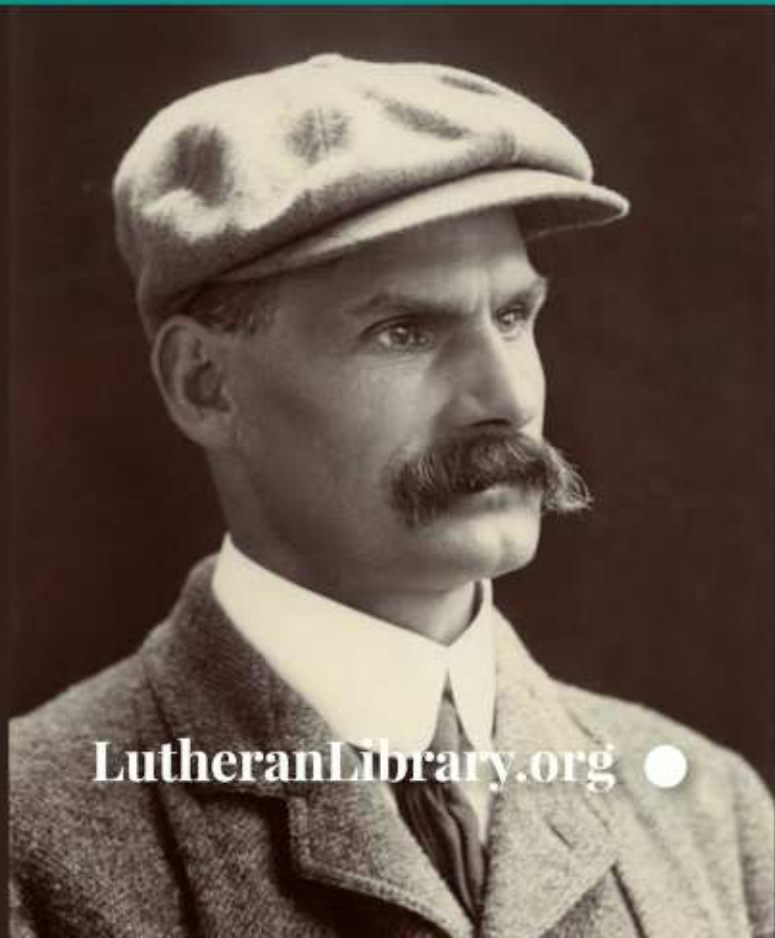


**Joseph Hocking**

**The Madness of  
David Baring**



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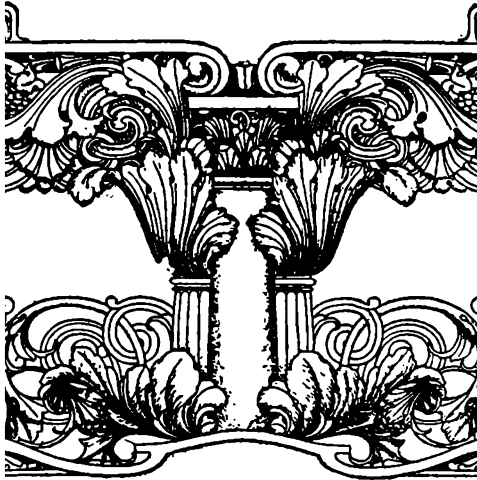
# DAVID BARING

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BY

JOSEPH HOCKING

AUTHOR OF "THE MAN WHO ROSE AGAIN,"  
"THE SOUL OF DOMINIC WILDTHORNE," ETC.



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# DAVID BARING

## CHAPTER ONE

### TWO YOUNG MEN

"**I**T'S a bit hard, David."  
"It is, old man. You've downright hard luck. I'm sorry for you; and yet I don't know."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, look here, Cyril, supposing this smash had not taken place: supposing you had taken your place in the country, as a squire with a fortune of a few thousands a year, and had settled down to the life which you thought had been marked out for you, it would have been a sort of living death."

"Yes, but it would have been a jolly pleasant death."

"No death can be exactly pleasant to a fellow of two-and-twenty."

"No, I suppose not. All the same it's an awful disappointment. Here am I just sitting for my degree, and looking forward to an easy, happy life, when a letter comes telling me that instead of possessing a fortune, I am a pauper."

"Not exactly that, old man."

"Well, only a few pounds a year. Anyhow, I shall have to work for my living."

"So shall I."

"Yes, but you expected it. You came here to Cambridge with the idea of earning your livelihood. That makes all the difference."

"I suppose it does."

"Of course it does. I came here because—well, it was the right thing to do. It is true I have done fairly well, and I think I shall take a good degree, but I looked forward to an easy life. I pictured myself spending half of each year in travelling, and having my own yacht: I thought that dear old place down in Surrey was absolutely mine. Well now—but you know."

"Yes, but hang it, Cyril, you aren't an idiot nor a cripple."

"Oh, no. I mean to rub along somehow; but it isn't only of myself that I'm thinking. I became engaged to Evelyn with the idea that I was—well, in a position to marry."

"But you are young, and she'll wait."

"Oh, yes, of course she'll wait; but it's jolly disappointing for all that."

"Langford would say that this is the best thing that could have happened to you."

"Oh, but Langford is a Socialist, a follower of Tolstoi. He does not believe in wealth; in fact he believes in nothing."

"It was a clever lecture he gave the other night; and, 'pon my word, his statements seemed unanswerable."

"It's all very well for such as Langford to talk. In my opinion, it is always these fellows who are penniless who spout such wild notions."

"Yes, but he said that property—personal property—was a curse. You remember how he tried to prove that it made life sordid, material. That the system of private ownership meant that the best and truest things in life were sold to the highest bidder. He argued that genius was by this means crushed under the weight of money-bags, that even love was degraded by gold, until both men and women were sold to those who had the biggest banking account."

"Oh, I know; but it's all bosh, David. Of course, money is a great necessity, and like all necessities, it is sometimes responsible for a great deal of hardship. But Langford is wrong. Why, take my own engagement; do you mean to say that I was drawn to Evelyn because of her money; do you think she accepted me because she thought I was the owner of three or four thousand a year?"

"I would not like to say so, Cyril. Only—but there. I have been reading a lot of stuff lately and it has set me thinking."

"Well," said Cyril Penrith, rising from his seat, "I have to face facts. I am poor, and I've got to make a fortune. Oh, I mean to do it. I did not think my University life would end like this; but it cannot be helped. I am young, I am healthy, and I am not, I hope, quite a fool. What others have done, I can do, and remembering that I have a good true girl waiting for me, and knowing that my future depends on my own exertions, I shall work like a galley-slave."

"Yes, we are both in the same box, only, in my case, I have no girl waiting for me. I never saw the one that I could care much about, and even if I did, I should never have had the pluck to ask her to become engaged to me. You see I am an orphan. But for a distant relative, who, I suppose, is well off, I should never have come here at all. It's funny, isn't it? But for a man I never saw, I might have been a joiner, a bricklayer, or, possibly, a labourer."

"But then, you see, you have the proverbial rich uncle."

"I don't know that I have. I've never had a home since I was a child. I've spent my vacations with an old woman, who, from all I can gather, was paid to keep me. All I know about myself is that I am the child of a man and woman who died when I was ten years of age—and——"

"Do you remember them, David?"

"Oh, very well. My father was a chemist, who died a poor man. Oh, there's no mystery about my life in that direction. There *has* been a little mystery since. A lawyer, who has an office in Chancery Lane, tells me that



a distant relative has paid for my education, and he also says that on completing my course here at Cambridge I shall receive the sum of three hundred pounds."

"That smacks of the fairy godmother."

"Nothing of the sort. I am to receive nothing beyond the three hundred pounds. When I leave here my future depends entirely upon myself. After having qualified myself to plead at the bar, I shall have to look out for briefs, like scores of other poor beggars, and in the meanwhile starve in a garret."

Both were silent for a few minutes, then David Baring broke out, "Life's a funny business, isn't it?"

"Yes," replied Cyril Penrith, "it is; but I don't think I shall mind so much when I get used to my new circumstances. You see I am not so dreamy as you are. I am not carried away by Langford's schemes."

"Oh, I am not altogether carried away by them, but after all we are surrounded by huge anomalies. And say what you will, money rules the world. Here am I at this moment removed from the farm labourer by money. I have spent my three years here in Cambridge because some distant relative, unknown to myself, has money, and decided to spend a few hundreds of pounds upon me. As a consequence, too, I have acquired certain tastes and habits. Who and what has done this? Primarily money. Then, to go further, if I fall in love, most probably it will be with a girl who has tastes and habits similar to my own; but my want of money will prohibit my speaking to her. If private ownership in money were abolished now, then every man would have the same chance, and we should all——"

"Hang it, old man, that's enough. I don't believe in your wild, hare-brained theories. I'm poor, but I believe in getting on: I must, in fact, for Evelyn's sake."

"Have you seen her since the true condition of your affairs has been revealed?"

"Yes, just for a few minutes, but I was so stunned at the time that I was hardly able to tell her about it. Poor girl, she was awfully sorry for me, she could hardly speak. Still, she's a brave girl, and—ah, there's the postman."

There were letters for both David Baring and Cyril Penrith, and both forgot their conversation in reading them.

Presently Cyril rose from his chair with a strange look upon his face.

"Baring, will you go for a stroll?" he said, but the other was evidently engrossed in his letter. He did not hear a word his friend said.

"Did you hear me, David?" repeated Penrith, "this room is as hot as a furnace, won't you come out with me for a walk?"

"I don't know," said the other in a dazed sort of way.

"Well, if you won't I must go alone, it's stifling here. I'm simply choking."

"Oh yes, I'll go with you."

The two young men walked away together, neither speaking a word; both were evidently deep in thought. Presently they reached the open country, but still they were both silent. Neither had spoken for more than an hour.

"I say, Baring."

"Yes."

"You were right."

"Oh no, I was all wrong."

"You were right."

"Not a bit of it."

"You are jolly companionable, aren't you? You sympathise deeply, don't you? For a pal now——"

"What in the name of heaven am I to do?" ejaculated David Baring.

"Read this letter, old man?"

"Letter! letter! Have you had a letter? Oh yes, I forgot, who is it from?"

"Read," said Penrith.

David looked into his friend's face, and the expression he saw there brought him back to the realities of life.

"More bad news, old man?"

"Read," repeated the other, drily.

David took the letter from Penrith's hand, and read it. At first he seemed confused, and he re-perused it.

"I say, old chap, I *am* sorry," he said presently.

"Beautiful, isn't it?"

"It's—it's——"

"Oh, don't try to find an adjective. It can't be put into words. You were quite right. It's all money. You see what she says. Her mother thinks as there is such a change in my prospects, that it would be unwise for the engagement to be continued, therefore——" and the young man laughed bitterly.

Again the two young men walked on in silence.

Men are different from women in this respect. They are more self-contained, more reserved; they do not, at the moment they receive important news, rush to tell their friends, and when they do at length communicate what is in their minds, they generally use but few words. I once knew two men who had been the closest of friends during their boyhood, indeed, up to the age of twenty-one. Then they were separated. One went to Africa, the other remained in England. After thirteen years, the one who had gone to Africa came home, and the two arranged for a meeting. Each recognised the other at the railway station. They shook hands as though they had parted the day before.

"Well, Bill," said one, "how are you?"

"All right, Tom, I'm glad to see you," replied the other, and that was all.

Women would have acted differently. They also would have acted differently under the circumstances I have been describing. There would have been many words, sobs, and possibly hysterics, but in all probability they would not have felt so deeply.

"Yes," said Cyril after a time, "it's a matter of money. It makes one believe in Langford. This system of riches and poverty is of the devil."

David Baring laughed; but there was no merriment in his laughter, it was simply the expression of a puzzled man.

"What would you do if you were a millionaire?" asked Baring presently.

"Millionaire?"

"Yes."

"Don't laugh at me, old man. It may be fun to you, but it's jolly serious for me. It's like asking a starving man what he would do if he were invited to a king's banquet. Besides, what's the use of such a question?"

"Oh, none at all, only I fancy I am—well, a sort of millionaire."

"You! why you told me an hour or so ago that you were——"

"I've received a letter, too," interrupted David Baring.

"Oh yes, I forgot. What selfish beggars we all are. We think only of ourselves. But, a millionaire! what do you mean?"

"Read," said Baring, passing a letter to the other.

Cyril Penrith read it through carefully. He rubbed his eyes, then he uttered an ejaculation more expressive than elegant. Presently he returned the letter to his friend, and they walked on for some time in silence.

"I forgot to congratulate you, Baring," said Penrith presently. "I believe I was stunned a little bit. You are jolly lucky. Well, I'm glad, I congratulate you."

"Life's a topsy-turvy business, isn't it?"

"Topsy-turvy! It's a raffle, a box of dice, a game of cards!"

"Yes, I hardly know whether I'm on my head or my heels. I've been like a man in a dream these last two hours."

"Let's look at the letter again. It's from a lawyer, I see."

"Yes, it's from that man in Chancery Lane. For twelve years now I've had occasional letters from him. They've all been headed the same way, always written in the same curt, business-like style, and all signed 'John Jay' in the same peculiar hand."

"This is evidently the rich uncle I spoke about," said Penrith presently. "You see I was right."

"Yes, but I never knew of his existence."

"Your mother's brother," he says.

"Yes. Poor old chap, he's dead. I am sorry, although

I never saw him. Read the letter aloud, Cyril, I can hardly believe it's true."

"Oh, it's all right. John Jay is a well-known London solicitor. It's all formal and in order. Yes, I'll read it aloud to you. I wish my own letter was as pleasant."

"DEAR SIR,—It is my duty to inform you that your late mother's only brother, David Barton, Esq., died yesterday at his residence, Malpas Towers, Surrey. As by his latest will you are his sole heir, I shall be glad if you can make it convenient to attend his funeral on Thursday of this week. It is my pleasure to state that the property which you inherit is very considerable, and I shall be glad to receive your instructions concerning its administration at your convenience. I may further add, that if you can call at the above address on Thursday morning at 10 o'clock, I shall deem it an honour to accompany you to the residence of your late uncle.

"Congratulating you on your good fortune,

"I am, dear sir, yours faithfully,

"JOHN JAY.

"DAVID BARING, Esq."

"You will go, of course."

"Oh, yes, I shall go. I cannot do other."

"It seems like a fairy tale."

"It does to me; although I suppose things like this happen oftener than we think."

"Your uncle must have been a peculiar man."

"Why do you think so?"

"Evidently he cared enough for you to leave you his entire property, and yet he never, during his lifetime, made himself known to you."

"No, it's very funny. Still, I daresay Mr. Jay will tell me a great many things when I see him. I say, old man, I am abominably selfish."

"Why?"

"This letter has driven your sorrow from my mind. Here are we talking of my good fortune, while you—you, well—things are all the other way with you."

"I had almost forgotten about myself. I think I am more excited about your prospects than you are. What are you going to do with it all?"

"That's the question. I don't know. It's all so sudden. I cannot accustom myself to the idea that I am a rich man. I have always had to consider my poverty. But, I say, Cyril—I—I, that is, you shall have a share in it."

"I?"

"Yes, of course. That's it. There'll be more than I shall want. I tell you, old man, you shall have a grand time."

"Stop, Baring. No, that'll not do."

"But why?"

"Well, you see,—but, I say, it's time we got back."

The two young men walked towards Cambridge together.

## CHAPTER TWO

IN WHICH TWO CHARACTERS ARE INTRODUCED WHOSE IMPORTANCE WILL BE SEEN AS THE STORY PROCEEDS

NEITHER David Baring nor Cyril Penrith spoke a word during their walk, their minds were too full for words. Both wanted time to think over the new conditions under which their lives had to be lived. The day had marked an epoch in their existence. Both had received news which had shaken their lives to the very centre. They had in many respects changed places. A few weeks before Cyril Penrith had regarded himself as free from worldly care. He thought he possessed a fortune sufficient to enable him to marry the girl he loved, and live his life in comparative ease. To-day he realised that he was poor, and that the girl to whom he had plighted his troth had jilted him. David Baring, on the other hand, had been brought up with the idea that he was poor, and had suddenly found himself a rich man. Such experiences may not be common; but they sometimes happen, nevertheless, and they often change, for weal or for woe, those whom they concern.

On reaching Cambridge, both of them found their way to Baring's room.

"Got used to it, old man?" asked Penrith.

“Not yet ; but I shall by degrees. I expect by to-morrow I shall feel as though I had been rich all my life. And you, Cyril, I hope you will soon be able to regard to-day’s disappointment without much pain.”

“’Pon my word, David, I don’t think I was very deeply in love. The girl’s action has made me feel indignant—angry, rather than anything else. You see, I had idealised Evelyn. I had believed her incapable of being influenced by poor and sordid things. I thought she loved me, regardless of my position ; but I was mistaken. The feeling which possesses me is a kind of madness, that a girl, professing what she did, should have thrown me over so easily. You see, she quotes what her mother said as the reason for breaking the engagement, but she has the honesty to say that she quite agrees with the action which that lady has advised her to take. The perfect barefacedness of the business simply destroys respect. But there, it’s no use talking.”

The young fellow laughed bitterly. Possibly he felt his disappointment more deeply than he cared to express.

“By the way,” said Baring presently, “I don’t wish any of the fellows here to know anything about the difference in my prospects.”

“Why ?”

“Oh, well, I don’t, that’s all. You see, I know very little as yet, and I’d rather the matter should remain unknown until—well, everything is settled.”

“Just as you like. But I say, what about your ideas concerning the evil of wealth and the curse of private property ?”

“I don’t know,” replied David quietly. “My mind is too confused to understand anything yet.”

“But you are known as pretty much of an idealist ; you’ve declaimed very often against the system under which we live. You’ve made strong speeches about the immorality of men possessing wealth for which they never worked. These things are remembered.”

“Would you mind my not discussing the matter just now ?” said Baring. “Honestly, I am not capable of doing so ; but if this fortune of mine turns out a reality.

well—you must come and see me down at Malpas Towers, and we can talk about the whole business quietly.”

Penrith laughed immoderately. He was much excited, and he tried to persuade himself that recent events did not worry him.

“You look solemn as an undertaker,” he said presently. “Things are all wrong. I ought to be solemn, while you should be gay; whereas it’s all the other way. Come, cheer up. A potential millionaire should be as merry as a lark.”

“I was just thinking,” said David, with a distant look in his eyes.

“That’s nothing new for you; but of what are you thinking?”

“Whether I am happier now than I was a few hours ago.”

“Nonsense.”

“It’s not, I assure you. But I am all unsettled, and I’m poor company too. You ought to have a more cheerful companion than I. Look here, Penrith, you’ll not be offended, I know; but I wish to be alone. I—I don’t quite understand myself, and my head seems like a seething cauldron. Good evening.”

For a few seconds Penrith was on the point of being offended, but when he looked at David Baring’s face his irritation vanished.

“Both of us will be the better for being alone,” he said kindly.

An hour later David Baring had interviews with some of the college authorities, and soon after went to bed. The following morning he left Cambridge early, and on foot. He might be the possessor of untold wealth, but he had very little ready money. Moreover, the habit of past years was strong; he felt that he must economise. Besides, he enjoyed walking, and he made up his mind that he would tramp most of the way to London. It was a delightful June day; the air was warm, but a breeze fanned the leafy trees and made his exercise a joy. He had fastened a small knapsack on his shoulders, and being unencumbered with any other luggage he was able to move his limbs



freely. By nine o'clock several miles lay between him and the quiet old University town, and he began to feel hungry.

"I am glad I brought a few sandwiches with me," he thought, "for there's no sign of a town or even a village where I might find an inn. But then, I've not kept to the main road."

He took a map from his pocket and studied it for a few minutes. "Yes, I'm all right," he reflected, "I've done well, too. I've kept up nearly four miles an hour. If I possessed a bicycle now I should have covered three times the distance. But there, I haven't; I've been too poor to buy one."

He laughed merrily, and started walking again. "I'll go on until I come to a cottage or to a spring of water," he thought, "and then I'll eat my sandwiches."

He tramped on for a few minutes, then he took from his pocket the letter he had received on the previous day, and read it again. He knew the contents by heart, but still there was something assuring in the written words.

"It must be true, I suppose," he thought, "and so I am very foolish to be trudging along like this; but why not? I enjoy it."

And doubtless he did. Like most of the healthy young men belonging to our Universities he loved athletics, and nature having endowed him with a fine physique, all bodily exercise was pleasure to him. There was something refreshing in his appearance too. Clothed in a light tweed suit, which fitted his well-knit body perfectly, and possessing a well-formed, ruddy face, which was lit up with merry, yet earnest, grey eyes, there was something positively charming about him. His laugh, too, was free and frank and hearty, and his every movement betrayed the fact that he belonged to the best class of our young English gentlemen, and that is very high praise indeed.

"I wonder what kind of a man my uncle was," he thought at length, "and how it is I never heard of him. Of course, the means whereby I got my education is explained now. If he was such a rich man my expenses at Cambridge would

be nothing to him. Still, I am glad I carried a valuable scholarship from the Grammar School."

He strode on, whistling gaily, and now and then humming a refrain from a popular song.

"Poor old Penrith," he broke out presently. "It's jolly hard for him. I expect he'll think it was funny of me to come away like this; but I could not help it. The mood was upon me, and I had to yield. Ah, here is water!"

He stopped by the roadside where a little spring burst forth. A little further along the road it formed itself into a pond.

Lying flat on the green bank, he took a long drink from the clear, pure water.

"It's lovely," he cried, and then he sat down and began to eat his sandwiches.

Away in the distance he heard the sound of a mowing-machine in a hayfield, and the gay laughter of the men and women who worked there. All around the birds were singing blithely, converting the whole countryside into a vast concert-hall.

He took off his hat, thereby revealing a mass of wavy brown hair. There could be no doubt about it, David Baring was a handsome fellow. All healthy young fellows of two-and-twenty are interesting; but when you find one who is tall, well built, handsome, cultured, and earnest, he is worth looking at a second time.

Presently David gave a start: he heard the sound of wheels. A few minutes later a carriage passed him. It was an open conveyance, and in it sat two people, an old man and a young girl. The former was stout and florid and pompous; he looked what he was, a country squire who owned two or three parishes, and thought he had the right to rule over them. The girl appeared to be a good representative of the educated girl whose lot is cast among the country families of England. She might be twenty years of age, and seemed to possess a will of her own. She had a somewhat haughty expression on her face, and her eyes suggested the fact that she had a temper.

Perhaps there is no Englishman who possesses more autocratic ideas than the country squire. It is also generally

the case that those brought up in a country house imbibe the owner's views. This is natural. No rural landlord, who spends his time on his own domains, can help regarding himself as a person of immense importance. His will is in most cases law, and the tenant farmers and labourers, as a matter of course, pay him much homage. As a rule he does not care much about London. His presence is of no importance there ; he is not noticed in the great busy throng. A man may be a king in a country parish, and a nonentity in the metropolis ; and most men prefer being king. The man who gets homage because of his position, looks upon it as his right, and he generally thinks himself badly treated if any one refuses to pay it. He cannot understand the common people regarding him in any other way than as their superior. That is why such men are angry at the new ideas which are spreading so rapidly.

The man in the carriage was of this order. He owned the parish in which he lived, and thought he had the right to rule over all who were in it. When he saw David Baring sitting on the bank, therefore, he felt perfectly free to ask him questions, and could not have understood any objection which the young man might have had to such a course of behaviour. The young girl by his side had been moulded by the same influence. Under other circumstances she would probably have been a gentle, unassuming girl, but being reared in an atmosphere of adulation, she regarded homage from common people as her right, and would be surprised at any opposition to her will on their part.

The girl held the reins, and guided the horse with evident skill, while the old man sat contentedly in the carriage.

"I think Duke wants to drink," he said, as they drew near the pond. "Pull him up, Grace, my dear."

There was no necessity to do this, for the horse went straight to the water, and tried to drink, but owing to the fact that the reins had become caught in the harness, he was unable to do so.

"I'll get out and unfasten them, Uncle," said the girl ; "hold the reins, will you ?"

"No need, my dear," said the old man. "There is a young fellow who will do it for you. I say, young man !"

David rose and went towards them. "Can I do anything for you?" he asked.

"The reins have caught in the harness, unfasten them, will you?"

"Certainly," said David, and he obeyed the old gentleman's bidding.

"Thank you," replied the Squire, looking at him steadily. "It's very warm," he added.

"Yes, it's very warm; but lovely weather all the same."

"Oh, yes, very nice. You—you are resting on your journey, I see."

"Yes, the spring attracted me, and it made my sandwiches all the sweeter."

The Squire tried to guess what the young man's position might be. It was evident that he was not a mechanic or anything of that sort; on the other hand the fact of his walking alone with a knapsack on his back seemed to prove that he did not belong to his own rank in life. Probably he might be a schoolmaster, or possibly an artist who was too poor to pay his train fare.

"Travelling far?"

"Yes, I'm going to London."

"Walking all the way?"

"Probably."

"Not to-day, surely?"

"No, I hope to get as far as Hatfield to-night, and then go on to-morrow."

The Squire was an inquisitive man, and, while not wishing to be rude, he had a desire to know who David was. As a rule, those who live in country places have but few interests, and thus every new face is interesting. Besides, the young man before him puzzled him somewhat, and he saw no reason against entering into a conversation. Every one in the parish was willing to tell him his business, indeed, they seemed proud that he had sufficient interest in them to listen to them. No doubt, therefore, this young fellow would be willing to talk. Still, it was not easy to ask questions freely, David was different from those he met day by day.

"It's rather a slow way of travelling, isn't it, young man?"

"Yes, rather; but it's nature's own way," laughed David.

"True, but in these days young fellows ride a bicycle, and leave even—that is, they leave carriages behind. I don't believe in the pesky things myself. I should be glad if they were put a stop to."

"I don't possess a bicycle myself," replied David.

"Oh, you don't believe in them, I hope. Sensible fellow!" and the old gentleman smiled patronisingly.

"Oh, I don't know about that; I've not been able to get one—that's all."

"Ah, you've wanted to spend your money in better ways, no doubt."

"I simply haven't had it to spend," replied David.

"Ah!" replied the old man, scrutinising the young fellow from head to foot, "then—then you are not bothered with much of this world's goods?"

The words came out awkwardly. He had an impression that he was perhaps over inquisitive. The young man did not belong to his parish, therefore he had no right to make inquiries. Still the habit of long years, and the willing confidence of the people made his questions natural.

"No, I have not been troubled with too much money," laughed David.

"Perhaps you are going to London to get work now?"

"No, I'm not going to get work."

"Oh," and then an awkward silence ensued. The horse had drunk its fill, and was now standing lazily, with its fore hoofs in the pond, showing no desire to continue the journey. The girl who held the reins sat watching David, and listening to the conversation.

"You know London, of course?" continued the old gentleman presently.

"Only a little."

"I seldom go there. It's a Babylon, that's what it is. A Babylon. The Almighty will destroy it one day, just as He destroyed the other Babylon. Nothing is respected there. The working people are scornful and independent.

They are full of revolutionary ideas, and have no respect for the things which the Almighty has evidently ordained."

"That is very sad," replied David.

"It is, indeed. Well, Grace, my dear, drive on. Good morning, young man, I hope you will be successful in London."

"Thank you," replied David. "I hope I shall."

"He did not seem to be willing to talk much, did he, Grace?" said the old gentleman as the horse jogged along the country lane.

"No," replied Grace quietly.

"What do you think about him, my dear?"

"I think he was laughing at you, Uncle."

"What!"

There was anger, consternation in the exclamation. He could not conceive of any one laughing at him—John Winfield, of Winfield Hall, and owner of three parishes.

"If I thought he was, I'd—I'd——" but he did not finish the sentence.

The next morning at ten o'clock David Baring walked down Chancery Lane, London, and knocked at the office door of Mr. John Jay, solicitor.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE CONDUCT OF MR. JOHN JAY, SOLICITOR

THE young man was completely metamorphosed in appearance. The tourist's suit was discarded, and instead his stalwart figure was attired in the conventional black frock coat. He wore a silk hat too, although it was not made ugly by the black band which has become a sign of mourning. He had arranged for his luggage to be sent to an inn at Hatfield, and realising the purport of Mr. John Jay's letter he had deemed it wise to appear before the lawyer in a fitting manner.

Mr. Jay welcomed him to his office very quietly. He was a lawyer of the old school. His practice was largely of a conveyancing nature, and he preferred making a

respectable income in the orthodox way, to becoming a millionaire by floating companies.

“ Good morning, Mr. Baring. It’s a nice morning, isn’t it ? Even in Russell Square, where I live, it looks like Devonshire. You don’t mind my looking at my letters for a few minutes, do you ? I shall be at your service in about a quarter of an hour. Here is the *Times* if you would like to look at it.”

David accepted the *Times*, but he did not read it. He read Mr. John Jay instead, for the man was far more interesting than the newspaper. He might be any age between fifty and seventy, for in some respects he appeared a well-preserved gentleman in the prime of life, and in others he looked weary and old. He was dressed entirely in broadcloth, which had the supreme quality of looking neither too new nor too old. He wore the kind of collar generally worn by Mr. Gladstone and around it was carefully placed a neat black tie. He had no beard, except a small fringe under the chin. His face was free from wrinkles, and yet his skin looked like parchment, it was so dry and colourless. His eyes were almost hidden by the large over-hanging brows and bushy eyebrows, his hair was iron-grey, and very thin on the crown of his head.

No one could doubt Mr. Jay’s respectability, and ninety-nine out of every hundred would declare him to be an exceedingly prosperous man ; all the same, that same percentage would feel uncomfortable in his presence. He was a man who was not easy to understand, he always appeared to have a double meaning, even when making the most simple statements. He seemed to be on the constant look-out for secrets, as though he suspected the honesty of every man with whom he came into contact.

Even while he was examining his correspondence he gave occasional attention to David, and the movements of his keen, deep-set eyes were sharp, suspicious, and bewildering.

“ I never thought Mr. John Jay was like this,” thought the young man. “ I wonder how my uncle got on with him ? ”

In less than a quarter of an hour Mr. Jay was at liberty. One of the secrets of his success in life was that he always

fulfilled more than he promised. If he gave his word that certain work should be done in a month, it was sure to be completed in twenty-seven days. If he told a client he would have to wait an hour for him, that client might be sure that in fifty minutes Mr. Jay would be ready to give him his attention.

"Well, I think I can be free until four o'clock," said the lawyer, ten minutes later. "It is now three minutes past ten. I have ordered a hansom for ten past; we can get to Victoria Station by half-past. Our train leaves at twenty-five minutes to eleven, and it takes just an hour to reach Malpas Station. A carriage will be waiting, which will take us to Malpas Towers by twelve o'clock, the time I have arranged to be there."

He repeated these items as if for the purpose of refreshing his own memory, rather than from any desire of imparting information to David.

"Would you mind telling me some particulars about my uncle?" asked David rather stammeringly. "You see, I know nothing about him. Indeed, I was ignorant of his existence until I received your last letter."

"Oh, certainly," was the lawyer's reply. "Your uncle was a very prosperous man; and, by the way, Mr. Baring, you will need a hat-band. Doubtless in your hurry you have forgotten it. My own hatter has a place not far from the bottom of the lane, and as the cab will doubtless be waiting, we may as well start at once."

Placing his own well-brushed hat on his head, and taking an ebony-handled umbrella from a rack, he led the way to the door where a private hansom stood. He gave a few words of instruction to the driver, and the two entered the conveyance together. The matter of the hat-band occupied only a few minutes, and they arrived at Victoria Station three minutes before the lawyer had said. During the journey David had again asked questions concerning his late uncle, but again, while expressing his willingness to give full particulars about the deceased, David Barton, Mr. John Jay had drifted to the question of hat-bands.

"You see, Mr. Baring," he said, "the servants would



have noticed it, and while I care little for externals myself, I always believe in considering the fads of other people ; don't you ? ”

The train swept over Grosvenor Bridge, and passed in view of the streets of Battersea, and again David asked the lawyer questions.

“ You say by my uncle's will I am his sole heir ? ” he said, questioningly.

“ I hope my letter was perfectly plain ? ”

“ Yes. Of course you were his solicitor ? ”

“ I had that honour.”

“ What kind of property do I possess ? ”

“ Oh, various kinds—various kinds. I always maintain that, from a business point of view, it is bad policy to confine investments to one class of property. House property, now, is regarded as safe. Take Battersea. Look at these houses ; not pleasant to look at, are they ? And yet a street such as the one we see would be worth, well, at least a thousand a year. All the same, if I had an income entirely derived from house property, I should, although every house was let to a respectable tenant, sell three-quarters of them, and invest the capital realised, in various ways. You know the old proverb about having all one's eggs in one basket.”

“ Then my uncle had various investments ? ”

“ Oh yes.”

“ In what way did he invest ? ”

“ Oh, various ways. Take land, now. There's great skill required in buying land. What one has to think about is the possible value of land in ten years. A man has to think for the future. Why, think of Battersea. Fifty years ago, Battersea was fields. It went by the name of Battersea Fields, and could be bought for a song. Now, land is as dear as saffron. Why, suppose your father as a young man bought a hundred acres there, to-day you would be a rich man from that source alone.”

“ Was my uncle ever married ? ”

“ Really, I never asked him. Marriage, you know, is a very serious matter. Mark you, I never denounce marriage, like some men. Why should I ? A good wife

is a treasure ; but what I advise young men to do is to take time."

The train passed through Wandsworth, Streatham Common, Croydon, and presently left all sight of city life behind. Again and again did David put questions to his lawyer, who always professed great willingness to give him all the information he possessed, and yet when they reached the end of the journey the young man realised that he knew no more concerning the nature of his property, than when he entered Mr. Jay's office in Chancery Lane hours before.

Malpas Station was almost deserted as the train swept in. A couple of porters shouted the name as loudly as if it were an important junction where a hundred passengers had to change ; but only David and the lawyer alighted. Very few houses were to be seen, and these were nearly all hidden by the huge trees which abounded. The countryside was rich and loamy, flowers bloomed everywhere, Nature had clothed herself in her most beautiful garments.

"I stand by it," said Mr. Jay, "that Surrey is the most beautiful county in England. Some prefer Kent, others again choose either Devonshire or Cornwall ; but give me Surrey."

"This is indeed very lovely," said David. "To whom does the land around here belong ?"

"Oh, the owner of the land around here for many generations has always been a Muswell. The Muswells are an ancient race ; they claim to have possessed land here in the time of Elizabeth ; I suppose they came by it in a rather peculiar way ; but that was nothing uncommon in the sixteenth century."

"And where is the Muswells' country house ?"

"Oh, not far from here. Have you ever considered, Mr. Baring, that our House of Lords is not what might be strictly called hereditary ? The old families die out, and then new peers have to be created."

They were by this time seated in a conveyance which lumbered slowly along the country lane.

"Is Malpas Towers pleasantly situated ?" asked David presently.

"I think you will be pleased," replied the lawyer, "but

everything in this life seems relative, doesn't it? Take the question of scenery and weather, now. We English people complain of the rain we get, and yet we could not get these lovely colours without rain. Why, Italy, which boasts of such a glorious climate, looks grey and barren beside England. I do not say that Italy is not finer than England—by that I mean grander; but for beauty now, real rustic beauty, Italy is simply placed in the background.”

“What is the meaning of all this?” thought David. “He will tell me nothing. Every time I ask a question he answers me by going off at a tangent, and uttering some platitude which is of no interest to me. He makes me think that I am the subject of a hoax, and that my dreams about a big fortune are all groundless. Ah, but this is a lovely country. I never saw such beauty in my life! My word! what a magnificent avenue of trees. I suppose they lead up to some big house. I expect it will be the home of the Muswells.”

A minute later, however, their own carriage passed along the avenue, and mounted a gentle slope.

Presently the lawyer looked at his watch.

“Plenty of time, plenty of time,” he murmured assuringly, “everything is perfectly arranged. By the way, Mr. Baring, there is rather a fine view from here. Driver, stop a few seconds, will you?”

It was indeed a lovely sight that met the young man's gaze.

Perhaps Mr. Jay was right when he said that Surrey is the most beautiful county in England. Devonshire and Cornwall may have their peculiar attractions, but for perfect rustic loveliness Surrey is unrivalled. And they were in the most beautiful part of the county. On every hand the countryside spread itself out before them, hill and dale rising and falling like huge billows. All around them in the park where the carriage stood were giant trees, the growth of many generations, while in the distance they could see quaint farmsteads nestling among the trees. Everything, moreover, was in the summer of loveliness. Every field was green, every tree was covered with foliage. No sound nor sight marred the beauty of the day.

"Very fine, isn't it?" asked the lawyer, as the horse started into a trot again.

"It is simply magnificent," replied the young man, and then a perplexed look came into his eyes. "We are on our way to my uncle's funeral, I believe, are we not?" he added.

"Yes," replied the lawyer. "Surely, I did not omit to give you full particulars in my letter?"

"Oh no, only I was wondering why—why——"

"From here you have another view," broke in Mr. Jay suddenly. "Do you like it?"

Before him stood a fine country mansion, surrounded by luxuriant gardens and magnificent trees. In front of the main building, perhaps half a mile away, was a lake, across whose bright waters the shadows of many-coloured leaves fell.

"What is the name of the house?" asked David.

"That is 'Malpas Towers,'" replied the lawyer quietly.

"You see it is true to its name, and those two towers give it an imposing appearance. It is several hundreds of years old, I suppose; but I do not speak with authority. I haven't had time to study the history of the country houses."

"But do you mean to say that——"

"I think everything will be in order," broke in the lawyer. "Still, I hope you will excuse my not being able to answer further questions just now, as I am responsible for everything. After to-day, well, everything will be different," and he looked steadily at the young man's anxious face.

A little later the funeral of David Barton took place, a funeral which surprised his nephew very much. David Baring had imagined an imposing ceremony. He had pictured the gathering of many friends, of a church filled with mourners, and of much suppressed excitement. Instead, everything was of the simplest nature. No friend nor relation beyond Mr. Jay, the doctor, and himself were present. No preparations of any sort appeared to have been made. It is true that a man, who looked like a clerk, and who took his orders from Mr. Jay, seemed to have an

understanding with the undertaker, and took the management of matters generally; but nothing suggested the funeral of a rich man.

“Had my uncle no friends?” thought the young man, “or was he a miser—a man hated by his neighbours?”

Nothing in the appointments of the house, however, suggested miserly instincts on the part of the late owner. Every article of furniture was in accord with the spacious rooms. All were in perfect taste, and evidently chosen with great care. Moreover, everything suggested a woman’s supervision, and David constantly expected to hear the rustle of a woman’s garment. But except the servants he saw no one.

“Everything is mysterious,” thought the young man. “Beyond what was contained in the letter I received at Cambridge I have been left completely in the dark; but if I am heir to all this I shall know particulars presently.”

The funeral service was read in a little church some distance from Malpas Towers by the vicar of the parish, an old man who was evidently uninfluenced by the new spirit which has crept over the Established Church. He read the Psalms and the chapter in Corinthians quite naturally, while the clerk uttered the responses like an automaton. Had it been the funeral of the humblest cottager there could not have been less ostentation.

When the vicar pronounced the Benediction at the grave-side, Mr. Jay put on his hat, and hurried to his side. A few minutes later the four men—the doctor, the clergyman, the lawyer, and David—drove back to the great house together. Scarcely an hour had passed since the body of David Barton had been taken from the great chamber in which it lay.

A simple lunch had been provided, to which they sat down without ceremony. Neither the vicar nor the doctor paid any heed to David. Apparently, they knew nothing of the letter which he had received from Mr. Jay. Perhaps they took him for some friend of the lawyer.

“I suppose the whole property goes into Chancery?” said the doctor.

“Why?” asked Mr. Jay.

"I am told he hadn't a single relation, and that he made no will. Perhaps some distant cousin may turn up. But, of course, you know; you have conducted his business affairs."

"Yes," replied the lawyer drily. "How thankful gentlemen of your profession should be that you are not worried by business matters! Well, well, we all have our place. Mr. Jennings here tries to cure people's souls; you, Dr. Wells, care for their bodies, while I look after their money. Have you finished your lunch? Ah, then I must not detain you. Besides, I have an engagement in the City."

When the doctor and the clergyman had gone, Mr. Jay turned to David: "I am now at liberty, Mr. Baring, to have an hour's conversation with you," he said.

"Thank you," said the young man. "So far, I have been utterly confused by the day's proceedings. I shall be glad if you will explain matters."

"Perhaps we had better go into the library," remarked the lawyer.

"Thank you," said the young man, following him with a troubled look on his face.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HOW DAVID BARING TOOK POSSESSION OF MALPAS TOWERS

THE library formed a part of the oldest portion of the house. The ceiling was somewhat lower than that of the other rooms in which David had been, but the outlook from the mullioned window was fair beyond words. The smooth, well-shaven lawn sloped down to the river, which fed the lake on the other side of the park. Through the trees he could see the gleam of its swiftly-running water—he could hear it rippling over its stony bed. Although late in June, the white thorn trees were laden with white and red blossom, the rhododendrons were resplendent with luxuriant foliage, and roses bloomed everywhere. He knew that the care of many generations had been bestowed

on the grounds ; knew, too, that the late owner must have loved beautiful things, for nothing was left neglected. Every flower-bed was ablaze with colour, every part of the lawn had been carefully tended.

The library, too, gave evidence of culture, of taste, and of love for beauty. The heavy oak shelves were laden with books, while scattered around the room were objects of art, some of which were of great value.

David noticed all these things at a glance, but for the moment he was too much interested in what the lawyer might tell him to pay them much attention.

" You are rather surprised at the proceedings of to-day ? " remarked the lawyer.

" Very," replied David.

" Yes, I daresay you are," and Mr. Jay rubbed his chin thoughtfully. " I daresay you are, but everything was done according to instructions. At least, only one mistake was made."

" What was that ? "

" I ought not to have informed you that you were heir to your uncle's wealth."

" I see. Then I am not——"

" I did not say that," interrupted the lawyer. " My mistake was in sending that letter."

" I do not understand," said David rather impatiently. He felt that the lawyer was playing with him—that he was the subject of a foolish joke.

" No, you cannot be expected to understand," rejoined Mr. Jay ; " everything has come upon you suddenly."

" I shall be glad of your explanation now," said David.

" Perhaps I had better explain my mistake first," replied Mr. Jay, " and then you will be in a position to understand what may follow. When I received the communication informing me of your uncle's death, knowing that you were his heir, I felt it my duty to inform you of your good fortune without delay, but on coming down here immediately afterwards I had this letter given me," and he passed a piece of paper to the young man.

David unfolded it, and read these words :

" I desire that any one who is concerned in anything

I may possess may be kept in ignorance of same until after my funeral.—DAVID BARTON.”

“The signature is not in the same writing as the letter,” remarked David.

“True,” said the lawyer. “The letter was dictated to an old servant, but Mr. Barton signed it himself. You can judge from it that your uncle was a man of strong character. It is true the hand shook while he wrote, nevertheless every letter is bold and well formed.”

“Still, I do not understand,” said David.

“Your uncle was—well, let us say a man of some individuality,” said the lawyer. “He was not a copy of other people; he had his own way of acting, and he allowed no one to dictate to him. Your own history shows that. As you will have guessed, it was he who educated you—it was he who gave me instructions concerning you.”

“Yes, I understand that.”

“It was by his wish that you were brought up with the idea that you should have only three hundred pounds when you left Cambridge. Indeed, for a considerable time he intended giving all his possessions away to charities; but, hearing good accounts of you, he was led to change his plans.”

“May I see the will?” asked David.

“Certainly,” replied Mr. Jay; “but at present I think it will be better if you will allow me to give you a few explanations. The will was made about a year ago, when your uncle’s health began to fail. It was witnessed by two of my clerks. No one knew anything about it around here. Indeed, as you may have suspected from the remarks dropped by the doctor at lunch, he gave that gentleman to understand that, having no children, he did not intend making a will.”

“I see.”

“Well, beyond an annuity to the old servant who wrote that letter, you are his sole heir. Oh, you need have no fear. Everything is in perfect order. Allow me to be the first to congratulate you.”

“Still, I am confused by this day’s proceedings. You told me that my uncle was a rich man.”



"Oh, yes, I think I was safe in saying that."

"Then what am I to infer from the evident lack of respect to-day? Not a single soul was at the funeral beyond the doctor and yourself. Surely a man occupying the position which must have been his, ought to have received——"

"My dear sir," interrupted the lawyer, "as I told you, your uncle was somewhat eccentric. He did not care for society, and it was his express wish that no one but the doctor and parson should be invited to the funeral; he, moreover, told me, not long before he died, that he did not wish more than twenty pounds to be spent on his burial. I think," laughed the lawyer grimly, "that we are well within the mark. The funeral has been quiet and cheap."

"Then no one here knows I am my uncle's heir?" asked David anxiously.

"Absolutely no one."

David looked thoughtfully out of the window. He seemed to be living in a land of dreams, and at that moment he would not have been surprised if he woke up to the fact that he was poor again.

"Did—did my uncle live here long?" he asked presently.

"Only about two years."

"Two years. And before that?"

"Before that he lived in London."

"Oh, I see. Then I suppose he bought this house?"

"This house belonged originally to the Muswell family, but, like others of a similar degree, they became straitened for money; the whole estate fell into the market, and your uncle bought it. The general impression is that he got it cheap, especially as much of the furniture is very rare and costly."

"Then these things originally belonged to——"

"The Muswells? Yes."

"But did he not make friends among the people in the county?"

"No," replied the lawyer grimly, "he made no friends."

"Why?"

"Well, I think I told you that he was a man of strong

personality, and had his own way of—of—well, living. Now, is there anything more I can tell you, my dear sir, before I leave ? ”

“ Why, yes, ” cried David, “ I know nothing at all yet—absolutely nothing. For example, I should like to know what property I possess. How large is this Malpas estate ? What income do I receive from it ? Is there anything else besides these Malpas lands which belongs to me ? ”

“ After the probate of the will all this will have to be gone into, ” remarked the lawyer blandly. “ This Malpas estate is large and entirely free from encumbrances, and there are other sources of income. Meanwhile, my dear sir, you will, of course, desire money. Until everything is formally settled I shall feel honoured if you will draw on me for any sum you may require. ”

“ Of course, I hope you will continue to manage the estate, ” said David.

“ Certainly, if you wish it, ” replied the lawyer.

“ Then, for the present, there is only one other matter for me to attend to, ” continued Mr. Jay presently. “ The servants are naturally very anxious to know what is to become of them, and who is to be their future employer. I will, therefore, call them in here, and explain how matters stand. ”

“ Thank you, ” replied David nervously, “ but I should like to see—that is—the will, my uncle’s will, before you do this. ”

“ Oh, yes ; I anticipated such a desire on your part ; it is very natural—very natural. I, therefore, brought a copy of the will with me. The original is, of course, in a safe place. Here, my dear sir, here it is, ” and Mr. Jay took a document from his bag and handed it to David.

Like all legal documents, it was full of technical phrases, but David understood it perfectly. Beyond a hundred pounds a year given to an old servant, Martha Hayes by name, David was heir to all his possessions.

“ Of course, my identity will have to be proved, ” remarked David.

“ Oh, yes, but everything is in perfect order—everything. There will be no difficulty in that direction—not the slightest.

You see, I have been in communication with you for years, and therefore there is no mystery. And now I will ring for the servants."

He touched a bell as he spoke, and a man-servant came into the room.

"John," said Mr. Jay blandly, "will you kindly tell your fellow-servants to come in here at once?"

"All of 'em, sir?"

"Yes, all, John. I have an important communication to make to them."

"Yes, sir," said the man respectfully, and left.

Three minutes later all the servants appeared at the library door. On the face of each was a look of wonder and curiosity. Evidently Mr. Jay's message had raised their excitement to the highest pitch.

"Will you come in?" said the lawyer patronisingly, looking towards David as he spoke.

They filed into the room awkwardly, but still with evident enjoyment. The day marked an epoch in their lives. The old master was dead, and their eager questionings concerning the future would be answered. They knew that Mr. Jay was their late master's lawyer, and that he had taken charge of everything since his death, but beyond that they knew nothing. Who their new master was to be they knew no more than the cattle in the fields.

David looked at them steadily. They were evidently well-conducted servants; all were well-fed and well-dressed. As far as he could judge, the arrangements of the house were simple; there was only one man-servant besides the coachman, and there were very few women-servants. The young man felt very nervous as they stood waiting for Mr. Jay to speak. The experience was so utterly new—so utterly unexpected. He felt far more ill-at-ease than those who would call him master. Their life would be but little changed; his, on the other hand, would be utterly revolutionised. Besides, it was evident that they had no idea of the news in store for them. If they thought of David at all, it was simply as one of the lawyer's assistants. This was what the doctor and the clergyman had thought. Indeed, the former, on leaving the house, had spoken of

him to his friend as Mr. Jay's junior partner. The truth was, David had been so modest—so diffident—that no one had dreamed of him as the heir to one of the finest estates in Surrey, and, as the lawyer had refrained from giving the slightest hint as to the true condition of affairs, he was almost entirely ignored.

“I have asked you to come here,” said Mr. Jay, looking at them very benignly, “for the purpose of telling you something about the new conditions under which you will live here. You will naturally be anxious to know what those conditions will be, and from whom you will have to take your orders. Your late estimable master has left you, I trust, for a better world, and now you who remain behind, will doubtless serve your new employer as faithfully as you served the old, for whose departure you all grieve sincerely.”

Mr. Jay was fond of making speeches, and although his mode of address was very hesitating, and somewhat painful, he looked upon himself as an orator; thus, at this point, he looked carefully at his audience to see the kind of impression he was making. Evidently he had no cause to complain in this direction, for their attention was almost breathless; indeed, it was a long time since they had enjoyed any episode so much, and the lawyer's speech would, doubtless, form a subject for conversation during the coming weeks.

After having made his preliminary remarks, the lawyer thought fit to come to the point at once. He knew that the way to make an impression, was to make an unexpected statement suddenly.

“It is, therefore, my duty,” said the lawyer, “to introduce to you your new master, Mr. David Baring—the nephew of the late lamented owner of Malpas Towers—whom, I trust, you will serve as faithfully, and as cheerfully, as you served your late master.”

Here Mr. Jay bowed to David, and then marked the look of consternation and astonishment which rested on the face of every one before him. So astonished were they that none of them could speak a word. Not one of them had dreamed of such a thing. Like the doctor and the

clergyman, they had an idea that everything would either go into Chancery, or be given to some charity. Indeed, one or two had gone so far as to take steps to obtain new situations, as they imagined they would no longer be required at Malpas; and now to be brought face to face with their new master, without a moment's warning, was, as the cook remarked afterwards, "like hearing the cuckoo sing at Christmas."

"I am sure," said David quietly, "I hope you will continue to be very happy here; I do not think you will find me a hard master, and if you do your work cheerfully and willingly, there is no reason why we should not get on well together."

Thereupon the young man rose to his feet, and shook hands with them all round. He did not know whether he was doing what was right, but it seemed natural. He saw, moreover, that his action greatly pleased them, and that they were disposed to look favourably upon the new order of things.

"Well, I never!" said Mrs. Jobson, the cook, when they had all retired to the kitchen. "It 'as fair took my breath away. All the same I couldn't wish for nothink better."

"He's a perfect gentleman, ther's no doubt about that," remarked John Basset, the man-servant. "He's werry different from the ole man. In my opinion the ole man weren't a gentleman at all; I express my opinion freely, 'cause I think I ort ter know what a gentleman is—but this is a perfect gent."

"And ain't 'e 'ansome!" said the head housemaid enthusiastically. "Did you notice what lovely 'air and eyes 'e 'as? I'm sure it'll be a perfect pleasure to serve 'im."

"It's my opinion," volunteered Mr. John Basset, "that we shall soon 'ave changes 'ere, and I for one shall be werry glad. Personally, I am fond of society, and for two years we ain't 'ad a bit of society so ter speak. The ole master sawr nobody but the lawyer from year's end to year's end. The families around just avoided 'im. Even the pawson didn't py 'im no proper attention; but this young gent'll mike changes. You'll see. Ther'll be gawden parties,

and house parties, and we shall have gents bringing their valets, and ladies a-bringing their maids. Oh, you'll see."

"Anyhow," remarked the cook, "it'll give us somethin' to live for. And it'll be a joy to cook a dinner for a young gent as knows 'ow to appreciate it."

"But what I want to know," said the head housemaid, "is, where will Mrs. Hayes come in? She didn't come in with the rest on us; and ever since the ole master's death she's hardly left her room. Of course, we all 'ad to take our orders from 'er; who shall we have to take 'em from now?"

"She isn't a lydy, neither," remarked Mr. Basset, decidedly.

"I ain't a-goin' to bother about 'er," remarked the cook. "Mr. Baring'll know wot to do with 'er. He'll 'ave things changed all round. Perhaps 'e'll pension 'er off."

While David was being discussed in the kitchen, the young man accompanied Mr. Jay to the door, where a conveyance awaited the lawyer's pleasure.

"You'll hear from me in a day or two," said the lawyer. "There will be no difficulty, because everything is straightforward. And now I will leave you to your new possessions. By the way, I forgot to mention it, but there is a plan of the Malpas estate in the drawer of the library table. I daresay you'll want to look at it. Good day, Mr. Baring; let me congratulate you again. We understand everything perfectly, don't we?"

The lawyer drove away, and David watched the conveyance until it was out of sight; then he turned and walked back to the library like a man in a dream.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MARTHA HAYES, THE HOUSEKEEPER

"I HARDLY know even yet whether I am awake or dreaming," said David to himself as he stretched himself on a chair in the library. "I can't believe that I am the possessor of all this, and yet, I suppose there can be no doubt.

Here is the copy of the will," and he read it through very carefully.

"No, there can be no doubt about it," he repeated presently. "Malpas Towers is mine, and heaven knows what besides. But I can't make myself believe it. Everything is so strange—so unexpected. Evidently my uncle was an eccentric old man, and he requested Mr. Jay to take a certain course of action concerning me."

He opened the window, and stepped on to the lawn.

"All mine," he mused, as he wandered towards the river. "Woods, park, gardens, lake, farms, and goodness knows how much money—all mine. Did ever a fortune come to a fellow so curiously? I am here all alone amidst my possessions; there is no one to dispute it all; no one to share it. What am I to do? How am I to act? I am as helpless as a baby!"

He came to the river and saw a reflection of himself in the clear water.

"Silk hat, frock coat, patent leather shoes," he said, shaking himself impatiently. "I must get out of these; I must have some clothes sent to me."

Without hesitation he started to walk to the village of Malpas. "There's sure to be a telegraph office there," he mused, as he strode rapidly along. He did not realise that he had servants waiting to do his every bidding, and that they would have been proud to have been honoured by his commands. The truth was, he had been so much accustomed to wait upon himself, that the thought of sending one of them never occurred to him. Besides, he was still in a state of bewilderment; he could not accustom himself to his new surroundings. And yet David Baring was not the kind of fellow to lose his head. Rather, he was self-contained, cool, collected. When he received Mr. Jay's letter he did not, as we have seen, take the first train and rush to Chancery Lane. Instead, he did a hard day's walking, seeking all the while to work out the new problem set before him. All the same he had been bewildered by the course of events. He had not been able to understand the behaviour of the lawyer; he was confounded by the kind of funeral given to his late uncle;

he was bewildered by the explanations offered by Mr. Jay after the departure of the clergyman and the doctor. Nothing seemed real to him. Aladdin, in the presence of the Genie who offered to serve him as the slave of the lamp, was no more astounded than David Baring as he beheld the wealth that was his, to dispose of as he pleased. Had there been a big display at David Barton's funeral, had a host of needy relatives gathered together hungrily waiting for the few crumbs which might fall from the rich man's table, and had the will of the late owner of Malpas Towers been read before the assembled guests, he would have felt differently. He could then have sympathised with the needy mendicants, and formed plans for helping them, and he would have accepted the congratulations of the surrounding gentry with a certain amount of complacency. But there were no expectant relations, there were no congratulatory speeches, except those of the lawyer who utterly confused him. Besides, he was all alone. He would have to sleep in that great house without a friend. There was no one with whom he could converse. Had he known something of his uncle, his position would not have appeared so strange. But he knew nothing about him. He had not heard of his existence a few days before. How he made his money he did not know; he had only the vaguest idea of how it was invested. The knowledge of these things would come later.

All these thoughts passed through his mind as he tramped to the village. No one noticed him as he went to the post office; apparently the villagers had not the slightest idea that he owned the houses in which they lived—that he was the heir to one of the richest men in the county.

Having telegraphed for his belongings to be sent to him immediately, he wandered back towards the house. Catching sight of the lake, however, he went close to its banks, and sat under the trees.

"It's a perfect paradise," he murmured. "I never dreamed of anything so lovely. And it's all mine. I can't understand it!"

He heard a suppressed cough, and turning, saw John, the man-servant.



"Please, sir, what time would you like to dine?"

He had forgotten all about time, and had not thought of dinner. He looked at his watch; it was after five o'clock.

"Oh, it scarcely matters, John. Just at the convenience of——" he stopped suddenly and remembered himself.

"Say at seven o'clock," he added hastily.

"Yes, sir." The man waited.

"Anything else, John?"

"Beg pardon, sir; but we in the kitchen, sir, are, what you might say, in a little bit of a fog, sir."

"How? What do you mean?"

"Well, sir, the question is, who are we to take our orders from, sir? The cook—that is, you see, sir——" the man stammered awkwardly and then stopped.

"From whom have you taken your orders?"

"Mrs. Hayes, sir; that is, we in the kitchen have, sir."

"Mrs. Hayes! Who's she? Oh, I remember now. But have I not seen Mrs. Hayes?"

"No, sir—that is, not that I am aware of, sir."

"How is that?"

"She was housekeeper, sir, in Mr. Barton's days; but since he died she 'asn't left 'er room."

"Oh, I see. Well, you'll take your orders from me until I see Mrs. Hayes."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. There's nothing you wish at present, sir?"

"No, nothing, except that dinner shall be ready at seven o'clock."

The man walked back to the house, David following him slowly.

"Starting housekeeping on this scale is no joke," he laughed. "Fancy having all these servants to wait on poor me. But I shall get accustomed to things presently."

When he arrived at the house he sent for Mrs. Hayes. "Ask her to oblige me by coming into the library," he added, for he was already becoming attached to the quaint old room.

A few minutes later a woman of about sixty years of age knocked at the door and entered.

"Is this Mrs. Hayes?" he asked kindly.

"Yes, I am Mrs. Hayes," answered the woman.

Her face was pale and set; her eyes looked as though sleep had not visited them for many hours, but she appeared cool and collected.

"I suppose you have sent for me to tell me to leave the house," she said quietly.

"I certainly had not thought of it," replied David with a smile; "rather, I hope you will be able to help me."

"I can't help you, nor such as you," answered the woman sternly. "I hear you are straight from college. You will have your own ways of doing things, and they'll not be mine. With David Barton all was different; we knew each other—we had known each other for forty years. I was housekeeper to him before he came here. He was a plain man, and liked plain things; he had no business to come here at all. We was far happier in our little house in Battersea than we have been down here. People called him a hard man, but I thought he would have——"

The woman ceased suddenly, as though she found herself saying more than she had intended.

"I served him faithfully," she added presently.

"I am sure you did," replied David.

"I knew nothing about grand ways—neither did he—but I kept things as well as I could, and, considering everything, I kept the servants straight. We didn't want so many servants, but 'tis a big house."

The woman did not raise her voice, but her tones were hard, and somewhat bitter.

"I hear everything is yours," she continued after a few seconds' silence. "Well, I suppose you'll make the money go."

"I hardly know what I shall do," replied David, "but I do not propose making any alteration yet. That is, if you will stay and continue for a little while as my housekeeper."

A new light shone in the woman's eyes, but she answered in the same tones. "I am a plain woman, and I know but little of the ways of people who call themselves gentlefolk."

"That does not matter. You can conduct the house as it has been conducted?"

"Yes, I can do that, but——"

"But what?"

"You cannot understand—how should you?"

"Perhaps I can if you care to tell me what you mean."

"I don't grumble," said the woman. "I have enough to live on. He gave me very good wages, and I saved nearly all of it. But to die without saying anything, without remembering me in any way——"

"Didn't you know? Haven't you heard?" said David.

"Heard what? I have heard nothing."

"Didn't Mr. Jay tell you that he had left you an annuity?"

The whole aspect of the woman changed in a second. Her voice was altered, too; it had interest, eagerness, hope, life in it.

"An annuity?" she cried. "Did he leave me anything? You are sure you are not deceiving me?"

"Oh, no, I have a copy of the will; let me read you the clause about yourself. Mr. Jay told me that everything would be legally settled in a day or so. I suppose he did not intend to tell you until all formalities were complied with. Listen. 'I give to my trusted housekeeper and true friend of many years, Martha Hayes, the sum of one hundred pounds per year during her life, and it is my desire that my nephew, David Baring, shall render her any service that she stands in need of.'"

The woman sat down; during the previous part of their interview, in spite of repeated entreaties on David's part, she had remained standing. For a few seconds she struggled to overcome her emotion, but presently her lips trembled, and she burst into tears.

"Thank God, thank God," she said, presently. "It was not the money I wanted; but for him to die without thinking about me, without remembering—when years ago we were——"

The woman ceased suddenly, and mastered her emotion.

"I am very glad," she said quietly, after awhile. "Very glad. I wish I could have known this before he died, so that I might have thanked him. Still, it is best as it is. He always did things in his own way, and seldom asked any one's advice. But I am glad he thought of me so kindly."

"You knew my uncle a long while?" said David.

"Yes, we were young together."

"Indeed! Would you care to tell me anything about him? I never knew him. Indeed, I was not aware that he ever existed until a few days ago."

"No, I suppose not. That was just his way. I never knew his plans, or his desires. He was a close man; some called him a hard man, but I do not believe it. His bark was worse than his bite."

"You used to live in Battersea, you say?"

"Yes, until he bought this place. I was much happier there; so I believe was he; but he never said anything—not a word."

"Did you live in Battersea a long time?"

"No, not very long. Before then we lived in White-chapel. It was there he made his money."

"Indeed, how did he make it?"

"He told me very little; but he made it in many ways. He had a lot of shops, and he employed hundreds of men and women to make clothes and things; then he had a brewery, and bought I don't know how many public-houses."

David's eyes fell.

"He was not a drinking man himself," said the woman, noting his action. "Indeed, there's scarcely a drop of wine or spirits in this house now, except the servants have smuggled it in."

"Then he was a brewer, and a shopkeeper in White-chapel?" queried David.

"Yes," replied the woman, "he gave himself over to making money. He bought shop after shop, and employed hundreds of people. Then, I reckon, he kept a sort of bank."

David's eyes brightened.

"Oh, a bank!" he cried eagerly; "that's better. Do you remember the name of it?"

"No, I know very little about it. He never told me anything, for, as I said, he was a very close man. But one day I heard two men talking, and one said to the other that he could borrow as much money as he liked from David Barton's bank if he would agree to the interest."

"And that is all you know?"

"Yes, that's about all, except that—that people didn't like him down at Whitechapel, and he said he was tired of it, and we moved to Battersea."

"I see," said David quietly; "and did he still continue in business at Battersea?"

"Yes; he went to the City every morning; but, as I say, he never told me anything, until one day he came to me and said that he was tired of money-making—that he'd bought an estate down in the country."

"I see. He meant this place?"

"Yes. He said that the owner had squandered away the place, and that he had bought it just as it stood—furniture and all. I don't know all the particulars, but I believe that the family of Muswells lived here, and that everything had to be sold to pay their debts. Anyhow, David Barton said he had made enough to enable him to settle down as a country gentleman."

"And then you came here?"

"Yes, but he was never happy here. He told me that he had given up business, sold all his shops, and his brewery, and washed his hands from his old life, and was going to be free from all care and worry. But it wasn't good for him. You see, he had always been an active man, and he loved to make money. The ways of a big house like this did not suit him; you see, he was never used to it. He used to sit for hours and brood, and brood; and then I saw that he wouldn't live long."

"And did not the people around call to see him?"

"They did at first, but I am told that he insulted them; but if he did, I am sure he served them right. Anyhow, no one came after a bit, not even the clergyman;—and that's about all. People used to call him bad names,

but they were unjust. He remembered me, didn't he!"

"Mrs. Hayes," said David presently, "I wish to live a quiet life, too, for the present. Will you continue to be the housekeeper?"

The woman, whose demeanour had altogether changed since the news about the annuity, softened still more. "I have no home," she said, "and I am an old woman now. I am not like I was when he—that is—if you will be contented with what I can do, I will do my very best."

That night David had his dinner all alone, and, as he ate, he thought of all the old woman had told him. Afterwards he wandered through the house looking at the rooms, and wondering at what he saw. Even yet he could not realise his position, neither could he as he went to bed in a great chamber, which was quaintly, but richly, furnished.

"It is all so strange—so very, very strange," he thought, as he fell asleep. "A week ago, if any one had told me that I should be here as master of Malpas Towers I should have told him that he was mad."

Next morning when he awoke, however, his fortune seemed more real; the sunshine streamed through the windows, dispelling not only the gloom from the room, but the shadows from his mind. He looked across the park and saw the giant trees standing, while away in the distance he could just see the placid waters of the lake.

"It's like a dream still," he said, "but it is becoming more real, and more beautiful every hour. I wonder now—I wonder if my uncle——" but a cloud rested upon his brow at the thought of the man to whom he owed his fortune, and he dressed in silence.

On entering the library he found a copy of *The Times* on the table. The first paragraph which caught his eye referred to himself. It briefly described the funeral of the late David Barton, Esq., of Malpas Towers, and then said that his nephew, David Baring, Esq., who had just completed his course of studies at Cambridge, was the sole heir to his uncle's estates, and had entered into possession. It further stated that the business of the estate was con-

ducted by Mr. Jay, of Chancery Lane, and concluded by congratulating the young heir upon his good fortune.

A few hours later a carriage drove up to the door, and a servant brought a card to David. Then Colonel Storm was announced.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DAVID BARING'S GOOD FORTUNE FROM DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW

COLONEL STORM was a perfect specimen of the old type of a retired military officer. He was tall, stout, ruddy, and evidently of a choleric disposition. He had the manner of the centurion who said to this man "go," and to that man "come." He shaved in military fashion, walked in military fashion, and spoke as though he was on parade.

"Excuse this unceremonious call," he said, in a loud voice, "but on reading *The Times* this morning I discovered that you were a near neighbour of mine. I, therefore, lost no time in coming to congratulate you on—that is, your good fortune."

"Thank you," replied David quietly.

"You must forgive a blunt old soldier's way of putting things," continued Colonel Storm, "but I have spent a great deal of my life in India, and—and—but there, I am sure you understand me."

"It is very kind of you to call," responded David. "As you see I am all alone, and everything is strange to me."

"Yes, yes, of course. I was much surprised on seeing the notice in *The Times*; the truth was, it was believed that—that there was no relation, and that as a consequence everything would go into Chancery, or to charities. I was, therefore, delighted to know otherwise. I see you have just come from Cambridge. Did you know your—that is, your late uncle, well?"

"No, I never saw him."

"Ah!"

There was something very significant in the exclaima-

tion—something which did not please the young man. He felt like resenting his visitor's call, and he mentally protested against the cool way in which he spoke. The Colonel evidently noted the change in his face, for he rose as if preparing to depart.

"We shall hope to see you at Green Lawn, Mr. Baring," he said. "You may not know it, but I am one of your tenants."

"Indeed," replied David. "I know nothing about such matters at present. Everything has come upon me suddenly, and it will take me some time to acquaint myself with my duties."

"Of course, of course. The Muswells were my former landlords. A very unfortunate family—very."

"I am sorry."

"Yes, of course you—you will know nothing about their history?"

"No, nothing. I never heard of them until yesterday. Indeed, until a very few days ago I did not know of the existence of this place."

David was a very young man, and did not realise that the Colonel was devoured with curiosity concerning the new owner of Malpas Towers. Neither, of course, did he know that that gentleman had come very largely at the behest of his wife and daughter.

"You don't say so!" cried the Colonel. "How very romantic. Then the news came to you at the University?"

"Yes."

"Ah, indeed! Yes, well the Muswells were a fine family; but they were harassed with debt. And Roger Muswell, he—he went the pace, and got into the clutches of—that is, he got into the grip of a money-lender, and so—well, everything had to be sold."

"Indeed, and where are they now?"

"Oh, Roger is dead; it killed him. The son had a commission in the army, but he left his regiment. I hear he lives in London—by his wits. The daughter, as sweet a girl as ever lived—I don't know where she's gone."

"And are these the only members of the family?"

"Yes, that is, of that branch of it which lived here."



Mrs. Muswell died of a broken heart. Happy release ! But there, it seems the fate of these old families to die out. Strange, isn't it ? ”

“ It's very depressing,” said David politely.

“ Still, it's no use grieving, and it's very wrong of me to—to cloud your sky, so to speak. I am sure I congratulate you heartily, and I wish you much joy of your good fortune. No doubt you'll make Malpas Towers a scene of rejoicing ? ”

There was a tone of inquiry in his last remark which David did not answer.

“ You will find the people very neighbourly in the district,” continued the Colonel, “ very neighbourly. There's the Wilmouths, of Beechwood ; the Terrys, of Terry Hall ; the Bentleys, of Barwood ; besides what are called the lesser gentry. All are exceedingly kind, neighbourly people, who will, no doubt, call on you. I suppose none of them have called yet ? ”

“ No, you are my only visitor.”

“ Ah, I am very glad—very glad. I like to be the first to offer my congratulations to a fortunate man. Ah, my dear Mr. Baring, fortune smiles on you. You are young—you are, that is—you will have the county at your feet. Excuse a rough old soldier's freedom, but the people are *very* neighbourly.”

“ My uncle's funeral yesterday gave no evidence of it,” remarked David.

“ Ah, that was very sad—very sad ; but no one knew it was to take place yesterday. Many thought it would have been to-day. Still, we were all in ignorance. I hear it was your uncle's wish. I have no wish to say a word against him. No doubt he was, let us say, a man of great business merits ; but from a social standpoint he was quite impossible—quite impossible. I am very sorry, but it was so.”

David was silent. He knew no good of the man whose fortune he inherited ; nevertheless, he resented the Colonel's words.

“ Well, good-day ; we shall hope to see you at Green Lawn shortly,” concluded the Colonel, as he stepped into

his carriage. "You may be assured of a hearty welcome from my wife and daughters."

When he was gone David reflected that he had not received the Colonel's greetings with much heartiness. He had been civil and that was all. Still, he felt no warmth towards the man, and he was too unsophisticated to say what he did not mean.

"The young man is very handsome," remarked the Colonel to his wife and daughters when he arrived at Green Lawn. "He is, without doubt, a gentleman. But I can't make him out. He seems very much older than he looks, and I am sure he thinks more than he says. He's the kind of fellow from whom strange things may be expected."

"Is he anything like his uncle?" asked Laura Storm.

"Not the slightest—not the slightest. He is a quiet sort of fellow, and he has what the novelists call the speaking eye. He does not say much, but any one can see that he is one of those determined fellows who will stop at nothing when he makes up his mind."

"How horrid," said Emily Storm.

"Well, he's squire of Malpas," said the Colonel, "he's young, he's handsome, and he's a gentleman, and we must do our best to make him welcome in the district."

"Would it not be sweet of him to give a reception at the Towers, just to celebrate his advent there?" said Laura Storm.

"It would be very nice of him, no doubt," said the Colonel, "but we must wait a little. We must not judge him too soon."

During the next few days David Baring was very busy. He had several interviews with his solicitor, who became very communicative about everything except the character of his late uncle. He gave him full information concerning the source of his income. He owned several streets of houses in Whitechapel—houses which brought him a large rental. He owned a coal mine in Lancashire, and he had shares in a number of companies, all of which stood on a sound financial basis. These, added to the Malpas estate, made up a magnificent total, such as he had never dreamt of. Truly he was a rich man. When he asked Mr. Jay

how his uncle had amassed such a fortune, however, that gentleman became delightfully vague. He also received visits from the representatives of neighbouring families, all of whom welcomed him with great warmth, but immediately froze at the mention of his uncle. Either they knew nothing about him, or they thought it best to refrain from telling what they knew. Moreover, he could not tell why, but all his callers seemed to dwell in an atmosphere different from his own. They looked at things from a different standpoint—they lived in another world. During the time he had been at Cambridge he had belonged to the reading set; he had made but few acquaintances, and had not entered Society. For one thing he was too poor, and he constantly realised the fact that he had his own future to make unaided by any one, after his University course was ended. Perhaps this was the reason why there was a barrier between himself and the people who called on him.

“Upon my word,” thought David, as he reviewed the five days he had been at Malpas Towers, “I doubt if I’ve been any happier since I’ve been rich than I was before.”

Still, the strangeness of the situation interested him; he was constantly finding new treasures in the house, while the grounds were for ever revealing new beauties. On the fifth day after he came into possession he was delighted to receive a call from a man he knew at Cambridge—one who exercised considerable influence over his life.

“Langford,” he cried, “it is good of you to look me up. You are as welcome as the flowers in May.”

“Thank you, Baring,” replied the other, looking around him with an observant eye. “I saw an account of your new state of affairs in one of the papers, and thought I’d just give you a call.”

He was an uncommon-looking fellow, this Langford, and would be noted wherever he went. First of all, he was a giant in stature, and perfectly proportioned. David Baring, who stood six feet high, looked small beside him. Although quite a young man, being only about twenty-eight years of age, he wore a large beard, and allowed his hair to grow long. His clothes were cut after the most

unconventional pattern, their chief peculiarity being that they were made entirely on the principle of giving comfort. Richard Langford wore nothing that admitted of starch; he hated starch, he said, in whatever way it appeared. He lived an exceedingly simple life, and spent nothing on superfluities.

"Well, now that you've come, I hope you'll spend a few days with me," cried David. "I'm all alone in my glory, and have been longing for a fellow like you to come and see me."

"All right! Well, I suppose you'll do the correct thing and show me around."

"Certainly," said David. "We'll look at the grounds first, and then we'll go over the house."

Two hours later they entered the library, and sat down.

"Well, Baring," said Langford, "I suppose you think you are a lucky fellow."

"I suppose so; why?"

"Because I pity you."

"Pity me; why?"

"Oh, I pity any man who has come into a heritage of care, anxiety, worry."

"I suppose I must put up with that," replied the young man, looking across the brightly coloured flower garden.

"I am afraid you will," said Langford, "I am afraid you will. By the way, there are some fine books here. Have you read them?"

"No, I have had no time."

"And yet you were a hard student at Cambridge, and I remember you telling me that you intended doing a good deal of reading during the vacation."

"Yes, but just consider my position," cried David. "I have been simply overwhelmed since I came into all this. I have had neither time nor inclination."

"Just so," said Langford. "The cares of this world have kept you from good work. May I ask you when you intend taking that course of reading on modern jurisprudence in the light of the basic needs of humanity?"

"I am afraid it will have to be deferred. You see I have

come into everything suddenly, and there are so many things to understand."

"From what one can judge, then, your increase of riches will not enrich your intellectual life?"

"No—that is, not at present. By-and-by I hope to have more time."

"Of course, of course," responded the other with a laugh. "Could you tell me the percentage of rich men who are students?"

"I am afraid it is very small," replied David, like one musing. "But what are you driving at, old man?"

"Oh, I am simply expressing my feeling of pity for you. I suppose the people who have called on you regard you as a most fortunate man?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Well, I, on the other hand, regard you as one of the most unfortunate. I am afraid that I do not sufficiently thank the Almighty for His goodness, but one thing I do thank Him for, is, that He has not endangered my soul by giving me riches. Why, man, I tremble for you."

"Come, come, old chap."

"I do, Baring, upon my soul I do. I suppose you haven't read the New Testament since you became a modern Dives?"

"Not much, I'm afraid."

"'How hardly shall a rich man enter the Kingdom of Heaven,'" said Langford. "'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.' Besides, haven't you considered what an immoral life you have entered upon?"

"Immoral, Langford?"

"Immoral. Yes, grossly immoral. It's immoral for any one to become a part of a system which dwarfs his intellectual and moral life. And, look here, Baring, would you tell me by what right you live in this house?"

"Right? Yes, my uncle——"

"Your uncle left it to you. Of course, legally you are safe enough; but I am thinking of the right and wrong of it. What right have you, that is, morally speaking, to all this? What have you done for it? A week or so

ago you did not know that such a man as David Barton existed ; now you are the possessor of his savings. How he got it I don't know ; but from what you told me, he began life as a poor man, and so he must have made it out of the toil and moil of others. But that is not the question just now ; what right have you to it ? You never saw this land a week ago ; you did not even know of its existence. You never turned a shovelful of earth ; you never planted a flower—a blade of grass. And yet you come here to take the earnings of the farmers, the labourers, the toilers of many generations."

" True, but that is true of most landowners."

" Many blacks do not make a white. Because an immoral system is taken advantage of by others, it is no reason why you should take advantage of it. David, when you were at college a few rays of the light of God had penetrated your heart—the elements of honesty were within you. Now answer me : Do you believe before God that you have any right to all this ? "

" What would you have me do with it ? "

" That's not the question just now. By pure chance all this has fallen into your hands ; what moral right have you to it ? "

" From your standpoint, none at all, I suppose," answered the young man.

" Well, even that admission speaks well for you. How many servants did you say you had ? six or seven, wasn't it ? "

" It's a big house," said David, " and I suppose it is understaffed. But I don't think you understand, Langford, old man."

" I hope not ; but think again, David ; think of the terrible moral effect all this flunkeyism and adulation must have upon you. You told me that the representatives of all the leading families around here had called on you. Why did they do it ? Why didn't they call on you when you were poor ? Suppose you came here as a poor labourer, carpenter, journalist—anything—would they have called on you ? Not they. They came out of respect to your money, and not that they cared a fig for you. And do you

think, my boy, that if by any fluke of fortune you lost all this, they would pay their respects to you then? Would they call on you then? Not they; they would cut you dead."

"I expect they would," admitted David.

"Of course they would. And, besides, how miserable your life will be. You can never be sure that you have a friend who will care for you, for yourself. And you can never be sure, even if you marry, that your wife cares for David Baring."

"I say, Langford!"

"I repeat it, David; but, I say, you are not engaged, are you?"

"No," said David.

"Are you in love with any one?"

"I—I hardly know," replied David.

"But at Cambridge you were heart-whole."

"I am still, I suppose. That is, I hardly know—I don't mind telling you, Langford, because you are an old friend, but—but——"

"You have been struck by one of the Squires' daughters here, have you?"

"No, not that—but—but——"

"Come, old chap, I have the interest of an old friend."

"Well, I saw her at church on Sunday morning. Yes, come in."

A servant entered. "If you please, sir, there's a man at the door who wishes to see you."

"A man; what kind of a man?"

"He looks like a working man, sir."

"I'm busy, John—but did he state his business?"

"No, sir; he said he wanted to see you particular."

"Well, ask him to tell you his business, and then I shall know whether it is worth while my seeing him."

The man left, and the two friends were alone again.

"I am sorry we are interrupted, Langford," said David. "Of course, I've heard you say a great deal of this kind of thing before; let me see, what was I telling you?"

"You were telling me about a girl you saw at church on Sunday. I suppose you fell in love with her?"

"No, not that, but still——"

"Please, sir, the man said he worked under your uncle," said John, returning, "and he would like to speak to you about him."

"Show him in," said David. "Don't go, Dick; the business won't be private, I expect, and there's no need for you to leave."

A minute later, a brown-faced, shock-headed man, who looked as though he might be a superior mechanic, entered the room.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### A DREAM OF ARCADIA

"WHAT is your name, my man?" asked David Baring, as his visitor entered the room.

"George Jenkins," replied the man.

"And why do you wish to see me?"

"I'm from Whitechapel, I am, and—and—well, I was once a foreman for your uncle; that is, I take it that you are the one what is come into all the ole man's money—the nephew what was sent to college?"

"Well, what of that?"

"Only this: as I said, I was once foreman for David Barton, that is well-nigh twenty years ago. That was before he made the bulk of his money, that was; although he had a long stocking then, and he told me many a time that he just meant to rule the trade of Whitechapel. He never done that, but he made a mint of money, and he—he—well, I'll tell you presently, and then you'll see what you'll care to do."

The man spoke with but little hesitation, as though he were in the habit of expressing his views freely before working-men's clubs and the like. David examined his face more closely because something in the man's manner interested him. Both his nose and his lips betrayed a sensitiveness almost approaching refinement, while his eyes were bright and large and earnest.



"I shouldn't have come," he continued, "but I met a man yesterday who said he knowed you. He is a parson in Cambridge—not a Church parson but one of the better sort of them as preaches in chapels—Mr. Walters, you may remember."

"I've met Mr. Walters, and have just spoken to him, but that is all."

"I don't have much to do with parsons myself, but this is one of the better sort. A great scholar, too, I suppose, and might have a rich church if he would preach to please the big swells; but that isn't neither 'ere nor there. Well, it so 'appened that I was at a meetin' in London, and we was speakin' about old David Barton's money, and 'ow a young chap 'ad come into the whole lot. I was interested because I knowed old David, and Mr. Walters was interested because he said he'd met you, and he told me that you was a good, kind-'arted fellow, and 'eld reasonable views 'bout things. That's what made me make up my mind to come and see you. I thought you'd be willing to hear the truth."

David nodded. He was interested in the man; his earnestness impressed him, and he spoke as though he had something of importance to say.

"Say on," said the young man. "Tell me quickly what you have in your mind."

"Walters said you was a young fellow with a conscience," continued George Jenkins.

A cloud came over David's face.

"Mind you," said Jenkins, "I don't come beggin' nor nothin' of that sort, and what I tell you is God's truth."

"Well, tell me God's truth," said David, "and don't waste time in preamble."

"I will," answered Jenkins. "As I said, I was foreman for old David Barton when he lived at Whitechapel. He didn't live in a house like this then, I can tell you, but that don't matter. He had a big business as the people's clothier. He kept everything—men's clothes and women's clothes, and everything was readymade. He said he would beat the Jews of the East End on their own ground, and undersell any man in the neighbourhood. He did;

everything was dirt cheap—dirt cheap, that's what it was, and like all cheap things, it was made of the flesh, and skin, and bone, and blood of the men and women what worked for 'im."

A wild light shone in his eyes as he spoke, and he uttered each word with a terrible intensity.

"I won't tell you the prices he paid for dressmakin'," went on the man. "I won't tell you what he paid per dozen for makin' the shirts he sold, or how much the women got for makin' suits of cheap clothes; you wouldn't understand, you wouldn't; nobody can understand till they see these things for theirselves."

"Well, what has this got to do with me?" asked David.

"I thought you might think it 'ad, seein' you are reported to have a conscience," replied the man, "but I'll go on with my story. I was foreman, I was, I gave out the work, I paid the women and the men, I knowed the work they 'ad to do, and I knowed 'ow they lived. I knowed, too, what David Barton was makin', and I was a man with a little feelin'. You see, I knowed the people that worked twelve, fourteen, fifteen 'ours a day, for about as many pence; I could see their blood drying up, bit by bit; I could see the life leavin' 'em, little by little, and I 'ad to hear their stories, and—and, well, other people may get used to it, but I couldn't stand it. I went to David Barton, and I asked him to pay a bit better price; but would he? Not he; he'd got to feel the grip of it all, and he said that I was a fool.

"I stood it as long as I could, but presently I couldn't stand it no longer, and 'avin' saved up a few pounds—'avin' a savin' wife and no children—I took a shop myself, and put all my little capital into it, makin' up my mind that I would try and give the poor critters what worked for me a living wage. David Barton didn't forgive me for leavin' 'im, and so he took two shops close beside me, and he undersold me, crippled me, and I lost my every penny, and what is more, I was left in debt. Anybody as knows what business is will understand me. The blow was 'ard enough for me, but it killed my wife—killed 'er.

“ Since then I ain’t a-bin the same man myself—sometimes my feelin’s get too much for me. But, mind, I don’t ask nothing from you—not a penny. I have paid every penny I owe, and I can still earn enough to keep body and soul together. But when I see in the paper that David Barton had left everything to his nephew, and when Mr. Walters told me that the nephew ’ad a conscience, a sort of voice, or feelin’, or influence come to me, and said, ‘ go and tell ’im yore story, George Jenkins,’ and I just come.”

“ The man is mad,” thought David, “ mad ! ” And yet his words impressed him strangely.

“ What do you expect me to do ? ” he asked, looking into the wild eyes of Jenkins.

“ I don’t know, but I’ve just told you—oh, only a little. David Barton got richer and richer. He became a money-lender and a brewer ; he bought lots of public-houses, and everything brought him money, money ! But I ain’t goin’ to enter into that. I’ve just told you my story, and I feel better now, for Mr. Walters said as ’ow you’ve got a conscience. Well, I’ve kept you long enough, and I’ll go. If ever you want to see me again that address will find me,” and he gave David an envelope, which had evidently come through the post.

“ The man is certainly crazy,” said David to Langford when Jenkins had gone.

Langford laughed as though some one had related an amusing joke, but he made no other answer to his friend’s remark.

“ Such a fellow makes one feel uncomfortable,” continued Baring presently. “ One does not like to think that one’s money is associated with the suffering and poverty of others.”

“ Most money is,” said Langford. “ When one gets down to the bed-rock of property, it all rests on the toil and sweat of the men and women who work with their hands. Just consider a moment : The great sources of income in this or any other country are the fruits of the soil, and the commodities which lie under the soil. On the one hand you have food, cotton, wool, and so forth,

and on the other, you have minerals of various sorts. Well, all these have to be obtained by means of manual labour. Then, when you come to the manufacture of nature's products, the same truth obtains. It is all labour, my friend—all labour. And the labourer is the worst paid individual under heaven."

"I won't talk with you about it," replied Baring with a laugh. "I am not in the humour just now; besides, you are a specialist on the question, and I am not. What is the use?"

"Just as you please, my dear fellow," laughed the other, "just as you please. Well, let us go back to that love affair of yours. Who is she?"

"Oh, I don't think I am in love, only—well, I was rather struck on Sunday."

"Just so; well, who is she?"

"She is the daughter of a neighbouring squire—a Miss Brentwood."

"Wealthy?"

"No, I believe not. I believe her father is straitened for money. There is a large family, too."

"Just so. Good-looking—well educated?"

"Oh yes, she is very pretty, very. As for education, I hardly know. I have only just met her. I imagine, however, that she will have had the ordinary education of a young English lady."

"That is, she can read novels, strum on a piano, paint atrociously, and murder two modern languages."

"You are revealing a new trait in your character, Langford. You were never noted for being satirical."

"Well, I'm not satirical, but I—now look here, Baring; will you promise me something?"

"I don't know. I will if I can."

"Good. Well, I will assume that you are going to propose to this girl."

"I—I don't know. I don't think I'm quite so far gone as that."

"Well, if you do, I want you to promise me something."

"Go on."

"Test her love before you take the final step."

“What do you mean?”

“Just this. Make sure that she loves you. You see you are heir to all this wealth, and as a consequence you will be regarded as a good catch. Money will buy anything, including love, or the promise of it. Your great difficulty, when you are married, will be to know whether the girl marries you for yourself, or for your money.”

“Nonsense!”

“You know it is so, Baring; and there is no more pitiable thing outside the bottomless pit than a woman who is bought. Of course, the affair may be made respectable by the blessing of the parson, but, as you know, marriage without love is not marriage.”

“Well, go on.”

“If you discovered after you were bound for life that the girl you married cared not for David Baring, but for Malpas Towers, and all that is associated with it, you would live in hell. You would, David. I know your sensitive nature, and when the glamour of your new experience is gone you will feel it more keenly than you do now. I tell you, my lad, you will be regarded as the legitimate victim of half the marriageable girls for miles around.”

“Come to the point, Langford.”

“I thought I had. All I say is, test the girl’s love.”

“But how?”

“How? That’s for you to decide. You are not a fool. Use the sense that your prosperity leaves you, and be certain about the matter. Will you promise me that?”

“I don’t believe in your suspicions, or in your low estimate of life, Langford.”

“Therefore you are safe in promising me.”

“Well, I promise.”

“That’s good. I would ask you to apply the same test to all your new friends; but I am afraid it would be too much for you. As I said just now, before that man came here, my belief is that all this adulation which you are receiving just now is the direct outcome, not of the people’s respect for you, but of their worship of your position. If David Baring were a clerk going to an office in the city every day, and working for three pounds a week, well,

none of these people would take the trouble to speak to this same David Baring. Now, friendship is a sacred thing. For my own part, I wish for no man as my friend who does not care for me for myself—Dick Langford.”

“Just so.”

“Well, you are a good fellow, David. As yet the canker of wealth has not eaten far into your soul. At Cambridge you had a few friends who liked you for yourself, and were glad of your society because they really cared for you. Now, as you know, all is different, and so, if I were you, I would just test these new-found acquaintances of yours. You remember Polonius’ advice to Laertes. No doubt Shakespeare looked upon Polonius as a weak old fool, who went around spouting moral platitudes, but he made him say some wise things to his son.

“The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel;  
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment  
Of each new-hatched unfledged comrade.

Pardon me for quoting poetry, old man. I know it is bad form, but I am thinking of your good.”

“Well, to please you, I’ll promise to test my friends as well—there, now. You see what respect I have for your opinion. But that is enough about me; what are you going to do, Langford? What are your plans for the future? What are you going to do with your life?”

“I am going to try and make the most of it, David.”

“But how? You are not rich; and besides, if you were, I have heard you say that it is a sin for any man to be a parasite on society.”

“Yes, I hold to that.”

“Well, then, I assume you will do something. What profession are you going to adopt?”

“As you understand it, none at all.”

“No; why?”

“Because I do not believe in the professions.”

“Not that of a doctor, or a parson, for instance?”

“Both are noble professions, my boy, if the question of money did not come in. To give one’s life to the cure of

bodily disease and pain is a noble thing, second only to that of giving one's life to trying to cure diseases of the soul, and leading men to live nobler lives. But directly money comes in—directly professionalism comes in—then—well, it becomes a mere trade ; it means lowering the standard of one's life."

"Then what will you do—go into business ?"

"That is worse still. That would mean a continuous struggle to get the better of somebody else. It would mean spending one's energies on the poorer things of life. Life is for the development of one's best self."

"But one must live."

"Yes, one must live ; at least, there seems a prejudice in favour of living, but the question is how ?"

"Well, what are you going to do ?"

Langford was silent for a few seconds. He seemed to be thinking deeply. Then he rose to his feet, and walked around the room.

"I have come to the conclusion that the system of which we form a part, is utterly immoral," he said presently. "This testing of things by worldly success—this race for wealth—is sapping the best life of the nation."

"So I've heard you say at Cambridge ; but what are you going to do ? It is easy to call names, easy to find fault with the existing state of things. But the fact is we are born into them, and our civilisation is the outgrowth of hundreds of years of struggle. We are what the forces surrounding our existence have made us, and as far as one can see we are utterly dependent upon a huge system over which we have little or no control."

"True in a sense, David, perfectly true. Still, for all that, a man has some little individuality."

"You have, certainly. Well, what are you going to do ?"

"I have made up my mind to live a natural life."

"It sounds well ; but how ?"

"I am also determined to live among men and women who have spirits akin to my own."

"Very fine, my friend, very fine ; but again I ask how ?"

"You will, of course, think me mad. Perhaps I am, I hope I am in the true sense of the word; because every man who has ever done anything in life has been mad, from the worldling's standpoint. Buddha, John the Baptist, Paul, Savonarola, Luther, Wesley—the whole lot of them have been called mad. This is what I am going to do, David. I am going to leave so-called civilisation, and I am going to join a few friends of mine who have ideas and tastes similar to my own, and live on the products of the land that we shall dig and plant for ourselves."

"Whew!"

"Yes, of course you say that, but I shall be doing right; I am going to live a natural life. I am going to be untrammelled by conventions. I am going to be freed from the 'narrowing lust for gold,' as Tennyson calls it, and I shall endeavour to live a healthy, simple life, away from the quarrellings and bickerings of men, and away from the continuous grind for the poor and the sordid."

"Tell us about it, Langford," cried Baring, who had become strangely interested in what his friend was saying.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A DREAM OF LOVE

"THERE is but little to tell," said Langford; "very little indeed. You know my thoughts; you've heard me express them at Cambridge scores of times. I took a good degree, as you know, and have qualified for the medical profession besides, but when I came to think how I should spend my life—well, I was unable to decide. I studied the methods and requirements of most of the trades and professions, and—well, I could not adopt any of them. I simply couldn't. Presently, I heard that a fellow whom I had known years before, and had lost sight of, was living such a life as I desired down in Cornwall, on the south coast, not far from Falmouth. He owned a small farm there, and he determined that he would live as far as possible on the farm products. He told a few others of his



intentions, with the result that during the last few months a colony has grown up on his farm."

"A colony; what do you mean?"

"Oh, about thirty men and women, who desire to live as they believe God would have them live, have been drawn together. The soil is rich and the climate is warm. They have but few wants, and they live as brothers and sisters. Each serves the other and tries to cultivate the higher life. Food is but a subsidiary thing; it is regarded simply as a necessity of existence, and thus men and women have leisure to think of nobler things. There is no master, no servant—all are equal. Every one is estimated at his true worth; money and social position are not thought of. There is congenial society, and the life is simple, healthy, and pure."

"A kind of Socialistic community?"

"Oh, no; not as Socialism is understood. The question of property, of possession, never enters into their consideration. Socialism is a movement to make property equal; in this colony it is not considered."

"And what is the purpose of it?"

"It is to show that life is more than raiment; it is to make men realise that the true life is not an eternal struggle after place and position, but just to live as brothers. It is to lead men to see that if we would be happy we must be free from sordid cares. And the hope is, that it will be a little leaven, that, like the kingdom of heaven, will in time leaven the whole lump of society."

"But give us some details of the life there."

"I cannot. I know nothing about them."

"Then you are going on trust?"

"Absolutely; that is, except just what I have told you."

"And how do you know so much?"

"It was told me by the man I mentioned just now. I met him some time ago, and he told me what I have just related to you. It is the idea of the thing which charmed me, or perhaps I ought to have said 'the ideal,' and that is all."

Both men were silent for some time.

"When do you go?" asked David Baring presently.

"I start to-morrow morning," was the reply.

"No, no, Langford," cried Baring. "You must stay a few days with me here."

"Thank you, David; but I have arranged to commence my journey to-morrow. It will take me a week to get there, anyhow."

"A week?"

"Yes, I am going to walk."

"I say, Langford."

"Why not? The weather is glorious. I am young, healthy, and strong. Of course, if some one feels disposed to give me a lift on the road, well and good: otherwise, I shall walk the whole distance."

"But why walk at all?"

"Because it is pleasanter, healthier, and—well, I shall not be participating in the abominable system of money-giving, and money-taking. In short, I am going to adopt nature's method."

David felt like laughing, but when he looked at Langford's face the laugh died on his lips. His friend might be a dreamer—an idealist—but there was nothing in his presence to call forth laughter.

"Have you heard anything about the rules and customs of your new mode of life?" asked Baring presently.

"There are no rules."

"No rules?"

"No. Every one does as he likes."

"But, suppose some one behaves like a villain?"

"Oh, then every effort is put forth to make him ashamed of himself."

"How can that be done?"

"Just by being kind to him, and showing him, by a pure life, the right way of living."

"Then he would not be punished in any way?"

"Punished! Of course not. Whenever did punishment do good?"

"Then—does your community set up as reformers?"

"We shall set up for nothing at all. We do not believe in the existing modes of living. We do not believe in property. We do not believe in charity. We do not believe

in labouring for reward. Neither do we believe in force of any sort, save the force of loving service. But we do believe in living a simple, natural, healthy life, free from all the worries and cares of money-making. We are being drawn together, not by any expectation of gain, but by affinity of ideas. We believe that if ever the world is to be really saved, it will be saved by the practical exposition of ideas. Hence there will be no preaching, but there will be living—and, well, I think that is all. Baring, will you give me a bed? I believe I feel sleepy.”

When Langford had retired, David Baring sat up a long time, thinking of what had been said. At all events there was some novelty about his friend's ideas, and as a consequence they charmed him. But the more he thought about them the more impracticable did they seem.

“I suppose it is just another fad,” he said presently. “I have always had an idea that I possess fairly liberal opinions, but all this is madness—pure madness. Well, I'll go to bed too.”

The next morning Langford left him, and he was again left alone in the great house. The novelty of his position had not yet passed away, and he continued to roam around his lands, noting again and again with satisfaction the beauties of hill and dale, of woodland and of meadow—all of which he could call his own.

During the next few months his life was a constant round of pleasure. Every house for miles around was thrown open to him. He was invited to every kind of function, and being young and free from care, he was able to enjoy himself to the full. He had more money than he wished to spend, he had as many friends as he desired. On every hand he was fêted and flattered. Bright eyes became brighter when he approached, warm words of welcome were always sounding in his ears. Mothers arranged to leave their daughters in his society, fathers flattered him on his management of his estate; young men voted him a jolly good fellow, although a trifle slow; young women bestowed their brightest smiles upon him.

If he was not spoiled it was not the fault of his neighbours. He was made the lion of every gathering, and he

was made to feel in a thousand ways that no assembly was complete without him.

And yet he did not quite lose his head. He did not do anything foolish. He left the whole of his business arrangements with his lawyer, and so did not make foolish investments; he did not gamble; he did not indulge in excesses. Perhaps this was owing to the fact of his former mode of life, or it might be the result of the substratum of seriousness in his nature.

But more than this, he had not become entangled by any matrimonial engagement; he had spent a great deal of time in the society of young women, but he had entered into no serious flirtation. And yet he was not quite heart-whole. Perhaps it would be wrong to say that he was in love, but he fancied himself in love with Miss Nora Brentwood, the girl whose name he had mentioned to his friend, Dick Langford. Indeed, the fancy which had entered his mind during the first week of his stay at Malpas Towers had continued to become stronger during his sojourn in Surrey, until he had come to believe that she was essential to his life's happiness.

Thus it came about that, the February after he had entered into his property, he had made up his mind to offer her his hand. The truth was, his continuous round of festivities was beginning to pall on him, and he began to long for something of the quietness of his former life. He wanted thoughtful companionship, too. It was true he could choose his friends, but he felt that the young men among whom he was cast breathed an atmosphere different from his own. They had been trained in a different school of thought, and he often felt that they had no common standing ground.

He had practically forgotten his promise to Langford, and even if he thought of it, there seemed no reason why he should seek to fulfil it. The truth was, while he had made many acquaintances he had made no friends. He had no one to whom he could unburden his soul, and tell the dearest desires of his heart.

He thought of all these things as he sat alone one morning in February. He was suffering a slight reaction after a

continuous round of winter festivities, and he felt chilled, and somewhat discontented. There seemed no reason why this should be so. Malpas Towers was still beautiful. As he looked out from the library window he saw a picture almost as beautiful as that which met his gaze when he first visited it in company with Mr. Jay. It is true the flowers were not blooming, nor were the trees covered with foliage. On the other hand, however, the ground was covered with hoar frost, and the ice crystals which hung on the trees shone brightly in the light of the winter's sun. No man could desire a more beautiful prospect, and yet he was not content.

"Yes, that is it," he mused. "I will get married. At any rate, I will ask her to share my name and home. She will drive away all loneliness; she will make this old place appear in a new light," and as he sat back in his chair he pictured Nora Brentwood as he had seen her last.

Presently he rose from his chair, took a photograph from the mantelpiece, and looked at it steadily, while a smile wreathed his lips, and a bright light shone in his eyes.

Doubtless it was a handsome face which he saw portrayed. It could not be called beautiful, but it was handsome. It was the face of a girl about twenty-three years of age. She had great languishing eyes, and the features were cast in a rather large mould. The chin was rather square and determined for a girl of twenty-three, while the lips were a trifle thick and somewhat sensuous. But these things were not suggestive of blemish to the young man—rather, they fascinated him. Besides, the crown of wavy black hair was arranged in a way which showed to the best advantage the striking qualities of the face.

There was nothing diminutive about Nora Brentwood. Rather, she was tall, and more than ordinarily developed; indeed, she was usually described as "a very fine young woman."

David looked at the picture a long time, and presently laid it down with a sigh.

"She is a very handsome girl," he thought; "quite the belle of the county—black hair and eyes, brilliant complexion. She is a good dancer; she skates well, rides well,

walks well. She looks well under every circumstance. She plays fairly, sings—well, a little; can talk well, and belongs to an old family. Yes, I'll ask her." And then he sighed again.

"She is not the girl I dreamed of as a boy," he thought, "but what of that? One's youthful dreams are never altogether realised, and there's no doubt about it, I am very fond of her. I wonder whether she cares for me."

He called to mind the words she had said to him, the looks she had given him; and then he smiled.

He looked at his watch. The hands pointed to eleven. He put on his hat, and strode down the drive.

"She said she was going to skate on my lake this morning," he said, with heightened colour. "If she is alone I'll ask her this very day."

The air was very cold, although not a breath of wind stirred. It was freezing hard, even in the sun; but it was invigorating weather, and David felt a healthy flow of blood through his veins.

"I wonder how old Langford is getting on," he thought presently. "Poor old Langford! He's a good sort, although he is an idealist and a dreamer. My word! though, didn't he talk to me that night. He made me promise that before I engaged myself to any one I should——"

He stopped suddenly, and presently went on more soberly.

He had not gone far when he heard the sound of skates, and the pleasant murmur of voices, and soon a dozen forms skimming over the ice were revealed to his view.

"You see we have taken advantage of your invitation, Mr. Baring," said some young men and women as he came up.

He made a laughing reply, then he cast his eyes over the lake. Yes, there she was, skating alone. There could be no doubt about it, she was a very handsome girl. Her closely-fitting garments revealed her well-developed figure to perfection, and her movements were perfectly graceful.

"Are you not going to skate, Mr. Baring?" she asked, as he came up.

"No, I would rather walk in the woods if you will come with me," he said. "Will you?"

"I am afraid I should disturb your thoughts," she answered. "You look very serious this morning."

"Rather, you will help me; besides, I want to ask you something—something of very great importance to me."

"You frighten me," said the girl, with heightened colour. "What in the world can you wish to say to me? Still, I suppose I must come, only you must unfasten my skates."

He took the skates from her well-fitting boots, and threw them against the root of a tree, and the two walked away together. They were, doubtless, a fine-looking couple. David Baring was a handsome fellow, standing six feet high, and Nora Brentwood looked very little shorter.

"And now, what does your royal highness wish to say to me?" she asked, while her eyes flashed dangerously.

They had reached the woods, and were quite alone. Above them the tall trees towered, their branches laden with rimy frost, while all around a great silence reigned.

David turned and looked at the girl, and noted the brightness of her eyes, the brilliancy of her complexion. Yes, she would make a splendid mistress for Malpas Towers, and yet the young man hesitated.

"Will you take my arm?" he said presently.

She took his arm, and her touch made the blood tingle through his veins. Yes, he felt sure that he loved her, and yet he knew not how to broach the subject that was in his mind.

"Do you care for me?" he asked at length.

"What?" asked the girl.

"Do you care for me?" he repeated, awkwardly; "that is, do you really care for me very much?"

She chose to take his words as a joke, for she laughed merrily. "I told you you looked very solemn," she said. "Why, you almost frighten me. Don't I look frightened?"

"No," said David, "you don't look frightened. It is I who am frightened. I want to tell you something; may I?"

"What is it; something terrible?" she asked, and she looked at him stealthily.

"Perhaps it is for me," he said. "It may be terrible—very terrible. It all depends on the answer you give. I love you very much—very much. Will you make me happy?"

"I make you happy?" and her great languishing eyes rested on him.

"Yes. Will you, can you?"

"I will if—if you think I can," she said. It was rather prettily spoken, but somehow, David could not tell why, the words did not bring warmth to his heart. Perhaps it was because at that moment he remembered Langford's words. Still, he spoke excitedly.

"Then—then you love me, Nora?" he said. "Do you, really?"

"Should I have said what I have said, if I didn't—David?" she replied coyly.

No one was near. No sound was heard save the chirp of a blackbird. If he had kissed her no one would have seen, and perhaps she expected some such expression of his affection, but he walked quietly on without speaking.

"What is it, David?" asked the girl. "Is there any other terrible thing you have to say to me?"

Unwittingly she had enabled him to say what Langford had put in his mind months before. He had carelessly promised to test her love before the final step was taken. He was almost afraid it had been taken, but her words enabled him to keep his promise to his friend. He would test Nora Brentwood's love for himself.

## CHAPTER NINE

### PLUTO

FOR a few minutes they walked together in silence, David wondering how best to put his thoughts into words, the girl looking furtively at him, as though expecting some demonstration of his affection. She had not been at all surprised



at his confession—she had noticed for a long time his evident preference for her society. Her mother had noticed it, too, and had told her daughter that she was a lucky girl.

“He’s the finest catch in the county,” Mrs. Brentwood had assured her daughter, “while Malpas Towers is delightful. Of course, up to a few months ago he was a mere nobody, but in spite of his lack of polish, he is a gentleman. On the whole you couldn’t expect to do better, my dear.”

Still, as she walked by his side after his confession, she could not help feeling disappointed. He did not speak as warmly as she expected, neither did he accord with her ideas of how a lover should act. Nevertheless, he had told her that he loved her, and she had responded as warmly as she thought wise. And so, although she was not quite content, she had no fears for the future, and she pictured the sensation that would be created when it went forth that she would be mistress of Malpas Towers. She was very ambitious, and before David spoke again, her mind had flown to a house in the neighbourhood of Park Lane or Berkeley Square, where she hoped she would have the title of Lady Baring.

“I have something more to say,” said David presently, “but whether you’ll think it terrible or not I don’t know.”

“It’s nothing about your health, is it?” she said tenderly. She knew he looked well and strong, but the question seemed appropriate.

“Oh, no, I’m all right,” cried David. “Are you sure you love me, Nora? Really quite sure?”

“Oh, you silly boy, of course I am. Should I have told you what I have else? I am afraid *you* don’t love *me*.”

“Don’t love you! How can you say so?”

“Because you are cold, and—and you frighten me.”

There was a tremor in her voice, and David thought he saw that her eyes were tear-dimmed. For a moment he almost decided to cast aside Langford’s advice as worthless. Of course, the handsome girl by his side loved him, and he longed to take her in his arms and kiss her. Had he done this, I doubt whether I should have ever thought of writing this history, for the simple reason that there would have been nothing of importance to write about.

Anyhow, the man's life would have been altogether different. But at that moment he remembered the experience of his friend Cyril Penrith.

"I am so glad you love me," he said tenderly, "for I love you very much, and I need some one to cheer me—to comfort me."

"And do you think I can do this?"

"Of course you can. And could you love me if I were a poor man?"

"Of course I could. Whatever makes you ask such a foolish question?"

"Because—because, well, I may soon be a poor man."

"Whatever do you mean?" The girl's voice had hardened, and there was a frightened look in her eyes.

David saw this, and hesitated before replying. He felt that he must carry his project through now, and he wondered what he could say in order to convey the thought in his mind without telling a falsehood.

"It is possible I may be called upon to give up my wealth," he said evasively.

"How? Why?" asked the girl. "Is there any doubt about your uncle's will?"

"I've always had my doubts about it," replied David, with perfect truthfulness, "and, as you know, there seems nothing more unstable than money. Of course, I don't suppose I shall become absolutely penniless, but—there, you'll not mind, will you, Nora? You love me—rich or poor?"

"David, you don't mean this?" she asked; "you are joking with me?"

"No," said David, "I am not joking." Again he spoke with perfect truthfulness, for the look on her face had made him very serious.

"Do you mean to say," she asked, "that you may be called upon to leave Malpas Towers, and—and——"

"Yes, that may come to pass," he said quietly.

A cold feeling had crept into his heart. He scarcely knew why, but somehow the girl was different.

"But you will stand by me, won't you, Nora? Poverty

and riches make no difference to our love, do they? We can have the future together, can't we?"

Nora Brentwood made no reply. She walked quietly by the young man's side, with a far-off look in her eyes. But the languishing expression had gone. She was twenty-three years of age, and old for her years. She was not one who would be accused of doing what the world calls foolish things. She was very sensible, and very business-like in all her arrangements.

"Of course, all this is very hard for me to say," he went on, "very hard indeed. But I felt it my duty to say—what I have said. All the same, I love you for yourself, and you, Nora, you love me, don't you?"

He looked into the girl's face, and watched the changing expression in her eyes. He saw doubt, anger, indecision, and wonder, all portrayed.

Presently she broke into a loud laugh. There was neither mirth nor music in it, but it sounded like the laugh of a woman who had made up her mind.

"How serious we have been in our fooling, Mr. Baring!" she said. "We have been sentimental, heroic, confidential, and almost affectionate. We have almost come to a flirtation. Now let us have done with it, and get back to the skates again."

"But I am serious," said David. "This conversation is of the greatest importance to me. Surely, you do not regard it as a joke?"

"Of course I do," she replied.

"But I love you," he cried. "Can you not love a poor man?"

"Of course I can," she replied lightly. "Riches and poverty make no difference to me. Only—well, it so happens that I have never realised *une grande passion*. But, really, I think we are both delightful actors, Mr. Baring. It is a pity we hadn't an audience. Really, it was splendid while it lasted, and has given me an appetite for more skating. Will you take me back to the lake?"

David walked back by her side, whilst Nora Brentwood talked gaily, and no casual passer-by would ever have

imagined that she had just experienced the greatest disappointment of her life. When David had left the lake, however, and returned to the house, all her gaiety vanished. Leaving the skaters, she took an unfrequented path to her home, her eyes shining all the time with anger.

"I think I have done right," she said presently. "I have done the only thing possible under the circumstances. Who would have dreamt of such a state of things! Really, I have been very nearly making a fool of myself. The man ought to be exposed as an impostor. I almost wish I had found out more, for, really, we ought to know in what light we are to treat him. If what he said is true, he may at any time have to leave Malpas Towers, as a kind of penniless adventurer. I must tell my father and mother at once. I feel as though I have been on the brink of an awful precipice, and have just been saved from falling over. Of course, he is a very nice fellow, and I could have been very fond of him, but—but——" She did not conclude the sentence which had formed itself in her mind, for at that moment she reached the highroad, and her attention was diverted by the passing traffic.

As for David Baring, he sat in the old library—staring into the fire like one demented. When lunch time came, he simply went through the form of partaking of the meal, leaving almost every dish untouched. Immediately it was over he returned to the room again, as though he desired to shut himself away from all society. The truth was, the young man was hurt more than he cared to confess. His love for Nora Brentwood was not very deep, but he was sincerely fond of her. Had he been really in love he would have scorned Langford's suggestion to test her affection. As it was, he felt like accusing himself of doing a mean thing. Nevertheless, the result of his experiment staggered him. The girl had confessed her love for him; she had practically accepted him as her husband. And then, when he had told her of possible poverty, she had treated the whole question as a huge joke. The meaning of all this was evident. The girl had gauged the whole situation, and had adopted a course of action which allowed her to escape from an awkward position quite easily.

“Langford was right,” said David at length—“wholly right. It is not me they care about—it is my wealth, my position. I have been welcomed into their circle because I have been regarded as the owner of Malpas Towers.”

He had thought of this before, but he had never realised its meaning—he had never felt its full force. Now it hardened and embittered him; perhaps he attached an exaggerated importance to it, but the fact stood before him, bare and ghastly.

“It means that I can never be sure of my friends,” he thought; “never be sure of a woman’s love—never be sure of anything. It’s not me that the people want, it’s my money.”

As Langford had said, he was sensitive, and felt things keenly; thus, his experience that day had inflicted a wound in his heart. Later, when he was better able to analyse his feelings, he discovered that his disappointment was great, not so much because he had lost Nora Brentwood as because his estimate of womanhood was lowered. A great sadness possessed him, the sadness which comes to every man when his ideals are shattered, and his trustfulness in men and women lessened.

As the afternoon wore away he became unutterably lonely. He had no desire to call at any of the houses in the district, and there was no one with whom he could spend a pleasant hour.

“I doubt whether I am as happy as I was when I was poor,” he thought. “I had more congenial society. I had my dreams of carving out a position for myself, and my hopes of winning some pure true girl who would love me for myself alone.”

He opened a box of cigars and began to smoke. The fragrant weed had a soothing effect upon him, and he felt less bitter.

“I expect she will tell her father and mother of what has passed between us,” he thought presently, “and it will doubtless be mentioned by some one that my position is shaky. Brentwood will be sure to tell Colonel Storm that there is some doubt about my good fortune, and then it will be the talk of the countryside. Well, I shall con-

tradict nothing. It will be amusing to see the effect it will have."

The young man laughed, for the idea pleased him. There was some novelty in his being regarded as a poor man.

The next day he went to Chancery Lane, and had a long chat with Mr. Jay. At first that gentleman did not seem to understand his client, but presently he caught his humour, and laughed quietly as he rubbed his smoothly-shaven chin.

"I wonder what has led him to think of such a thing," thought Mr. Jay when he had gone. "But doubtless he's right. People in these days judge every man by his money, and on the whole I am inclined to think they are right."

A few days later Mr. Jay paid a visit to Malpas Towers. His eyes twinkled with quiet humour, and the corners of his mouth were puckered by a smile.

"I have had some correspondence which I thought might interest you," he said to David, "and so, not being very busy this afternoon, I thought I would run down."

"I got your telegram, and was delighted to see that you intended coming," said David. "It is very cold; come in and have a cigar."

"Not before dinner, thank you," said the lawyer. "I am an old-fashioned man, Mr. Baring, and have a few old-fashioned rules. One of them is never to smoke before dinner. Afterwards I can enjoy two or three cigars as well as any man."

"I have ordered dinner early," replied the young man. "It is a bitterly cold afternoon, and I thought you might be able to spend the night here."

"I shall be very pleased," said Mr. Jay, "very pleased. You see, I am a bachelor, and have no wife to consult. Ah, there is the dinner bell."

"And now about this correspondence," said David, as after dinner the two men sat before a cosy fire, and lit their cigars.

"Oh, it is what might have been expected," remarked Mr. Jay. "Neither is it of great importance; still, I thought it would interest you."

He passed a letter to the young man, and then, sitting back in a huge armchair, watched his face as he read.

"Not badly put, eh?" said the lawyer presently.

David read the letter again before replying.

"I did not think Colonel Storm could have concocted it," was David's reply.

"I doubt if he did. I should imagine that it is a joint-stock affair. You see, they have used a very ingenious means of finding out whether you will have to leave all this."

"Exactly. Well, have you written?"

"Oh, yes, I have written. I have not posted it yet, as I wanted your opinion," and he passed the young man another document.

"Splendid," said David. "It says a great deal and it says nothing."

"I am glad you like it. You see, I have gently hinted that they should treat you as though you were a poor man."

"Exactly, exactly." The young man's eyes sparkled. He was experiencing a new sensation, and in spite of his disappointments the sensation was pleasant.

When the lawyer had gone to bed that night he reviewed the whole situation; he called to mind all his experiences since he had become rich; he lived over again his last meeting with Nora Brentwood. Evidently he was not pleased; his memories made him angry, discontented.

"Everywhere, everywhere, it has been a matter of money," he cried. "I have been invited to open bazaars, preside over meetings, lay corner-stones of churches, and I have had all sorts of attention paid to me, simply because of the belief that I had money. All these people have claimed friendship for the same reason, and, worse than all, Nora Brentwood smiled on me just because she wanted to be mistress here. I am nobody; money is everything."

His eyes flashed angrily, and then he sighed as if utterly weary.

"It is lonely," he thought, "utterly lonely, and whatever else my money has done, it has made me doubtful of people's motives. If I remain here as a rich man, I can never be sure that any one cares for me—that is, for my-

self. I shall never trust a woman again. If I had not seen it for myself I could never have believed that Nora would have acted so. I thought she really cared for me, independent of all else. And now, with all my money, I can never be sure that the wife I may wed would have chosen me had I been a poor man."

He wandered around the room, with his eyes bent on the ground.

"I know what I'll do," he cried at length. "I'll wait and see what effect this letter of Mr. Jay's has upon the people. If they alter in their behaviour towards me—if I become certain that they have been kind to me simply because I am rich—I will allow their suspicion to be confirmed. I will see to it that if ever a woman loves me it shall be for myself, and not for my belongings. It can be done right enough ; but how ?"

The young man lit another cigar, and sat a long time before the fire considering plan after plan, and presently, when he went to bed, his mind appeared to be made up.

## CHAPTER TEN

### A FLOWER IN THE WILDERNESS

DAVID BARING stood in one of the great thoroughfares which lead through the East End of London. It was the first time he had ever visited that part of the city, and it came to him as a revelation. Here was a world of which he knew next to nothing, here were men and women living lives that were utterly strange. He had just come from Malpas Towers, and the difference between the quiet beauty of the Surrey country side and the sights and sounds of Whitechapel somewhat staggered him.

For two or three hours he walked amidst the grimy streets. He visited not only the main roads, but the scores of side alleys which lay at the back of them.

"It's an experience," said the young man to himself again and again. "Well, I am here now, and here I mean to stay a few days. Let them think what they will in



Surrey, I am going to live for a time in the place where my uncle spent most of his life."

For some time he seemed utterly dazed. He spoke to no one, and although many turned to have a second look at the well-dressed, well-built young fellow as he passed among them, he appeared to pay them no attention.

Presently he saw a long run of shops, which had evidently been many years before a row of dwelling-houses. Over the door he saw the words "DAVID BARTON," painted in large letters. He drew near and examined the articles shown in the windows. He was surprised at the low prices of everything exposed for sale. What seemed, to his inexperienced eyes, good and serviceable garments, were offered for a few pence, so that a working man, with anything like a fair wage, would be able to buy them with ease.

"This, I expect," thought the young man, "is one of my uncle's old shops. Evidently they are keeping his name. Well, surely a cheap shop like this must be a great blessing to such a neighbourhood."

David Baring had come to Whitechapel because he was utterly lonely at Malpas Towers. His episode with Nora Brentwood had influenced him more than he had imagined. He might not have been very deeply in love with her, but he to an extent idealised her. He imagined that she really cared for him; he had no doubt that he had been welcomed to many homes for his own sake, and the way his eyes had been opened had made him utterly miserable. Doubtless many young men would have been able to have laughed at the whole business, but David was an exceedingly sensitive fellow. He was, moreover, impressionable to a degree, while doubtless his early training had a tendency to make him feel such an experience far more deeply than if he had been trained amidst such associations as those into which he was strangely cast.

After Mr. Jay's departure he gave himself over to reading for a few days, and then, without giving his housekeeper any idea of his plans, he had rushed off to Whitechapel to try and study the life there.

For some time he stood looking at the shop window, making mental notes of what he saw, then he turned and

watched the crowds of people who went by. He could not get accustomed to it at all. Everything was so different from Piccadilly and Regent Street, or even the City. Very few cabs were to be seen, but the trams were well patronised. The side-walks, too, were crowded with people, but they looked utterly different from those of the West End. He might be living in another country. The people dressed differently, walked differently, and, what was more, they had a different expression on their faces. He could not define the difference, but he felt it. The look in their eyes, the cast of features, was to him strange. This did not apply simply to the very poor who swarmed in the alleys and back streets, but was evident among those who kept shops, and lived in comfort.

He left the shop, and walked along Mile End Road for perhaps a mile. There were still the same long lines of houses, still the same cheap shops, still the same number of public-houses, into which men and women went in great numbers. He listened to the conversation of the people, which sometimes almost made him shudder. True, there were a large number of people here who were doubtless respectable, God-fearing folk, who went to church and chapel on a Sunday; but as far as he could judge, the great masses seemed to live for the animal pleasure of the present moment.

He saw little or nothing of the hard-toiling thousands of labourers and mechanics in the East End; only those who appeared to have little or nothing to do, and who thronged highways, met his gaze; and the sight of them staggered him, because he was utterly ignorant of their existence.

Presently he came back to the shop where he had seen his uncle's name, and again he stood and looked at the cheap articles in the windows, like one fascinated.

While he looked he heard the sound of impatient voices within, and a minute later he started back like one frightened. And yet what he saw was not of a nature to cause fear. It was simply the face of a young girl about nineteen years of age. To the young man the sight of this young girl was very pleasant. Her presence in that dreary

district was like the vision of a flowery dell to a weary traveller in a barren desert.

She was very beautiful, and her beauty was of a refined nature. Moreover, her attire was not like that of other girls who flaunted around.

She wore no large feathers, nor was she disfigured by a hideous fringe. She was dressed simply and neatly. True, her clothes were very poor, but they looked clean. As she came out of the shop David took a mental photograph of the girl, and he carried it with him for many a long day. Her eyes, he saw, were large and brown and expressive; her forehead was low and well shaped, but partially covered by stray locks of glossy brown hair which had escaped from under her hat. Her cheeks were rather pale, but perfectly moulded; her nose was aquiline; the mouth was beautifully formed, and betrayed, so the young man thought, a tender, sensitive nature.

All this he saw—and more. Behind the rare beauty of this East End sewing girl, for such she appeared to be, was something he could not understand. The face was the face of a young girl, but the expression was that of a woman far older; the eyes were in one sense lustrous, in another they were hard and betrayed utter weariness.

She took no notice of David, but walked along the road like one in deep thought, and yet as one who had determined to take some important step in life.

Unconsciously, almost, the young man followed her. He had become strangely interested. For the moment the seething crowd of men and women had lost attraction for him; he thought only of the young girl who walked before him. The day was cold, the east wind swept in biting gusts along the road, but the girl, although she was far too thinly clad for such weather, did not seem to heed. She walked straight on, turning neither to the right nor left.

Presently she stopped outside the door of a big public-house. She hesitated for a few seconds as though in doubt, then went in. David hurried on, and a few seconds later he had also entered the "Barley Sheaf" by the same door. There was nothing in the appearance of the gin-palace

suggestive of a sheaf of barley. No green fields were near, neither was there a sight or sound in the whole district suggestive of lowing cattle, waving corn, or anything else rustic and sweet. It was simply a huge building, forming part of a street which John Ruskin calls "a long line of ugliness." Probably, many years before, there might have been on the same spot a country inn, standing amidst sweet green meadows, but now it simply formed a part of that district which is still very largely unknown, called the East End of London.

On entering David found himself in a kind of private bar, where three men and two women stood drinking. They scarcely noticed his entrance, as their attention was directed to the young girl who had just entered. The young man saw that she was talking with a man who, he rightly conjectured, was the landlord of the "Barley Sheaf." He was a corpulent man, with heavy jaws and fat, greasy-looking cheeks. His face was clean-shaved, and his hair was cut very short, except in the front, where it had been parted in the middle and pasted down very smoothly. The landlord was evidently prosperous; his clothes, though badly cut, looked of good, serviceable material, and he wore a heavy gold chain across his vest. On his hands, moreover, were several showy rings.

"Well, my dear," David heard him say as he entered, "and what ken I do for yer?"

The girl's reply was so low and disjointed that the young man could not understand it. Evidently, however, the landlord understood, for he answered somewhat abruptly:

"Oh, yus, my gul, that's orl very well. But yer see, this isn't a plyce run fer cherrity, nor is it a bloomin' soop kitchin."

"I knows it ain't," said the girl, rather impatiently, "and I ain't come a-beggin'. But my mother is poorly, she is, ain't a-bin able to work, what you may call workin', for six months, she ain't. And it's no good, I cawn't keep both on us by shirt makin', and that's straight."

She seemed different when she spoke. She was no longer the quiet and almost lady-like girl which David had reckoned her to be. Not that her speech was very bad—

indeed she spoke more correctly than most of the people in the neighbourhood, and certainly more so than the landlord of the "Barley Sheaf." Probably the Board Schools might be credited with giving her the advantages of some sort of elementary education. What struck David was, that she seemed older and coarser as she spoke. Her speech did not reveal the refinement and gentleness suggested by her looks.

"Well, and wot 'ave I got to do with that?" asked the landlord, looking steadily into the girl's face. "What did yer sy yer name wos, my dear?" he added after a second.

"Emily Baker," answered the girl.

"And where might yer live, Em'ly, my gal?" asked the landlord familiarly, still eyeing her with much attention.

"Number 17, Wilmot Lane."

"Oh, just so. Well, as I told yer this ain't no mishin nor no soup kichin', this ain't, and konsecently I carn't see no good in yer a kummin' 'ere. But you are a nice-lookin' gal, Em'ly, and I don't mind standin' a glaws of sutthink warm. It'll do yer good on a cold d'y."

"You don't twig me," said the girl almost angrily. "I never thought that this was no mishin 'all; my gosh, who would think it was? And I ain't a-come a-beggin'. What I wanted to tell yer wos that I can play the pianner, and I thought yer might give me job to play ov a night 'ere. I 'eerd as 'ow yer other player 'ad left, and so I come to yer straight, and that's orl about it."

"Oh, pl'y the pianner, can yer? Thet's a 'orse of a different colour, thet is. Let's see wot you can do, Em'ly, my dear," and he led the way to a larger room, where a piano stood against the wall. "Pl'y somethink, my dear," he said, as he opened the instrument, and revealed a long line of dirty yellow keys.

"What shall I play?" asked the girl.

"Oh, wot yer like," replied the landlord. "Somethink religious for a preference. Our chaps like a music-'all song generally, but a religious piece takes as well as anythink. 'Old the Fort 'll do. Em'ly."

The girl sat down and played "Hold the Fort" fairly correctly, and not without some feeling.

"Thet's not bad, eh?" said the landlord, turning to the others. "Beg yer pardin', sir, anythink I can serve you with?" this to David.

David ordered something to drink, in order that he might be able to remain at the house without attracting attention.

"Can yer read notes?" continued the landlord, turning to Emily.

"Oh, yes," replied the girl, "I can play anythink in Sankey's. Wot would yer like?"

"Oh, 'ere's one I likes," replied the landlord, "and it allus goes with a swing, it does, altho' it's a bit 'awd to pl'y. 'Only a Harmer Bearer,' thet's it. There, pl'y thet, Em'ly, my gal."

Emily played it without difficulty and with some spirit.

The landlord looked at her with increased interest. Evidently he regarded her with more favour than when she entered.

"Have yer heny better togs than them?" he asked presently.

"No," replied the girl, like one ashamed, "I ain't. 'Ow should I, I should like to know? I've 'ad to slave twelve and fourteen hours a days, I 'ave, and though I'm quick with my needle, as Mr. Brewer will tell yer, and though I ain't lost time, I've never bin able to make more than eleven or twelve shillin's a week. And I've 'ad to keep mother, and pay rent; 'ow could I buy fine clothes?"

"Then you're a respectable girl, Em'ly, my dear?" said the landlord.

"Awsk Mr. Brewer," replied the girl. "I don't drink, and I keep good hours. Awsk Mr. Brewer; 'e knows all about me."

"Thet's orl right," said the landlord. "I'll speak to my missis about it. But you'd 'ave to git some nice togs, and a bit of jooelry, if you wos to come 'ere. I should 'ave to lend you somethink fer thet, I s'pose, and tike it aat ov yer wyge awfter. But thet could be managed, and

wot you would git in presents would 'elp yer to mike a good pound a week."

"Presents!" said the girl, like one in a dream.

"Of course," replied the landlord. "A nice-lookin' gal like you, as kin pl'y and sing, would git many a copper from the chaps as comes 'ere of a night. Eliza Jane Klemma, who is jist gone, wasn't as trim a craft as you, and she got a good many shillin's; of course, it ain't supposed to be the thing, but I jist winks if the girl is respectable and obligin'."

"Then when shall I call again and settle about particulars?" said the girl. "You know Mr. Brewer, and you can awsk him any question you like about me."

"Well, I'll talk with my missis," said the landlord, "and if you come up about eight o'clock to-night, I'll see what can be done."

"Of course," said the girl, as she turned towards the door, "I knows Mr. Brewer will be a bit vexed with me for leavin' in the bissy season, but he cawnt say nothink aginst me."

"Oh, I'll just see," said the landlord. "Of course, if you was to come 'ere, you'd have to make yourself useful. You might 'ave to turn barmaid sometimes. But what of that? This is a good 'ouse, and we git better company 'ere than at any 'ouse in Whitechapel."

Evidently he said this as much for the benefit of those who were in the bar-room as for that of Emily. Indeed, he seemed glad to have an opportunity of talking of engaging a piano player before his customers. It was an advertisement; besides, he was the kind of man who liked to parade his doings. He evidently thought it added to his importance.

"A nice-lookin' gal," David heard him continue as the girl left the public-house, and walked along the highway back in the direction of the shop from whence he had seen her come. "A nice-lookin' gal, and wun as can pl'y the pianner well, too. I've 'ad a lot 'ere and I ought ter know. Thet girl ort to be a dror to this 'ouse of a night, and I think she will, too. Put on a silk dress to her, and a flowery blouse, and do 'er 'air nice, and a few bangles, and

nobody would 'ardly know 'er for the sime gal. If my missis is agreeable, I think I shall engige her."

David listened to every word the landlord said, but he kept watching the girl who continued to make her way along the street.

"The worst of these gals is that they tike to drinkin' 'ard theirselves," said the landlord, "and then they jist lose their good looks, and ain't no good for nothink. It's very silly ov 'em. A glawss or two, I don't s'y nothink against; but thet lawst one I 'ed, Eliza Jane Klemma, well, she got too fond of drink, so I 'ad ter get rid of 'er."

"Where's she gone?" asked one of the customers.

"Oh, don't awst *me*," said the landlord, with a wink and a horsey laugh.

David did not wait any longer, but left the house, and hurried along the street after the girl. He hardly knew why he was doing this, except that he was impelled so to do. He overtook her just before she reached the door of the shop where he had first seen her.

"Emily," he said, "Emily Baker, I should like to speak to you."

The girl turned towards him with a startled look.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE FOOLISHNESS OF DAVID BARING

"WHAT do yer want?" she asked. "What ev yer got to say to me?"

"I was in the 'Barley Sheaf' just now," replied David, "and I heard what passed."

"Well, and wot if yer did?" was her response. "I ain't done nothink wrong, I ain't; what did yer foller me for?"

For a moment David did not know what to say. In reality he had no reason for following her, or for speaking to her. He had acted on impulse, and now, when he was brought face to face with the girl, he had no reason to urge for his behaviour.



"I followed you," he said, after hesitating a second, "because I think you are too good to play the piano at a public-house."

"What do you know about me, I should like ter know?" was her almost angry reply. "You are a toff, that's what you are, but you ain't got no right to speak to me."

David was at once pleased and disappointed. He liked the sturdy independence of the girl. It suggested the fact that she tried to live a respectable life; at the same time, he thought that not only her words, but her manner of speaking them, was suggestive of a certain coarseness which did not agree with the refinement of her face. Yet in answering her, he fixed upon the words which he did not like.

"How do you know I'm a toff?" he asked.

"Oh, I know," said Emily, "I know. I've not been much out of Whitechapel, but I've gone ter Hyde Park, and I've seen your sort there. But you ain't got no right to speak to me."

"I know I haven't," replied David, "and I ought to beg your pardon for doing so. But I could not help being sorry at the thought of your having to get a living by playing in a public-house, and so I took the liberty of speaking."

"What can the likes of you know about me?" asked Emily. "You don't know nothing about what I've had to put up with."

"I know I don't," replied David, "still I felt sorry for you. You seem a respectable girl——"

"So I am," said Emily. "Nobody can say anything against me. You can ask Mr. Brewer, if you like."

David could not help noticing that her language improved as she continued to speak to him. She dropped the pronunciation of words peculiar to the poorer parts of London. Evidently she had received some amount of schooling, and spoke the cockney dialect simply through association.

"I don't need to ask Mr. Brewer, or any one else, in order to know that," replied the young man. "That is why I think you far too good to spend your time in a

public-house, to amuse a lot of drinking men. Will you walk along the road with me for a few minutes, and then we can talk about it?"

"No," replied Emily, "I'm not going to walk with you. Why should I? Besides, I'm going to tell Mr. Brewer that I ain't coming again."

"I wouldn't do that yet," said David. "I dare say it's terribly hard to work twelve or fourteen hours a day for a few shillings a week, but even that is better than getting accustomed to the language and ways of the 'Barley Sheaf.'"

"The language and ways of the 'Barley Sheaf' can't be worse than our workroom," said the girl, and there was a hard, bitter expression on her face. "Besides, I don't care; it was bad enough when cotton and buttons was provided, and now when I have to provide them myself—well, I won't do it. So that's straight."

"I know I've no right to suggest anything," commenced David, like one in doubt.

"Then what are you interferin' for?" asked Emily angrily. "You're a toff, that's what you are. You've come down to Whitechapel for fun, that's what you've come for; and you ain't got no right to go interferin' with me. There, I ain't goin' to 'ave nothing more to say to you."

"Don't say that," replied David, kindly, for he had become much interested in the young girl. He saw, or thought he saw, at every word she spoke, evidences that she did not in reality belie her looks. Besides, there was an element of romance in the episode, and it appealed to his young life. "Don't say that," he repeated; "I know I seem very rude, but if it's in my power to help you, I will. As I said, you are far too good to do what you propose doing."

"And if I am, what's that to you?" asked the girl. "You ain't up to no good, that's what I believe."

"I'm not up to any harm," replied the young man kindly. "I only wish you well, I assure you, and if I can help you I will."

Perhaps there was something in the tone of his voice,

or in the kindly look on his face, which disarmed the girl's suspicion. Anyhow a softer look came into her eyes. This again was followed by another less kindly.

"Are you a mishin-'all toff?" she asked—"are you a parson?"

"Nothing of the sort," answered the young man. "But years ago a relation of mine lived here, and that's why I came down. I saw you come out of the shop, and I thought what a good girl you seemed. I fancied you were in trouble, and that was why I followed you."

The girl laughed incredulously.

"I've heard that kind of tale before. Toffs of your sort ain't no friends of girls like me, and I don't want to have nothing to say to you. There, I'm going in to speak to Mr. Brewer."

"You say you have a mother who lives at 17, Wilmot Lane," said David. "Would you have any objection to my going to see her?"

"What do you want to see her for?"

"I want to let her know that if I can befriend you, and keep you from going to that public-house, I will."

"But why?" asked the girl, still suspiciously. Reared as she had been, amidst associations which fostered the belief that every action was prompted by selfishness, she could not believe in the sincerity of the handsome young fellow who stood by her side. Her impression concerning "toffs," as she called them, was that they were so many sharks who came to the East End for evil purposes.

"I mean nothing but good," answered the young man. "You have interested me very much, and I should like to help you."

It will be seen from all this that David was young at heart and that he had not lost that sense of romantic chivalry which is the charm of a young man's life. Possibly throughout the whole episode he acted foolishly, and offered himself a prey to designing people, but I respect him for it. The blood of true youth flowed in his veins, and thus he could act on a generous impulse without calculating as to the result. Besides, unknown to himself, he was working

out his life's problem. He was yielding to influences which, in after days, would lead him into strange, untrodden paths. He did not know what the future held for him, he did not even think; nevertheless, what I have described formed a link in the chain of events which resulted in that madness, which was fraught with unthought-of adventure.

The girl stood by his side, looking on the ground. Evidently the young man had interested her, and, spite of herself, she could not help believing in him.

"What do you want me to do?" she said, half sullenly.

"Well, at least wait," replied David. "I am afraid you have had a hard life, but, hard as it is, if I had a sister, I would rather she should be a shirt-maker than a public-house piano-player, and a barmaid. Very likely there are good barmaids and public-house pianists, but I am sure it must be very hard for a young girl to be good and pure in such a place."

"But I promised to call at eight o'clock to-night," replied Emily, "and it is getting dark now. I shall only have time to go into the shop and speak to Mr. Brewer, and then go home and see mother before going up to the 'Barley Sheaf' again."

"I wouldn't go at all," replied David. "I would just send up word that it's not convenient for you to come to-night."

"Yes, and that would lose me the place," replied the girl. "I daresay there are scores as'll jump at it, for the 'Barley Sheaf' is a good 'ouse, and I've 'eard that the landlord, Mr. Beel, is a kind man."

"Perhaps I may be able to suggest something to your mother," replied David.

"Look 'ere," said the girl earnestly, and for the moment lapsing into the dialect of the district. "You're straight, ain't yer? This ain't no bloomin' blarney, is it? You don't want to take away a gal's livin', do yer?"

"Honestly, Emily, I want to help you, and I will if I can. I know nothing about this district, but I believe I can help you to do something better than what you thought of doing."

Emily Baker looked steadily into David Baring's eyes.

She noted the expression on his kind, handsome face, and the very refinement of his presence softened her.

"I'll trust yer," she cried. "I may be a fool, but I'll trust yer. I'll go straight 'ome and tell mother all about it, and if you like you can come in an hour."

"Very well," replied David. "17, Wilmot Lane, I think you said? I'll be there in an hour from now."

"It's the third turnin' on the left, and the second to the right," said the girl; "you cawn't miss it. There's a geranium inside the window. We lives on the first floor."

The girl walked away and left the young man alone, outside the shop where the name of David Barton stood out boldly in large letters.

"I wonder if I've made a fool of myself?" thought the young man, as he watched the girl's retreating form. "I know nothing about her, and have no right to act in this way. And yet I could not help it. I was just drawn on without knowing what I was doing. And now what shall I do for the next hour? I believe I'm hungry—I'll get something to eat."

He looked around for a restaurant, or hotel, but saw neither. The only places which offered refreshments were cheap working men's eating-houses. They were by no means inviting, but he made his way towards one, and sat down at one of the small tables in the room.

"Well, guv'nor, wot'll yer 'ave?" asked the man in attendance.

"Oh, something hot if you please," replied David. He was getting interested in his experiences, and began to feel more at home. The cold, biting air, moreover, made him hungry, and the smell of the place, while utterly gross, was not as unpleasant as it would have been under other circumstances.

"Oh, then you've come to the right shop," said the man. "Most of the plyces don't 'ave nothink 'ot, except it's a bit of fried 'addick, after the middle of the day. But we allus has a good meal at this time. Wot'll yer 'ave?"

"What have you got?" asked David.

"Wot do you say to biled sheep's 'awt and kerrits?" asked the man. "I kin recommend ìt. It's just Al."

For a moment David revolted at the thought, and was about to say so, but remembering where he was, he ordered the dish and waited.

About a dozen men were in the room. Nearly all of them appeared to be working men who had just finished their day's work, but one or two had the appearance of commercial travellers. In using the term, "commercial travellers," however, I do not mean that class of the community who represent large firms, and therefore, as a rule, stop at good hotels. Many calling themselves commercial travellers in the East End simply carry around unimportant trifles which they sell on commission. How they manage to make a living is unknown; nevertheless, they form a fairly large portion of the community. Many of them have, in the past, been clerks and servants of large firms, but have been dismissed to make way for younger men. Others have, through one means or another, lost their places, and then, because they have been unable to secure regular employment, have drifted into the precarious life of "travelling on commission."

All of them appeared to eat with great heartiness, and most of them smacked their lips as if with enjoyment. David noticed what they had on their plates, and was much interested. One favourite dish appeared to be fried liver and potatoes, while both boiled and fried haddock were in great demand. Some of them paid for their meals while the young man was in the room, and he noticed that the average price for a knife-and-fork repast appeared to be about sevenpence. This included cocoa, which was the favourite beverage.

David did not much enjoy his sheep's heart and carrots, but not knowing where he could get anything else, and being hungry, he ate it, and paid his eightpence.

"Can you tell me of an hotel where I can get rooms here?" he asked of the man who had served him.

The man wiped his greasy hands in his apron, and eyed him steadily.

"Are you in the commercial line?" he asked.

"No," replied David.

"No?" repeated the man; then, noticing the fur-

lined coat which the young man was putting on, he said, knowingly: "I thought not. You are in the music'-all business, I expect."

David smiled, but made no other answer.

"Ah! I thought so," said the man. "You warnt sutthin' swell, I expect?"

"I should like a nice place," replied David.

"I thought so. Well, of course, ther's publics enough, but they are not the places wot you might care to stay at long."

"No?"

"No, that is, not as a general thing. I tell you wot'll be the thing for you, guv'nor. There's a Temperance 'Otel not far from 'ere. Oh! you needn't be afeard, they'll send out fer orl the drinks you want. They don't keep no license, but they've got an arrangement with a pub for thet. You cawn't miss it, guv'nor. Just a little way on the road, turn up by the 'Fountain' until you come to the 'Vic,' and there it is in front on yer. It's a werry respectable plyce, and lots of nice people stay there. You just tell Mrs. Dormer that Mr. Sam Vitter sent yer, and she'll treat you as though you was the Prince ov Wiles and orl the Royal Fam'ly."

"Thank you," replied David, and left the hot, gross atmosphere of the eating-house with a sigh of relief.

He was not long in finding the Temperance Hotel, and was at once introduced to Mrs. Dormer, who eyed him keenly. Evidently visitors of David's class were not common at her establishment.

"And 'ow long is it that yer wants ter st'y?" she asked.

"I should say a week," replied the young man.

"And yer wants two rooms—a bedroom and a dinin' room," she said, slowly. "Well, I can give you a bedroom, and, as it 'appens, ther's only one bed in it, but as fer a private dinin' room, I cawn't manage thet. All the meals are served in this big room 'ere, for them as wants their meals in the 'ouse. I 'ave a good table," she continued, "the best you'll find for miles around. For everythink I chawge a pound a week." And she looked at him inquiringly.

“All right,” replied the young man. “I agree to that.”

“Paid in advance,” added Mrs. Dormer, with emphasis.

“Exactly,” replied David, putting a sovereign on the table. “I expect you’ll wish to give me a receipt for this.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Dormer, as though she felt sorry she had not asked more, “I’ll give you a receipt, but, of course, there are hextrys.”

“What are they?”

“Well, beer, if it’s sent out for, and boot-cleaning, if you have ’em cleaned, and sich like.”

“Oh, yes, I understand; and now, have you some one that I can send to the station for my bag?”

“Oh, yus, I ken arrange that,” said the woman quickly. “Well, that’s settled then?”

“Yes, that’s settled,” replied David.

“Of course,” said Mrs. Dormer, “this is a respectable ’ouse, and nothink but respectable people come ’ere. And we don’t ’low no larks. I’ve bin’ ’ere better nor twenty year, and I’ve got my kerrickter to mind.”

“Yes, yes, I understand,” said the young man; “that’s all right, and now show me to my room. I want a wash.”

A little later David Baring was on his way to 17, Wilmot Lane, for the purpose of speaking to Emily Baker’s mother about her daughter’s future, wondering all the time why he took such an interest in the girl.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### EMILY BAKER’S MOTHER

THERE was no difficulty in finding Wilmot Lane. Emily Baker had given David Baring ample directions, and as the distance was not great, he was not long in reaching No. 17. It was a dreary district. The houses all seemed exactly alike, all were uniform in size and form, and all presented the same depressing appearance. Indeed, all the houses in the neighbourhood were evidently built on one plan, and the purpose of the builder was apparently to get the



greatest possible number of rooms in a given space, at the least possible cost. There was not the slightest attempt at architectural beauty. Everywhere was the same monotonous uniformity, everywhere the same long lines of ugliness.

At nearly each street corner was a public-house, which threw its garish light up the spaces between the gloomy rows of houses; otherwise, comparative darkness would have reigned. The street lamps were few and far apart; the light they gave rather added to the gloom than dispelled it.

Many of the houses in Wilmot Lane looked at first sight as though they were uninhabited; a closer inspection, however, revealed the fact that lights were burning in almost every room. These lights, however, were dim and sickly, most of them being given by cheap tallow candles.

As Emily Baker had said, there was a geranium in the window of the first-floor of No. 17, and so David mounted the narrow, evil-smelling stairway towards Emily's home. He soon saw that the houses in the streets were larger than he imagined, and it was evident that each one was inhabited by many persons. He heard the sound of voices, and the tramp of footsteps all around him. He noticed, too, that many curious eyes watched him as he passed the numerous doors.

"Come in," was the response which he heard, as he knocked at the door of Mrs. Baker's room. He therefore entered, and for the first time in his life beheld the home of one of the comparatively poor families in the East End of London.

The furniture was, as may be imagined, poor to a degree, and consisted of two chairs, a rickety table, and a bed. On the table was a tin candlestick, which held a cheap tallow candle. In the room sat Emily Baker and her mother. Both were evidently anticipating his visit, for there was a look of expectancy in their eyes; moreover, they had both done their utmost in the way of personal adornment. The girl had put on a clean white apron, and had arranged her hair very becomingly. The older woman had evidently discovered a dirty cap, with faded trimmings,

which she doubtless thought gave her the appearance of gentility.

Mrs. Baker rose and curtsied as David entered, while Emily vacated her chair, and sat upon the bed.

"I've come as I promised, you see," said David, as he accepted the proffered chair.

The girl nodded nervously, but gave no other answer; the woman, on the other hand, welcomed him in gushing terms.

David was immediately struck by the difference between the mother and daughter. The latter's eyes were large, and at times lustrous; the former's small and shifty. The whole contour of the two faces, moreover, was different, neither was there any resemblance between their way of speaking. The girl's manner was independent and a trifle defiant, that of the woman was cringing.

"I am sure it's a great 'onner for us, that a gent like you should tike an interest in Em'ly," said the woman, as she looked stealthily towards David.

"Nothing of the sort," replied David. "Rather, it is kind of you not to resent my interference."

"Oh, don't s'y so, sur. We tike it as a grite 'onner for a rich gent like you, fer no doubt you are a rich gent, to come like this to 'elp us."

"We don't want no 'elp, mother," said Emily, who seemed even more defiant than when David met her in the street. "All I want is good work. I don't say nothink against Mr. Brewer, only when he don't give me enough to make a living. I ain't afraid of work, I ain't, but we can't live and pay rent, and buy coals on less than ten shillin' a week. I can work as fast as any of 'em, I can, and faster than most. You ask Mr. Brewer, and he'll tell you that lots on 'em can't earn a shillin' a day."

"Yes, you're a good gal, Em'ly," said Mrs. Baker, "a werry good gal. And I don't want yer ter stay at Barton's shop no longer. You'll be able ter git a pound a week up to the 'Barley Sheaf,' and p'raps some of yer grub as well. I dessay, too, as 'ow you'll be able to bring 'ome a drink now and then as well. Anyhow, as yer kno', I cawn't work, and I cawn't do without fire, and I cawn't do without my

beer, and as you kno', Em'ly, the doctor sed as 'ow I ort to 'ave my threepenny o' gin every night, he did. And wot with coal at fourteen pence a hundred, it cawn't be done."

The woman kept looking at David furtively, while she spoke, as though she wanted to divine what was passing in the young man's mind.

"What would you like to do, Emily?" asked David. "Supposing you had a friend who could help you to start some business, what would you like to do?"

The young man spoke stammeringly, for he was much in doubt as to what he should suggest. He had no definite plan as to how he might help the girl in whom he had become so suddenly interested, and, being entirely ignorant of the various ways by which a livelihood could be earned in Whitechapel, he was utterly unable to make suggestions.

"Like?" said the girl, "like? I know what I would like."

"You'd like to be a lydy, Em'ly, my dear," broke in Mrs. Baker with a giggle, "and I often say as 'ow a nice-lookin' gal like you ought to be a lydy. You wos cut out fer it."

"No, mother," said the girl, "I wasn't brought up like a lady, and I know it. I've seen real ladies, and I know. What I would like would be to 'ave a shop of my own. I can do dressmakin', I can, and I would like to be a dress-maker, and 'ave a good respectable connection."

"I'd rather see you a lydy," said the woman. "You'd allus be ible to dress your pore mother in a silk gown then. I know what dressmaking is, and near you would 'ave to cut it, even if you 'ad a good start; and you kno' the doctor said as 'ow I must on no account go without my threepenny o' gin afore goin' to bed. And threepenny is little enough, as anybody knows. I'm sorry we cawn't offer you nothink to drink, sir, but being so poor, 'avin' come down in the world, I'm not ible."

"Thank you," said David. "I don't require anything to drink. I simply called to see if I could render any assistance."

"God bless you, sir," whined the woman, "and it's werry kind of you. You see 'ow poor we are, sir, and we ain't got a bit of coal to mike up a better fire."

David looked at the grate, and saw a few dying embers.

"Heaven knows the room is dreary enough," thought the young man. "If such people drift to wrong-doing there is little wonder."

"But we 'ave allus kept ourselves respectable," continued the woman, who seemed determined to do the lion's share of talking, "and we've allus 'ad a room to ourselves. If we 'ad took in lodgers, as I wanted, we might 'ave bin better off."

The woman did not seem to belong altogether to the lower orders of the people. Now and again her words suggested the remains of respectability. It was possible that she might at one time have been better off.

"Well," went on David, utterly at a loss what to say, "if you can suggest something feasible, I shall be glad to render some little assistance."

The woman rose with great alacrity, and took a jug from a little cupboard.

"Emily, my dear, I want you," she said, and she led the way to the landing outside the door. The girl reluctantly followed, and David was left for a minute alone in the room. He could not help hearing a whispered altercation between the two, however, and he wondered what they were talking about. A few minutes later the woman returned alone.

"Where is your daughter?" asked David.

"Oh, she's only gone out on a little errand for me," was the reply. "She'll soon be back. She's a good gal, is Emily, and it's a 'ard life she's 'ad to live. It was all right while my pore 'usband was alive. He was a lawyer's clerk in Mile End Road, he was, and got good wage. He had Emily learnt dressmakin', he did. If he'd lived, it 'ud 'ave been all right. Emily can't stand so much 'ard work, that's w'y I advised her to go to the 'Barley Sheaf.' It was my pore 'usband as 'ad her learned 'ow to ply the pianner."

David did not reply. Somehow he felt that the atmosphere of the room was different now that the girl was gone.

"Oh, yes, she's a good clever gal, an' 'an'some, too; ther's no s'yin' nothink against it. She might 'ave 'ad

plenty of sweethearts, she might, but Emily was praad, and wouldn't 'ave nothin' to say to 'em. Emily could git merrid enny day, she could, and give 'er mother a good 'ome. But she isn't one for sweethearts, and she don't st'y out late at night, she don't, nor nothink of thet sort. W'y, altho' she's 'ad 'eaps of chances, Emily's never 'ad no sweetheart, she 'asn't."

"I'm very glad," replied David.

"She wos cut out for a lydy, she was, there's no daat abaat it. You can see thet, who is a gent yerself, sir, and I'm werry glad you've seen 'er with yer own eyes, sir."

David did not like the woman. He had a suspicion that she had been drinking, and he was not pleased at her sending Emily out. Moreover, the difference between the two became more and more impressed upon him. Why was there such a disparity? The woman's eyes were evil, her thoughts were evil; he was sure of it. What made the child so unlike her parent?

"Is Emily your own child?" he asked abruptly.

"My own child? Why, yes. Whose child should she be, if she ain't mine, I should like ter know?"

"Have you always lived in Whitechapel?"

"Allus, allus," replied the woman with averted eyes. "And since my pore 'usband died, oh, 'ow I've slyved for thet gal! Ah, it's been a 'awd life fer me."

"Your husband was a lawyer's clerk, you say?"

"Yus, he wos, and he know'd more than Mr. Crowle, the lawyer who employed him, he did. Ah! it wos a loss for me when my pore 'usband died. It's been such a chynge, such a chynge."

The woman began to whimper, while David made a mental note that he would call and see Mr. Crowle the lawyer, who lived in Mile End Road.

"Where have you sent your daughter?" he asked.

"Oh, only a little w'y along the road. You needn't be afeard, sir, you needn't be afeard; Emily don't 'ave no sweethearts; in fact, she ain't got no pals at all. And she knows 'ow to take keer on 'erself."

"Still, it's late for a young girl like her to be alone in

the streets of Whitechapel," said the young man. He was utterly ignorant of the life all around him, and was forgetful of the fact of the thousands of girls of all ages who went unprotected along the streets.

"Oh, she's orl right—she's orl right," replied the woman. "The truth is, sir, she's gone up to the 'Barley Sheaf.'"

"The 'Barley Sheaf?'"

"Yus; she's took a jug with 'er. I thought as 'ow Mr. Beel would give her some ale, seein' as 'ow she's been there about the place. And she's going to tell 'im that she'll call again to-morrow to settle up the job one way or the other. Of course, I know'd all the time that you'd do sutthink 'ansome."

David became more and more uncomfortable. He did not like the way the woman spoke, neither could he understand Emily being sent out in the way she was.

"I'll come back again in an hour or so," he said, rising to his feet.

"Oh, you will, will you?" said the woman. "Why, you ain't a-told me nothink of what you think o' doin' for Emily."

"No, I'll tell you when I come back again," he said. "We'll discuss the matter when Emily is here."

The woman gave him a cunning look. At first she seemed as though she would be angry, but presently, thinking better of it, continued in her former tone of voice—

"Oh, yes, sir; perhaps you can tell better when Emily is here, perhaps you can. You're sure you'll come back?"

"Oh, yes, I'll come back. I shall make up my mind about the matter."

The woman still continued to leer at him with her cunning eyes. Evidently she had not quite made up her mind about him.

"Ah, then, no doubt you can give me a trifle to buy a mite ov firin'. It's werry cold, an' I ain't got a penny in the 'ouse."

David gave her some pieces of silver and left the house.

"I'm afraid I'm making an ass of myself," he said, as he walked along the dark, cheerless street. "She's a

bad woman, and she's been drinking, too. I'm afraid I shall do no good by going there again. And yet the girl is a good girl—of that I am sure."

He made his way out into the main road, and became at once impressed with the change which had passed over the neighbourhood. Whitechapel Road was far more crowded, and there was far more noise than in the daytime. Drove of youths and girls thronged the sidewalks, the public-houses were filled with men and women, boys and girls. Costermongers' barrows lined the way, butchers were shouting to people as they passed to come and buy their meat; on every hand was a great mass of seething life. The whole street presented as great a difference from the West End of London as the life of England is different from that of Spain or the Orient. Squalor and poverty was everywhere, and yet the bustle of the streets was more to be desired than the dingy room from which he had just come.

One thing, however, impressed him more than all else. It was that Whitechapel was a great market. Everything was on sale, everything was a matter of supply and demand; if there was no demand, the great business of a certain portion of the community was to create it. Every shopkeeper kept open his shop to make money; the thousands who toiled in the dark, toiled to make money; the costermongers who shouted shouted, to make money. He saw glaring advertisements concerning certain curiosities which were on exhibition. Fat men, fat women and skeletons, giants and dwarfs, were all there to be seen for money. Conjurers were there, ready to show their tricks for money. Strong men all waited to show their strength for money. All along the thoroughfare were glaring public-houses: all who had money—and would spend it—were welcome; beggars were everywhere who wanted money. Poor down-trodden wretches were there ready to sacrifice honour and virtue for money. The same thing obtained in Piccadilly—in Regent Street—but the fact never struck him so forcibly as here in Whitechapel.

There was plenty of food on sale. Food for the body,

food for the eyes, food for the passions—all on sale. Money was the *open sesame* to everything.

Almost unconscious of what he was doing, he threaded his way through the people towards the "Barley Sheaf." In spite of himself he was drawn to the spot where he believed Emily Baker had gone. The place was brilliantly lighted, and from the sounds which escaped through the constantly opening doors, he knew that many people were within. A few hours earlier, when he had called, it was comparatively empty; now business was in full swing. Men and women had finished their day's work in the factories, the workshops, the docks, and the streets, and now they were able "to enjoy themselves."

David opened the door of the private bar, and entered. He looked around eagerly, but he could not see Emily. He saw the landlord, however, who recognised him immediately.

"Oh, you are the bloke who is tryin' to keep Emily Baker from comin' 'ere, aw ya?" he said. "Toffs like you should keep to the West End, guv'nor. Let us keep to ourselves."

Before David could reply, there was a great noise of the shuffling of feet, the shout of laughter, in the next compartment. Above these sounds, however, was a cry,—a woman's agonised cry.

A minute later David entered the room, and saw Emily Baker struggling in the arms of a huge fellow, who looked like a brewer's drayman.

"That's it, Bill," shouted the crowd, "you kiss 'er—you kiss 'er."

"No," cried others, "'e cawn't. She won't let 'im."

David saw that the girl's face was flushed with anger and shame, while the stalwart carter was mastering her little by little, in spite of her frantic struggles.

The tap-room loungers doubtless regarded the whole episode as innocent fun. There was nothing uncommon in the fact of a man kissing a girl in a public-house; but David was maddened at the sight of the carter bringing his thick coarse lips closer and closer to the girl's face. The crowd watched the scene good-humouredly. It was



a pleasant episode in their evening's entertainment, and they laughed and cheered at the girl's opposition.

For a moment David knew not what to do ; but when he saw that Emily was completely at the carter's mercy, and that the crowd laughed as they saw him about to kiss her, he rushed forward, and angrily pulled him away.

A minute later the young man was the central figure in a public-house brawl.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### WHO WAS EMILY BAKER ?

HAD any one told David Baring, a few hours before, that he would that night be one of the chief actors in a public-house brawl, he would have laughed at his informant, and perhaps have told him that he was a fit candidate for a lunatic asylum. Yet such was the case. He, who had the English gentleman's hatred of participating in a vulgar scene, heard angry threats on every hand, while the drayman, whom he had flung against the wall with no very gentle hand, was evidently preparing to have his revenge for the insult he had received. But David had no fear. The healthy athlete seldom has. He was reputed to be one of the best boxers in his college at Cambridge ; he had a cool head and steady nerves, and did not at all trouble about the attack of the man, who, although thick-set and strong, was clumsy, and apparently ignorant of the science of self-defence.

For some minutes the place was in a great uproar, and language was poured forth the like of which David never thought could be used by men and women. Some of the bystanders sided with the drayman, while others, hoping David would stand treat, took his part. David, who saw that no good could be done by remaining there, and dreading the interference of the police, at length made a proposal to meet the drayman at a more convenient place, and said that, meanwhile, he was prepared to leave

a sovereign with the landlord for the good of his customers.

For a second the inclination of the crowd was divided. They liked the idea of "drinks all round," but they also loved to see a fight. There was a back yard to the "Barley Sheaf," and some suggested that they should go and fight it out. How the matter would have turned out it is difficult to say, had not a young woman come in at that moment, and changed the whole course of events.

"Bill," she cried to the carter, "Bill, mother's dyin'; the doctor's give 'er up, and she wornts to speak to yer."

"They said she was dyin' last night," said Bill; "she'll get over it like she did then."

"No, she won't," said the girl. "She's gawspin' fer life now. Come 'ome, Bill, do."

Bill stood undecided. He still longed to resent the rough handling which he had received at David's hands, while a dull sense of duty prompted him to go home.

"Look here, Bill," said David, "I have nothing against you, and I don't wish to quarrel. Still, if you insist on fighting, we had better put it off to another time; meanwhile, here is something for you to take home."

"Yus, but you're tryin' to take away a gal I wants from me," said the carter.

"Not a bit of it," replied David. "And even if I am, a good-looking fellow like you can always get plenty of girls."

Bill's hand clasped over the money David gave to him, and a look of indecision came into his eyes.

"Come 'ome, Bill, come 'ome," cried the girl.

"Well, another time then," cried the carter, as he went unwillingly towards the door. "I've spotted yer, so I'll 'ave it aat with yer another time."

A few minutes later David was walking along the road with Emily Baker by his side.

"He'll kill you," said the girl.

"No, he'll not," answered David, with a laugh. "He'll soon forget his anger. But, tell me, Emily, do you often go to such places?"

"No," said the girl, eagerly, "I don't. When I go I

always go into the bottle and jug department to get a drink for mother; and then I go, 'cause if I don't, mother——”

The girl stopped as if ashamed to finish the sentence, but David understood. From what he had seen of the woman herself, and from what he had gathered from the loafers at the “Barley Sheaf,” he knew Emily Baker's mother was a drunkard, and that it was at her instigation the girl had gone to the landlord to try and get the place as piano player.

“Your mother drinks more than is good for her, I am afraid,” said David.

“It's on account of father's death,” said Emily. “She gets so down-hearted if she don't have something. We could live all right but for that. She'll be all right to-night, 'cause she ain't got no money. But—but——” Again the girl lapsed into silence.

“Emily,” said David, “I mean kindly by you, and I should like to help you. Could I help you to set up as a dressmaker, or something?”

“Why should you?” said the girl suspiciously.

David did not reply, for, indeed, he did not know why he should.

“I want to live a respectable life,” she continued, “and it's very hard, and I only want what I can earn 'onestly. That's all. And I'm much obliged to you for stoppin' Bill Bray from kissin' me.”

There was a touch of real refinement in the girl's words, and to the young man they revealed a pure, unsullied nature. This influenced David, and made him more than ever desirous of helping her.

“Emily,” he said kindly, “I should like to help you, just as I should like a sister of my own to be helped if she were situated as you are. Don't go to that place again, my girl, and think, if you can, how I can best serve you. I'll call at your house again to-morrow, and by that time I shall, perhaps, have settled on something. You are nearly home now. Good night!”

“Good night,” and the girl looked up with strange, yearning eyes. “You're not going home with me, then?”

“ I think I'd better not, Emily, but you just think over what I've said. I'll call to-morrow.”

When he awoke next morning his first thought was of Emily Baker. He pictured the girl's refined and almost beautiful face ; he thought with a sigh of the hard and despairing look which sometimes shone from her eyes ; he remembered the evil face, and the shifty-looking eyes of her mother. Why should he trouble ? He had narrowly escaped a brawl with a brewer's drayman the previous night on account of his interest in her. Indeed, why should he stay longer in the East End at all ? He had now seen Whitechapel, where his uncle had made his money, and as far as he could judge his visit had done no good. After all, the place was not so bad. Whitechapel Road, Mile End Road, Burdett Road, and Commercial Road were fine thoroughfares—as fine almost as any in London. It is true that the streets at the back were very bad. He knew that they were overrun with Jews, many of whom were of the most unscrupulous character ; but what of all that ? He could not help it. His uncle had made much money. Well, why not ? Why could he not enjoy the wealth which had lawfully come to him ? He need not stay at Malpas Towers. He could take rooms at a London hotel, or he could travel. Supposing Nora Brentwood was heartless, and cared only for his wealth and position ? It need not affect him. He was young, and he loved beautiful places and beautiful things. Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Madrid—indeed, all the great capitals of Europe were open to him ; then why make a fool of himself by staying at an uncomfortable lodging-house in Whitechapel ?

And yet, he did not make up his mind to leave the neighbourhood. At least he would stay a few days, and see something more of the way in which the people lived. Besides, he had made up his mind to call on Mr. Crowle, the lawyer for whom Emily Baker's father had worked ; he had determined to see how the wealth which he possessed had been made.

Mr. Crowle lived in Mile End Road, and was regarded as the poor man's lawyer. Whether he had a lucrative

business or not, I do not know ; of this, however, I am certain, he did not allow David to wait long for him, after the young man had sent in his name.

The lawyer was a bullet-headed man, with a short thick neck. His hair was short and bristly, his face was rather red, his eyes were small but piercing. Mr. Crowle gave one the impression that those quick weasel-like eyes of his were always open to the main chance.

Yes, it was true that Jim Baker had been a handy man of his, and that he had died a couple of years before.

“ Was he a decent fellow ? ” asked David.

“ Yes, he was,” replied the lawyer. “ Not over brilliant, but still a good fellow.”

“ Could you tell me what he looked like ? ” asked David. “ Was he short or tall—had he the appearance of a gentleman ? ”

“ The appearance of a gentleman ? ” repeated Mr. Crowle, with a laugh. “ Not much, I reckon. Why, I believe I have a photograph of him somewhere. He had it took at Margate the year before he died. Yes, here it is.”

David looked at it keenly. It was the picture of a shabby-genteel fourth-rate clerk. It was the exact likeness of a man who would go to Margate for his holidays, and stand eating winkles and whelks at the stalls along the promenade. The man was by no means ill-looking ; nevertheless, his face was that of an utterly commonplace East-ender.

“ Did you, or do you, know Baker’s wife ? ” asked David.

“ No,” replied the lawyer, scrutinising the young man keenly. “ I didn’t, nor don’t, know his wife ; but from what he told me, and from what others have told me, she was what the people around here call a ‘ reg’lar bad ’un.”

“ How long did you know him ? ” asked the young man.

“ Oh, I should say about fifteen years.”

“ There is a daughter called Emily ? ” remarked the young man, rather awkwardly.

"Yes, I suppose so," and the lawyer continued to watch him closely.

"I suppose she is really the daughter of this man and this woman ?"

"What makes you think so ?"

The lawyer said this sharply, and his eyes twinkled with eagerness. He had immediately conjectured that this young man might have a purpose beyond the ordinary in inquiring about his late clerk's family.

"Well, she lives with the woman Baker," replied David.

"Yes, she lives with the woman Baker, and calls her 'mother,' at least I suppose so. But that don't go for much. Look here, young sir, have you any special interest in this girl ? Have you any knowledge of her ?"

"No, none at all," replied David, "none at all. But I should like to know something about her for all that."

"Sweetheart of yours ?"

"No, nothing of the sort."

"Then why do you inquire ?"

"I am interested ; that is all. Do you know anything about the antecedents of the girl ? If you do, I am willing to pay you for the information."

"All I know is this," replied the lawyer, like one trying to recall some far-back recollections : "Jim Baker used to say sometimes that he hoped for better days, and that he had somebody he was taking care of who would pay him well some day. Another time I heard him say that he had no child of his own. But we don't take much notice of them tales," continued the lawyer, after a pause, "we hear so many of them. Personally, I shouldn't think the woman Baker is the girl's mother."

"I thought not," replied David.

"Why ?" asked Mr. Crowle, sharply.

"Because they are so utterly dissimilar. The girl evidently belongs to a different world."

"Would you like me to find out ?" asked the lawyer. "I'll do it cheap."

"Could you ?" asked David, eagerly.

"Could I ?" repeated the poor man's lawyer. "Couldn't I rather ! I'd do it for a fi' pun' note."

"Thank you," replied the young man. Then he hesitated. "If I wish you to do this, I'll call again. Meanwhile, here is something for your trouble."

Mr. Crowle picked up the piece of gold eagerly.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "You couldn't come to a better man nor me. There is no lawyer in these parts as knows more about the people and their doings than I do. Look in again, sir, look in again."

When David left Mr. Crowle's office in Mile End Road he felt more than ever interested in the welfare of Emily Baker. He fully believed there was some mystery in the girl's life. Possibly she might be a gentleman's daughter. If so, the refinement of her face, and the modesty of her demeanour, was accounted for. The thought made the neighbourhood appear more interesting, for it had stirred the love for romance in the young man's heart. Besides, the memory of the girl's eyes pleaded with him. She was so lonely, so uncared for, and yet apparently she had kept her life pure and unsullied in spite of evil surroundings.

David Baring made his way to 17, Wilmot Lane, with a quickened pulse and an eager step.

"At any rate, I can do no harm by trying to find out," he soliloquised.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### TRYING TO HELP

"COME in."

This was the response to David's knock.

He opened the door and entered the room. To his disappointment Emily was not there. Mrs. Baker, however, met him with a half-drunken giggle. She was reclining on the bed, while at her side was the table which she had dragged up, on which was a bottle of spirits and a cracked glass.

"Oh! you've come, 'ave yer?" said the woman.

“ Yes ; where’s Emily ? ”

“ W’ere is she ! w’ere coo’d she be, I’d like ter kno’ ? She’s gone ter Mr. Brewer fer work, she is ; ’ow else could we live, an’ me so poorly ? It’s orl werry well for you ter go around upsettin’ of people’s minds, it is, and keepin’ from gettin’ a respectable livin’, like a young lydy should. Now she’s got ter work at ’er sewin’ ag’in,” and then the woman burst forth with an oath.

“ You’re drunk.”

“ Ow, drunk, am I ? And wot if I am ? ”

“ You have spent the money I gave you in drink,” said David.

“ An ’oo wouldn’t ? Did yer tyke me for a curate, or a Salvyshin Awmy Captin’ ? What ’ud become of me, I shu’d like ter kno’, if I ’adn’t a drop of gin when I gits the spasms ? ”

The woman was half mad with the spirits she had taken, and David, disgusted with the scene, was about to leave the house when Emily entered. A flush mounted the girl’s cheeks as she saw him—a flush which at once suggested shame and surprise.

“ I didn’t expect to see you again,” said the girl.

“ Why not ? I promised.”

“ What are promises ? ” said the girl. Then she continued, “ You gave mother money last night. You shouldn’t have done it. She’s been drunk almost ever since.”

“ Shouldn’t ’ee ? ” cried the woman. “ Oh, you ungrateful young ’ussy, and after orl I’ve suffered for yer ! You begrudge me a drop of gin when the doctor said with ’is own lips, ‘ Mrs. Baker,’ ses ’ee, ‘ nothin’ ’ll kep yer alive but good gin, and good whiskey.’ ”

“ Be quiet, mother,” said the girl.

“ I shawn’t be quiet, I shawn’t. Oh, I kno’ you’re mad ’cause you’ve ’ad to go ter Mr. Brewer’s fer work. Well, it’s orl this swell’s doin’s ; but for ’im you’d ’ad a nice plyce—a plyce fit fer a lydy.”

“ Do you want to speak to me ? ” said Emily to David.

“ Is there anything you want to tell me ? ”

“ Yes,” said David.



"Then let's go out," said the girl. "It isn't rainin' to-day, and it'll be quiet in Victoria Park."

"Yes," replied the young man, "let us get out of this."

There was a hungry, despairing look in the girl's eyes. She seemed to have strangely aged since the previous night. They walked out into the street, and then David noticed that her face became deathly pale, and she almost staggered as she walked.

"What is the matter, Emily? Are you ill?"

"I feel faint," said the girl. "I expect it's because I didn't have no breakfast."

"No breakfast!" cried David. "Come, here is a place where you can get something."

"No," said Emily, "I ain't got no money."

"That does not matter. I will pay for you."

"No," she replied sullenly, "I don't want nobody to give me things. I can work for 'em."

"But you can let me lend you a shilling. When you are better off you can pay me back."

The girl looked at the shop at which they stood, eagerly scanning the eatables exposed for sale. Then nature overcame her scruples, and she yielded. A few minutes later she looked more like herself again, and walked quite briskly by the young man's side. But she said nothing until, presently, they reached Victoria Park. Evidently she had been thinking deeply while they walked, for no sooner did they reach a seat in the Park than she said, harshly:

"It's no use, you can't help me."

"Oh, yes, I can. I've been thinking of a plan."

"No, you can't. You've seen mother. I wasn't goin' to tell you nothing about her; but you have seen for yourself. I could manage if she was sober; but she's nearly always drunk. She drinks every penny I can earn. I expect we shall be turned out of our room to-morrow. She hunted my pockets while I was asleep, and drank the money I was goin' to pay the rent with."

She spoke harshly, defiantly. Evidently she was in despair.

"Besides, why should you? You ain't nothing to us. I'd go in service, but for mother, I would; but what can I do?"

In spite of himself David felt the Quixotic nature of his enterprise. After all, what could he do? An ignorant girl and a drunken mother, how could he help them?

"You've learnt dressmaking, haven't you, Emily?" he asked, presently.

"Yes; but what's the good of it?"

"But if I got you a good place, a nice respectable place, with good wages?"

"What's the good of it? There's mother."

"But if I could arrange for her somehow?"

Emily Baker shook her head.

"I don't let her have money if I can help it," she went on, presently, "and you oughtn't to have given it to her last night. But then you didn't know. Still, it's all gone now, and I expect she'll be sober by to-night."

"But if I could get you a good place, Emily, and send your mother to some establishment where she'd be well looked after, what then?"

The girl looked at him eagerly, for the idea seemed pleasant to her. This was only for a moment, however.

"She wouldn't go to no such place," she said. "She won't go nowhere where she can't get her drink. Besides, she's my mother after all, and if I don't stand by her, nobody knows what she'd do."

"Do you love her?" asked David.

"No," said the girl, quietly, "I don't; but then she is my mother, and it 'ud be mean to leave her."

There was heroism in the answer, and David could not help being moved by the look in her eyes.

"No," she continued, "I must rub on somehow. I shall manage." But even as she spoke she wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Why did you interfere?" she went on. "I shu'd 'a' gone to the 'Barley Sheaf' but for you; then I should 'ave had an easier place, and more money."

"Do you wish you had gone?" asked David.

The girl looked at him steadily. "No, I don't," she

answered, "but it's no business of yours, and I'm a fool for talking to you now."

"No, you are not, Emily," replied David. "I should really like to help you, and I think still that the plan I've suggested is a good one."

"It can't be," said the girl, doggedly. "She's a bad 'un, but I can't leave her. I must go back now. No, you mustn't go with me. It's no use," and the young man saw the look of despair in her eyes.

"Well, let me do this," said David. "Let me lend you a sovereign, and then when I've got you a better place you can pay me back in your own time."

"Are you sure you can get me a better place?"

"Quite sure."

"Who are you? Tell me your name," she cried.

"I'll tell you some day," said David. "I don't pretend to be a sweetheart, nor anything of that sort, I only want to help you."

"You mean it, so help you God?" said the girl. Reared as she had been, it seemed to her that some kind of oath was necessary.

"So help me God," repeated David, "I desire only to help you."

"Then I'll borrow the money, and I'll work like a slave to pay it back. When shall I hear about the place?"

"To-night," said David.

"Where?"

"I'll call at your room."

"No, not there—not there," the girl seemed ashamed.

"Where, then?" asked the young man.

"I don't know," and she walked away without another word, while the young man watched her retreating figure, until presently she mingled with people in the street.

It was now noon, and although only a few clouds hung in the sky it was bitterly cold. The young fellow saw the thousands of people, who he knew must have what the people called "a hand-to-mouth existence." He wandered through street after street, and still dirt, squalor, wretchedness, and vice everywhere met his gaze. What could be done to clear this great cesspool? The main streets, the

great thoroughfares, looked prosperous enough ; it was in those side streets, back from the gaze of the thronging crowd, that he beheld such terrible evidence of want and degradation.

Presently he saw a woman standing at a street corner, off Mile End Road, selling matches. As he passed her the clock of a neighbouring church struck one.

“ Only one o'clock,” said the woman, with a shudder. “ My Gawd ! ”

She looked at the few coppers she had gained by selling matches ; then, with another shudder, went towards a public-house that stood near, and entered.

David watched her with a wistful look in his eyes. “ Supposing I were cold, and miserable, and starving,” he thought ; “ supposing I had no home, no name, no reputation, and I had a few coppers in my pocket, and knew that a glass of spirits would warm me, what should I do ? ”

He turned and walked along Mile End Road towards Whitechapel Road. He had not gone far when he saw a flaring announcement. It was to the effect that a debate on Socialism would be held in the Assembly Rooms of the Working Men's Club, and that all particulars could be gained from the Secretary, George Jenkins, whose address was given.

“ George Jenkins ? ” said David to himself ; “ surely I know the name.”

He hesitated a second, and then he remembered. George Jenkins was the name of the man who had called at Malpas Towers soon after he had inherited his fortune.

“ It will be interesting to see him,” he thought. “ I will call on him.”

A few minutes later he stood in a little room, the walls of which were covered with flaring placards. David read them because they were suggestive of the state of mind among a vast portion of the community. Each one of them expressed the same thought in different ways. The following was a sample of the whole :—

“ Socialism our only hope.”

“ We refuse charity, but we demand justice.”

“ Who makes the wealth of the land ? The workers. Therefore the workers should have their fair share in that wealth.”

“ Who sucks the blood of the people ? The rich idlers and landlords. Therefore, we must make the idlers work, and reform the land laws.”

“ If every able-bodied man and woman in England were to work, all that is now done, could be done by each one working three hours a day. And yet thousands work sixteen and eighteen hours out of twenty-four on starvation wages. Workers, shall we stand this ? ”

And so on. As the young man looked, he felt almost like a culprit. During the few days before leaving Malpas Towers, he had read a great deal of the writings of Tolstoi, and John Ruskin, and William Morris. These men had, in other ways, said practically the same thing. In a sense, this also accorded with Langford's views.

While he read, George Jenkins came into the room. David recognised him at once as the man who had called on him some months before.

“ I seem to know you, somehow,” said Jenkins.

“ Very likely,” said David.

“ Anyhow, what can I do for you ? ” and George Jenkins eyed him steadily.

“ I want you to get work for a respectable girl as a dress-maker,” replied David.

“ Ask me another,” replied Jenkins, with a wink. “ Why, you might as well think to get inter the 'Ome Sekitry's office at ten quid a week as to get a gal a good job just now. Who is this gal ? Where does she come from ? Where did she learn her trade ? ”

“ Let me put it in this way,” said David. “ Do you know of a dressmaker who does a good business ? ”

“ Oh, yus, I knows a dozen.”

“ Well, I want you to introduce me to one of them.”

“ Introdoose yer ? W'y, I don't kno' yer.”

“ Yes, you do,” replied the young man.

“ By gosh ! ” said George Jenkins, after looking at him again, “ you're the toff wot's come into old David Barton's money. Wot 'ave you come 'ere for ? ”

"You gave me your address and told me to call," replied the young man.

George Jenkins looked at his watch. "I'm goin' ter git some grub," he said.

"I'll go with you," responded David. "I want a chat with you."

"That sky pilot said as 'aa you wos a sensible chap, and that you 'ad a conscience," remarked George Jenkins, like one musing.

A few minutes later the two sat down together at the table of a Whitechapel eating-house. Before each of them was a steaming plate of stew, which George Jenkins ate with great heartiness.

"I see you are the secretary of the Society of Socialists," said David, presently.

Jenkins nodded.

"Do you like the work?"

"Only middlin'."

"Why?"

"It's 'opeless, mister, simply 'opeless, that's wot it is. I know I'm talkin' 'eresy, but it's 'opeless."

"Why do you say so?"

"Kin a boy ten year old knock daan St. Paul's Cathedral with a popgun?" asked George Jenkins. "Kin a woman with a baby in 'er awms break inter the Bank o' England?"

"I suppose not."

"You s'pose not, and so do I. We are rammin' our 'eads against a stone wall, thet's wot we're doin'. You're a toff, thet's wot you are. Wot I wants ter kno' is, 'ow is our work likely to affect the likes o' you?"

"I don't know. Perhaps a great deal."

"And p'raps not at all. I've lived in Whitechapel all my life, I 'ave, and I knows every inch of the ground for miles araand. I've been on the Socialistic tack for many years, and I speaks wot I knows. We're simply beatin' the air, that's wot we're doin'."

"How is that?"

"You're a sensible chap, as that parson said, and so I tell yer. I've come ter the conclusion that you cawn't uplift anybody by meetin' force with force."

"No? But give an example of what you mean."

"Socialism may be right, but it cawn't be done, sir, it cawn't be done. Yer see, it's this way: Socialism means an equal distribution of the nation's wealth. Well, at present the wealth is 'eld privately, and the people who 'old it, love it. Well, while that is so, you can never, never git people to vote for a government wot'll revolutionise everythink."

"What do you mean?"

"Put it this way. This 'ouse, and thousands of others even 'ere in Whitechapel, is owned or okkipped by people wot 'ave saved a few pounds, and directly a man 'ave saved a few pounds 'ee ceases to be a Socialist. It's nawsty s'yin' so, but it's true. Well, the Socialists be mostly those as 'avent sived nothink. In fact, if a Socialist is true to his creed, he cawn't save. Naa then, do you think these people 'll vote for a guv'ment wot'll tike it aw'y? I knows it's short sighted, but that's 'ow the people look at it. I'm at present the seckitary of the Socialist League, but I'm talkin' to you as man ter man."

"You are speaking somewhat differently from the way you spoke when you called to see me."

"No, I ain't. Mawk you, I feel as much as ever I did about the condition of things. Why, sir, I can show you sights araand 'ere wot's simply 'art-rendin.' I can tike yer to workrooms, w'ere people are simply killin' themselves to keep themselves alive. That's a Irish bull I know, but it's troo. Oh, it's troo. I've thot it orl aat, and I'm givin' up my post as a Socialist seckitary. Oh, I kno'. I've mide as red 'ot speeches as any ov 'em, I 'ave, and I've meant 'em. But it cawn't be done, sir, it cawn't be done. While money is wot yer call a *sine qua non* of existence, and the great thing squabbled abaat, well things will go on just as they are, Socialism or no Socialism. 'Cos w'y? 'Cos 'uman nycher is 'uman nycher. That's w'y."

"I am afraid I don't follow you," said David.

"Look 'ere," said George Jenkins, "I don't kno' w'y you've come daan 'ere. It ain't my bisness, p'raps. But wot are yer doin' this awfternoon? 'Ave yer got a foo 'ours to spare?"

"Yes," replied David, "I've nothing on hand."

"Then come with me," said George Jenkins. "I'll just show yer what I mean, and I think I can convince yer afore yer wants yer tea."

The two men left the eating-house together.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### THE LOGIC OF WHITECHAPEL

"WHERE are you going?" said David to George Jenkins, after they had walked some distance.

"We'll stop 'ere."

David looked, and saw a Salvation Army Shelter. They were in Whitechapel Road, only a few minutes' walk from Aldgate Station. Over the doors of the shelter was a hearty invitation for all to enter, also information to the effect that none need commit suicide, and none need starve. On entering the building, David saw a long counter where several people were busy at work. All around were placed solemn warnings concerning eternity, as well as Scriptural invitations to accept salvation.

A man, evidently well known to George Jenkins, came up and spoke to him in a friendly way.

"I just want to show this gent over the show," he said, in familiar tones.

"All right," said the man, and led the way through the building. Everything was conducted on the most simple plan; everything was frugal in the extreme. The first thing that interested David Baring was a large room, along which forms and plain deal tables were placed. On the forms sat, perhaps, two hundred men, who were eating heartily of the food that was placed before them. The prevailing dish was a kind of stew, which emitted a grateful odour.

"We feeds this kind of crowd every day," said the Salvation Army man.

"Free?" asked David.



“ Oh, no, sir, not free. We charge a penny and twopence each. For a penny they can have a good hunch of bread and butter, or jam, or something of that sort, with tea or cocoa. For twopence we give them as much as they can eat. They can 'ave it, as you may say, *ad lib.*”

David walked in among the men in order to have a better view. He saw that some had finished their meal and had gone to sleep; others ate hungrily. All of them belonged to the off-scourings of society. Mostly they were professional beggars or street-singers, while a few were hawkers of shoelaces, tapes, buttons, or matches. Some of them had their stock-in-trade by their sides.

“ How many do you feed every day ? ” asked the young man.

“ Oh, from two to three 'undred.”

They went through the compartment where the food was cooked, then into the lavatory, and afterwards ascended into a kind of loft. Here, in a room fifty or sixty feet square, was sleeping accommodation for, perhaps, two hundred and fifty people. The arrangements were very simple. The beds consisted of a frame about six feet long, two feet wide, and about six or eight inches deep. At one end a bit of wood was placed to hold a pillow. The mattresses and pillows were, apparently, composed of some kind of woolly material, and covered with cheap oilcloth, dark brown in colour. Every inch of space appeared to be utilised, and the place was fairly ventilated.

“ Are all these beds full every night ? ”

“ Always,” replied the man. “ Sometimes—often, in fact—we 'ave to turn people away.”

“ And how much do they pay ? ”

“ Twopence a night.”

A minute or two later they found themselves at the entrance, where a little office had been arranged.

“ Will you sign your name in the visitors' book, sir,” asked the man.

“ Do the same men come night after night, or do you get a new lot every night ? ” asked David.

“ Oh, they are mostly the same men who come,” was the answer, “ mostly the same. I've been here now for

several years, and lots of 'em have come every day and every night during all that time. I should say that from sixty to seventy per cent. of 'em is old customers."

"And they've been coming here for years?"

"Oh, yes, sir—for years."

"And do you find any improvement in them?"

"Not much, sir. Now an' then we gits one converted; but it's very seldom. In fact, lots of 'em gits worse. There was men who used to come years ago, and they was ashamed to come then. They ain't ashamed now."

"I see. Then there's very little real reformation?"

The man shook his head sadly.

"And what are the causes of their getting in this condition?"

"Oh, I should say that eighty per cent. of 'em come 'ere through booze. They drinks their money. And the other twenty per cent., well, they gits poorly and can't git work. Then, well, generally they go down 'ill morally as well as wot you may call financially."

"I remember when the social work of the Salvation Army commenced," said David, "it was promised that poverty should be destroyed, and that a new era in the social life of the people should begin. You've been trying it for several years now. What are the results? I really wish to know. I am no newspaper man, and I'm not going to write articles about it."

"Well, of course," said the man, thoughtfully, "we do a little; but it's 'ardly perceptible. It is, as you may say, like a drop in a bucket."

"Of course," said David, "I can see it is a good thing to give these poor wretches food and shelter, but you simply keep alive a lot of people whom the world regards as useless."

The man nodded. "Of course, we gits one converted now and then, and when we do we sends him to one of our factories," he added, "but those cases are very rare. It's the drink as does it, sir, it's the drink. Eighty per cent. or more come 'ere through the drink."

George Jenkins, who had been silent all the time, laughed derisively.

"Oh, yus, drink again," he said.

"Well, an' so it is," said the man. "We've traced the cases by the score, and we've proved it over and over again."

David gave the man a subscription, and left.

"Why did you laugh when the man said that drink was the cause of all the mischief?" asked David of George Jenkins.

"'Cos it's rot."

"It seems to me he spoke the truth."

"Oh, I knows. I've seen it fer years. Drink may be the occasion, but the cause lies deeper," replied Jenkins.

"I don't see it," replied David, "and it seems to me that those Salvation Army people are doing a splendid work."

"Oh, yus, in a way they are, no doubt. They are feedin' an' sleepin' a lot of people as might be as well dead as alive. They are helpin' to keep up a system which is the cause of the whole thing."

"What's the system?" asked David.

"The system of givin' money in exchange for sutthink else. The root of the whole business is in money. Private ownership, that's the mischief. While people can own things, this kind of thing will go on. I used to think that money ought to be more equally divided, and that when it was, things would be better. But it ain't no use. Private ownership of any sort is rooted in selfishness, and while selfishness is fed, well, the system will continue, and all this kind of thing will continue."

"I must say you are beyond me, Jenkins."

"You know what I told yer when I called at yer big 'ouse. I told yer 'ow old David Barton made his money. Now, look 'ere, why did he sweat 'is work-people? Why did he buy public-houses? Why did he run wot he called a people's bank? Why did he buy a lot of cheap property? W'y? To make money. I speak plane to you, mister. Yore money was got out of the flesh and blood and bone of the people. More, it was got out of the moral degradation of thousands of people. People say

it is the drink, it is the gamblin', and so on, of these people wot curses 'em. I tell yer, if ther'd been no private ownership in money there'd be no drink, and ther'd be no gamblin' and ther'd be no slums like this," and he pointed to a filthy slum they were just passing.

"It seems to me that money is wanted to clear it away," said David. "Money is wanted to give the people better homes and better food."

"Look 'ere," cried George Jenkins, "if you wos to give all the money w'ich ole David Barton made down here, do you think it would do any good? Not a bit of it. It would simply strengthen the system what causes the evil. See that woman there, comin' out of that pub, slued? Give 'er three paand a week, wot would she do with it? You don't know? Well, I knows. She'd kill 'erself in three months, that's wot she'd do. Higher wages! That's bin our cry for years. Well, in a sense ther's justice in it. But wot do higher wages mean? More drink and more devilry, that's wot it means."

David was silent. He was thinking about what the man had said of the way his uncle's money had been made.

"I'll take yer to one of yer uncle's old workrooms," went on George Jenkins. "One w'ere women work. It's just the same naa as it was then. It's owned by a man wot lives up West somewhere. A very religious man he is, wot gives thousan's a year to the mishinaries, and that sort o' thing."

A few minutes later the two stood in the workroom of a shirt-making factory. Perhaps a score or more of women were hard at work. Their ages varied from sixteen to forty. "They ain't fit fer much after forty," remarked George Jenkins, sententiously.

David looked at the women and they looked at him. On most of their faces was a look of indifference, mingled with a certain harshness of expression.

"How much can these people earn?" asked David.

"Oh, these are among the better sort," said George Jenkins; "they can earn perhaps ten shillin' a week. Some may get more, some less."

"How long do they work—that is, how many hours a day?"

"Oh, 'ere, and at their 'omes, twelve, fourteen—and sometimes sixteen."

The atmosphere of the place was stifling, but the women did not seem to heed. Their faces were mostly of a sallow, unhealthy colour. Some of them coughed incessantly, but each worked unceasingly.

When they left, David heard a hoarse laugh in the workroom.

"Let anybody work year in and year out in such a place, only for the idea of gettin' a few shillin' at the end of the week, and they don't graduate as angels," remarked Jenkins.

"Have you heard the conversation of these women?" asked David.

"'Aven't I rauther."

"Well, what do they talk about?"

"Wot do *yoo* think?" asked Jenkins. "Wot is it likely they'll talk about? I tell yer the older ones teach the younger ones,—that is, if the younger ones need any teachin'."

"Is it possible for girls to keep pure-minded in such places?"

"Possible, yes, it's possible; but it's jolly hard. Wot do *yoo* think?"

David grew more thoughtful.

"Look 'ere, I knows a place where four girls live together, and work together. They know me, too. It's close by 'ere. Would you like to see 'em? Mawk you, these don't drink, they don't go on the spree. They're respectable girls. They pay for two rooms, and 'ave their meals, such as they are, reg'lar. They used to work for ole David Barton, they did."

David accompanied Jenkins to the room of these four work-girls. Jenkins was right, these girls sought to be respectable; the room which David saw was clean and wholesome; but poverty had set its stamp everywhere. They were all hard at work—stitch, stitch, stitch. Jenkins had called them girls; in reality they were more than

thirty years of age. They were weary-eyed, and a look of utter hopelessness rested on their faces.

"Well, Leah," said Jenkins, "'ow are you?"

"'Bout the same."

"You don't see much change, I s'pose?"

"Not unless one on us gits ill."

"Let's see, you four 'ave worked together like this for several years now?"

The woman nodded her head.

"And you are just where you were when you begun, I s'pose?"

"You know we are!" cried the woman, half angrily, "wot is the use of awskin'?"

"How much will they earn?" asked David, when they had left the house.

"Oh, perhaps twelve shillin' a week, if they do well, and if they don't get poorly. But one on 'em is delicate, and so they 'ave to 'elp her."

"What will they do when they get old?"

"Gawd only knows!" said George Jenkins.

"Is that drink?" continued the man presently. "Nobody don't know nothink about them; they're respectable, they are. They don't belong to the slum order. One on 'em goes to chapel. But they ain't all like them. Some gals can git money easier, and drink makes 'em forget. But what then; is drink at the bottom of it? When they git old, and come to want, will it be through drink? P'raps so, in a way. But money's at the bottom of it. The man as keeps the shop sweats them, 'cause it means makin' more money. The people buys cheap things 'cause they love money, or 'cause they can't git enough to buy dear things. The whole system is built upon makin' money, and it closes up people's hearts, and makes 'em careless about sufferin'."

David was silent. He felt like a culprit.

"I think I'm beginnin' to prove my case," said George Jenkins. "To-morrow I'll take you through the match factories; I'll show you more of what I mean. Mawk you, I'm not callin' names. If the people who are now sweated could become sweaters. *they* would be sweaters, too. Oh,

they would, and perhaps be wuss than those as sweats them. Charity ain't no good, mister. It's only like puttin' a stickin' plaster on a cancer. It's private ownership what's wrong. It's a system what encourages men as are able, to make money out of the life blood of those as are not."

David remained silent.

"I must be goin' now," said Jenkins; "I've work to do."

"Before you go," said David, "I would like you to introduce me to a respectable dressmaker, who has a decent connection."

"Oh, yes, I remember. It's about the gal wot you spoke of. But who is she? Wot is she?"

David told all he could about Emily Baker, and how he desired to help her.

"It's no use, mister. No respectable dressmaker would take her on," said Jenkins.

"Not if I make it worth her while?" said David.

"Oh, yes, put it that way. Pay for it, and you can do it. Oh, yes, money 'll do it, money 'll do it. Yes, I know one who'll suit, I think."

Half an hour later David had made provision for Emily Baker. There was some difficulty at first, but David managed it. He had arranged with Miss Perkins, who prided herself on her respectable connection, to take on Emily at a salary of a pound a week. Who was to pay this pound a week, is a matter upon which I need not enlarge.

After David had partaken of food at the Temperance Hotel where he was staying, he went to his bedroom, and sat for an hour as motionless as a statue. He thought of what he had seen and heard. More and more the ghastly logic of the whole business impressed him. He had not become hardened, neither, perhaps, did he possess sufficient knowledge to grasp the question which faced him in all its aspects.

"And all my money came this way!" he cried presently. "It came to me at the cost of—God only knows what! The fact that hundreds of other people's money

came to them in the same way does not help me a bit. David Barton made his money here! here! here!”

It was now dark, and a cold drizzling rain had come on. He walked for more than an hour amidst grime and filth; he listened to the language which was common to the streets.

“I’ll go and see Emily Baker,” he said. “I’ll tell her what I’ve done. I may have been a fool, but I’ve raised the poor girl’s hopes by promising to help her, and so I’ll do it. After that I will——” But he did not finish the sentence.

The madness of David Baring, which was the cause of my writing his history, was beginning to possess him; a madness which was fraught with strange issues.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

DAVID BARING stayed in the East End of London for several weeks. During that time he saw all those departments of life and labour for which it is famous. He saw the great match-making factories, the clothes-making factories, the breweries, as well as the houses of many of the people who worked at them. He also visited the music-halls, the public-houses, the clubs, and the dancing-rooms which may be found in the neighbourhood. He talked with missionaries, nurses, district visitors, Salvation Army captains, and philanthropic workers. Indeed, so far as it was possible, he saw those phases of life for which Whitechapel, Stepney, Shadwell, and Poplar are peculiar. On many of his visits he was accompanied by George Jenkins, who had evidently taken a great liking to him, and whose peculiar views had set him thinking. At the end of his stay he was almost stunned. He felt he had only just begun to see the district. The life, thought, feeling, hope of the people were all largely hidden from his view.

As may be imagined, he was impressed greatly, and as



he had been led to think on certain lines, he saw everything through the medium of his peculiar thoughts. As we have seen, David Baring was honest; he wanted to be conscientious, and he was impressionable. Moreover, he was young, and young men are mostly impulsive. An older man would probably, when visiting such a district for the first time, have philosophised on the whole question raised. He would have said that the present condition of things was the outcome of a combination of circumstances, and, while they were very bad indeed, there was no possible remedy for them. The great thing was for the people to reform themselves, and the most he could do would be to support existing charities, and then go to his dinner, his wine, and his cigars. But David was young, his blood ran warm and free, and he was exceedingly susceptible to the influences by which he was surrounded.

“It’s just sickening, sickening, sickening!” he cried, as he packed his portmanteau. “Jenkins is right; nothing can be done. Charity simply encourages laziness. All these institutions are merely palliatives—merely palliatives. All the tens of thousands of pounds which have been spent here have made no appreciable difference in the life of the people. The whole evil lies in the system. It’s all money, money, money. That is the canker which is eating out the vitals of the people. Those match-making girls expose themselves to that horrible skin disease for money, and the employers allow them to be exposed to the danger of it for the same thing. The motive of every sweater is money. Those poor creatures who walk the streets will sell themselves for money. It is all money, money. And I have inherited a fortune which my uncle made down here. Those cheap shops, those public-houses, that money-lending concern—they made my money. I feel as though every pound of it was gained at the cost of the flesh and blood, ay, the very souls, of the thousands of men and women who made it.”

He recalled the scenes he had witnessed; he remembered the bleary-eyed, blotched-faced men and women in the public-houses, he thought of the haggard faces of the tailors who sweated in the workrooms, and the hundreds

of sallow-faced girls who toiled long and wearily for a paltry pittance, while a vision of the slums in those terrible back streets passed before his eyes.

What should he do? Suppose he spent his whole fortune down here? What good would he do? He would, he thought, add another sticking-plaster to the great sore, but the thing would go on festering as it had festered before.

Could he go back to Malpas Towers, and live the life of a country gentleman? The same evil expressed itself there, only in a different way. In Surrey he, David Baring, was nothing; his money was everything. And this was also true at Whitechapel.

Possibly his mind was diseased; possibly he saw everything through coloured glasses; possibly his mental powers were not great enough to grasp the situation in which he was placed. I do not attempt to explain, or to excuse. I am simply writing David Baring's history—the history of a sensitive, conscientious young man.

When he had packed his portmanteau, he called at the house of Miss Perkins, where he had obtained a situation for Emily Baker. She had been there some little time, and David went to inquire about her.

Yes, Miss Perkins admitted, she was a very respectable girl. Of course, she was of very little use as yet; the work she had been in the habit of doing was of the cheapest, poorest, coarsest nature. But she was fairly quick to learn, and in time she might become useful. She was perfectly willing to keep her on the terms which had been arranged.

David left an address to which Miss Perkins should write, if anything of importance to Emily's welfare occurred, and then left the house. As he did so, he saw Emily also leaving by another door.

"I am glad to see you, Emily," said David. "I wanted to say goodbye to you."

"Goodbye!" repeated the girl. "Are you going away?"

"Yes, Emily, I'm going away."

The girl had vastly improved. The haunted look had left her eyes; her whole appearance was healthier, happier.

She was better dressed, too. David had arranged for this with Miss Perkins. Moreover, she seemed, even in these few days, to have forgotten many of the sayings peculiar to the life she had been living.

“Do you mean to say that you are going away for good?”

“Yes, for good.”

“Oh, you are a gentleman,” she said, “and the likes of you don’t live down here. I *am* sorry you are going.”

The girl’s look and tones revealed more than her words. David’s going away was more to her than either of them was aware of.

“How is your mother?” he asked.

“Just the same.”

“She’ll not consent to go to a Home?”

“No, she won’t. And I must stand by her. She’s my mother.”

“I am very sorry,” remarked the young man.

“I’ve thought of going to a better room, but it isn’t much use. The public-houses are everywhere, and I have to keep away all money from her.”

“I want you to write to this address if ever you are in need of a friend,” he said, giving her the same address he had given to Miss Perkins.

“Yes,” said the girl, taking the piece of paper on which he had written. Tears welled into her eyes—the word she spoke was almost a sob.

“Emily,” went on David, “you’ll be a good girl, won’t you? If I were you I’d go to some church or chapel. It would grieve me very much if ever I heard you had taken——”

He hesitated, because he did not know how to finish the sentence.

“Do you think I could go wrong, sir?” she said. “Do you think after your kindness I would, sir?”

“No, I don’t believe you would,” he replied.

“Thank you, sir;” this time she sobbed outright.

“Goodbye, Emily.”

“Goodbye, sir.”

David could not understand why his heart was so heavy

as he walked towards the Mile End Road, while to Emily Baker life seemed utterly dreary just then.

A few minutes later the young man stood in the office of Mr. Crowle. The poor man's lawyer greeted him very warmly.

"What can I do for you, sir?" he asked.

"You told me you would find out if the girl known as Emily Baker was the child of your late clerk and the woman whom she calls her mother."

"I did, sir. I offered to do it for a five pound note."

"Everything is marketable," thought the young man; but he was curious to know whether the beautiful girl could be the child of the drunken woman with shifty eyes.

"I wish you to find out, without letting either the girl or the woman have any suspicions of what you are doing."

The lawyer thought a moment before he replied:

"That would make it a little more difficult, sir; but I will manage it."

"Very well," said the young man; "here is the five-pound note. When you have cleared up the case I will give you another."

The lawyer looked into the young man's face and made a mental note.

"I shouldn't wonder if this toff isn't good for fifty," he said to himself; "that is, if I manage things right."

"I'll do it, sir, I'll do it. You can depend on me."

"This is the address to which you must write," and he gave the office of Mr. John Jay, solicitor.

Mr. Crowle's face fell as he read what David had written down; but he was a man of great resource, and had a keen eye for the main chance.

"And now I'll go back to Malpas Towers," said the young man. It was dusk when he arrived at Malpas Station; nevertheless, the countryside appeared very beautiful to him, especially after the sights he had been witnessing. The Park through which he walked, too, seemed lovely beyond words. The great trees, although their branches were denuded of leaves, seemed to give him a welcome; the grey old house, which stood out against the evening sky, was fair to behold.

And it was his own.

He had telegraphed to his housekeeper, telling her of the time of his arrival, and so everything was ready for him. A tempting dinner had been prepared, and a great fire greeted him as he entered the library.

"After all, it is home," he thought, "and it is very pleasant." But even as he looked around the room, and noted its comfortable appointments, he thought of the dens he had been visiting.

He spent the evening in reading. No one called, and so he was not disturbed. Perhaps the reason for his being left alone was that no one knew of his arrival; but the young man attributed it to the stories which had been afloat—stories to the effect that he would soon have to leave Malpas Towers. Doubtless, belief in these rumours had been confirmed by his absence.

In spite of his interest in the book he was reading, he felt sad and lonely. He was there alone in that great house; there was no one to whom he could speak except the servants, and they could not sympathise with the thoughts that were surging in his brain. After all, what real joy did his possessions bring him? And was he any happier because of his beautiful surroundings? Besides, how was the money which bought Malpas Towers gained? Ay, what was the true history of all money? Would it bear thinking about? Did it not ever mean the lowering of manhood, the numbing of the soul, the dwarfing of life?

He thought of his yearly income—of the wealth which he possessed. Of what good was it to him, or to the world? Looking at the heart of the matter, of what real true good was money at all?

His mind was confused, he could not think clearly, and his vision was, doubtless, distorted.

The next day he went for a walk through the countryside. It was now March, and the day though cold was bright. As fortune would have it, he met with two people who were factors in his life. The first was Nora Brentwood. In spite of himself he felt his heart flutter as she approached, while the blood mounted to his face.

"It is a fine morning, Miss Brentwood."

"Yes, it is very fine."

"And I hope you are enjoying your walk?"

"Yes, thank you, very much."

Whether he was right or not, he thought the girl's manner was haughty, and her words lacking in courtesy. He compared this meeting with their last. Then she put on her most bewitching smile, she let her great languishing eyes rest on him, and during the first part of their conversation spoke in honeyed tones. Now, she looked away from him, while her voice was hard and metallic.

"It seems a long time since I saw you last," he said, impressed in spite of himself by the girl's handsome presence.

"Does it?" she replied. "I have not noticed. I suppose you have been away from Malpas Towers?"

"Yes, I have been away. Perhaps I shall soon be away from it altogether."

"Indeed? Well, you have scarcely lived there long enough to become attached to it. Excuse me, Mr. Baring, I am rather in a hurry. Good morning."

As the girl walked away, David felt his loneliness more than ever. He laughed a hard bitter laugh; the girl had strengthened the resolve which was beginning to form itself in his mind.

Later on in the day he met Colonel Storm. That gentleman seemed anxious to converse with him.

"I should like to speak with you about some repairs in connection with my house," he said. "I know I ought rather to approach the man who manages your estate for you, but, seeing we are neighbours, I thought you might not object to my speaking to you about it."

Possibly Colonel Storm was sincere in this; but David saw only curiosity to know whether the rumours which had been afloat were true. He knew that Colonel Storm was a gossip, and judged accordingly.

"You must excuse me, Colonel," said David, coldly, "but I have nothing whatever to do with it."

"No? How unfortunate. Do I—that is, I suppose you are still my landlord?" and the Colonel looked at him eagerly.

Perhaps this was only natural curiosity on the part of a man who had few interests in life, and who was eager know who was his landlord, but David understood otherwise.

"The management of the estate is left entirely in the hands of Mr. Jay, Colonel," he replied. "You had better make all your applications direct to him."

The Colonel coughed uneasily. During the last few weeks he had heard many things, all of which went to show that David's reign at Malpas Towers would be very short, and it seemed to him that the young man's words confirmed what he had heard. He had, of course, heard of his conversation with Nora Brentwood; indeed, it had caused quite a buzz of excitement in the little social circle to which he belonged. Possibly he would like to have spoken kindly to his young landlord, and told him of his hope that there was no truth in current gossip. But he did not. It might be that David's somewhat haughty manner prevented him, or it might be that Baring was right in his surmises. Anyhow, the Colonel walked away with a cold "Good morning," and left the young man with his unpleasant reflections.

During the afternoon David called on some of the farmers who rented their land from him. He was impressed by two facts, or what he thought were facts. One was, that they paid him less respect than formerly. Another was, that the life of these farmers was a constant grind to make ends meet.

"I shall have a hard job to pay my rent this year," was the cry that met his ears again and again. "Wages be 'igh, and men won't work like they used to. They don't care 'bout nothing but their wages. I tell you, sir, 'tis 'ard job to live—a very 'ard job. 'Tis simply slave, slave, and nothin' at the end of it."

As David sat alone that night in the room he was beginning to love, he thought over the incidents of the day.

"Everywhere it's the same story," he thought, bitterly. "The East of London, the West of London, and out here in the country. Life is utterly sordid, utterly sordid. I wonder whether it will be possible for me to find any one who will ever care for me for myself?"

A knock came to the door, and a servant entered bringing some letters.

David scanned them listlessly. Presently, however, a look of interest came into his eyes.

"That's Langford's writing," he cried. "I wonder what he has to say?"

Langford's letter was long, but the young man read it through time after time. Evidently it was deeply interesting.

"It must be fine," he cried presently, "it must be fine."

This was the part of the letter to which he paid most attention:

"Life here is free from all sordid care and worry. We never think of money, except to be glad that we have none. We are just a band of men and women who are trying to live a natural life. We work, but we never think of pay for it. We work for the love of it, and for the good of the little community. We have come out from the world, and, although it seems like boasting to say so, we are an object-lesson to the world. We show how the highest, and the happiest life can be lived, when it is freed from the world's barter. We care for each other because of what we are, not because of what we have. In short, ours is an ideal life—ideal because it is natural, and because we seek to be true to the best that is in us. We are tied by no convention, no artificial bond. The only aristocracy is the aristocracy of worth. Each day we meet, and commune with kindred spirits; we are free from miserable restraints, because we know that there is no abominable selfishness prompting any man's actions."

Following this was an idyllic picture of daily life and conversation, of pleasant gatherings in the common room when the daily work was over, of discussions ever raised above the paltry issues of place and power—the sole theme of interest in the world they had left. And then the letter concluded with a comparison between the life of the world, and the life of the little colony of men and women, who lived to develop all that was highest and best.

"How can a man become morally healthy," wrote



Langford, passionately, "when day by day he breathes an atmosphere which is morally poisonous? How can a man be a Christian in the true sense of the word, when his daily life is made up of one long endeavour to make money, and where a money value is placed upon the individual? How can a sensitive man be happy in a world where even such sacred questions as love and marriage are degraded into matter of pounds, shillings and pence? What dignity can there be in work, when at the end of it all is sordid reward?"

Every word in the letter sank into the young man's heart. At that moment it seemed utterly and absolutely true, while the picture Langford drew of the life of the Cornish colony seemed the fulfilment of a beautiful dream. There, a man could be loved for himself and himself alone. There, poverty and squalor could not be; there, hollow social distinctions would be impossible. There, religion could be lived. There, was the fulfilment of the words of the Founder of Christianity, about a little leaven leavening the whole lump.

Presently he got up and paced the room rapidly, his eyes flashing, his heart beating violently.

He looked around him, and noted the objects he was learning to love. Then he went out. The moon sailed in a clear, wind-swept sky. The tall trees in the park stood out boldly, the rich broad acres which surrounded it were dimly visible in the light of the silvery moon. He thought of many things. Of the past, the present, and the future. He realised his loneliness, and longed for congenial society. He thought of the price which he believed had been paid for the wealth he possessed; he felt the terrible logic of what he had seen and heard in the East of London.

"Langford is right!" he cried. "He is right! He is right!"

David Baring's mind was made up. He was possessed of the madness which had slowly been coming on him. He had determined to renounce money, position, and the thousand other things which wealth is supposed to command and to leave Malpas Towers and its associations for ever.

BOOK TWO  
*A YOUNG MAN'S MADNESS*

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE MAN WHO WAS MAD, AND THE MAN WHO WAS SANE

THE next morning David Baring went to Chancery Lane, and spent several hours with Mr. John Jay, solicitor.

At first the old man either would not, or could not, understand him; and then, when presently the young man's words made his purposes so plain that he could no longer pretend ignorance, he spoke in no measured terms.

"It is madness, madness!" he cried; "nay, it is worse than madness—it is idiocy!"

"Probably it is," said David, quietly; "nevertheless I am determined."

"But have you considered what it means?"

"I have considered everything."

"But, man alive, you are throwing away one of the finest fortunes of the time."

"Very likely, I do not want it. Beyond that moiety of which I spoke, everything goes."

"Moiety!" there was a world of scorn in the old lawyer's voice as he repeated the word.

"Yes, that moiety."

"May I ask what you are going to do with the moiety?"

"I am going to give that away also."

"Then," said the lawyer, grimly, "you must please to get some one else to do this business. I will not."

"You will not?"

"No, I would no more do it than I would give a madman a knife or a pistol who wished to commit suicide."

"But I do not wish to commit suicide. I wish to leave a bad life, and begin to live a new and a better."

"That's what every suicide thinks," remarked the lawyer, drily. "Anyhow, I will not transact this business. I will not go down to my grave with your curse resting upon me."

"Rather, I will bless you."

"As you think now, perhaps; but not in years to come. Of course, if you appoint some one else to be your solicitor I must hand over the business to him; but mark you, even then I will make an appeal to the authorities. I will declare that you are not sane."

"But I am sane, I tell you. I was never saner."

"I say you are mad."

"Let me show you I am not," cried David, eagerly. "Let me tell you what led me to take this step."

"That's better," said the lawyer, with a grim smile puckering his parchment-like skin, "that's better. Tell me."

David told him, in brief, his experiences since he had come into possession of his fortune. He described Langford's visit, the promise he had made, and his later experiences with Nora Brentwood. Afterwards he told of his visit to the East End, and what he had seen and heard. Finally he related how he had been led to take the step which Mr. Jay had condemned as madness.

The old lawyer's face was a picture as David told his story. Pity, amusement, wonder, contempt, sympathy—all were expressed in those time-worn features.

"Is that all?" he asked, when presently David stopped.

"That is all."

"Very good. Now let us have a chat."

"I shall be very glad to hear what you have to say."

"Smoking is forbidden in my office," said the lawyer, "but I have another room behind. I am going to break my rules. I am going to have some lunch sent in there, and I am going to smoke a cigar with you afterwards."

During lunch little was said. David noticed that a grim smile played on Mr. Jay's features, that his eyes twinkled with a curious light. The face of the lawyer was one not easily forgotten. Troubled as David was, he could not help wondering what thoughts were passing through the old man's brain. What secrets must be stored there; what strange stories he must have heard! This man had been a London solicitor for nearly fifty years, and during that time he must have come into contact with all sorts and conditions of men. He had, doubtless, had to deal with criminals and enthusiasts, with knaves and with fools. David wondered to which category he belonged, according to Mr. Jay's estimate. What were the schemes passing through his subtle brain?

Presently lunch was taken away, and the two men lit cigars, but neither spoke for several minutes.

"Does your cigar burn all right?" asked the lawyer, presently.

"Yes. It is a very good cigar."

"It costs money," said Mr. Jay.

"Yes."

"I could not get it without."

"No."

"I have artistic tastes, as you will see. I have a hobby for collecting pictures. Even here are some fairly good ones. That is one of Turner's, this one is by one of Raphael's pupils. The one near the window is one of Titian's masterpieces. My house in Russell Square is full of them. They cost me a good deal of money."

"But would not life be nobler if these things could be obtained without money? Ay, and if all men could obtain them. You see the great fundamental of English life is money. Business men spend their whole time in making money. Artists paint pictures for the same reason. Books are written for gain. All the gambling of our time, and most of our other vices, are prompted by the greed for gold. Both men and women sell their virtue for it. Now, I ask you this question: Can men and women become pure and true, and really great, while this sordid lust lies not only at the root of, but is the object of their endeavours?"

The lawyer listened in silence, and then he began to ask many pointed, searching questions. For a long time they conversed on the bald principle contained in David's words, and then discussed the proposition which the young man had made.

Two hours later David left Chancery Lane. The lawyer's arguments had not altered his determination. He could not live a healthy, natural life, he declared, while money was the touchstone at which everything was tested. He wanted to be free from it all. He wanted to save his soul, and to live amid associations which would free him from the "narrowing lust for gold."

When he had gone the lawyer sat still in his chair, thinking deeply.

"I hope I have saved him," he said, presently; "I hope I have; but I don't know—I don't know." And then he sighed like a man in doubt.

The next morning David left Paddington by the 10.30 express, and by about six in the evening he had reached a little station between Truro and Falmouth. It had been rather a cold ride, but his pleasant anticipations had relieved it from tedium. Besides, the country from Exeter to Plymouth was very fair to behold, in spite of the fact that the hand of winter was still laid upon the countryside. He saw beauteous houses nestling amidst the trees; he beheld the sunlit waves sweeping upon the shore as the train skirted the Devon coast. Soon after he left Plymouth, however, night began to close in, and the air grew colder. Still the sky was light, and the bright moon kept the night from being gloomy. He could not help noticing the speech of the porters when the Tamar had been crossed. They all spoke so softly—so musically. No one seemed in a hurry; an air of restfulness pervaded everything.

When he got out at the little station between Truro and Falmouth, the quietness seemed almost oppressive. He was the only passenger who alighted, and he saw no one save the two porters, who appeared to regard the stopping of the train as one of the events of the day.

"King Harry's Ferry is not far from here, is it?" he asked of the porter.

"No, sir," said the porter, "not very fur. Do 'ee want to git across to-night then, sir?"

"Yes, if I can."

"Oa, you can. Tommy Trethewey es allays glad ov a job. But your bag es brave 'n 'eavy. Do 'ee think you c'n car'n so fur, sir?"

"I'm afraid I shall have to let it stay here for the night."

"Oal right, sir. I'll take 'n in to th' office, and give 'ee a ticket for'n."

"Thank you."

"Be 'ee goin' fur to-night then?"

"Yes, a few miles. Can you tell me the road to Terwinnick?"

"Terwinnick? Aw, iss. Tha's where they curyus people do live. They've new named the plaace, they have. They call it The Brotherhood Settlement, now, they do. You bean't goin' there, be 'ee?"

"Yes."

"But you bean't wawn of they soart, be 'ee?"

"I don't know. I'm afraid not—at least not yet."

"But, lor', sir, they be maazed, and you be a gentleman, you be."

"Maazed? What do you mean?"

"Aw, they do go round like savages. I b'lieve they do wear cloas now, 'cause tes so could; but laast summer they didn't 'ardly wear nothin'. They went round without shoes 'n' stockin's, while the wimmen there do dress funny."

"Is that all?"

"No, 'tedn'. I 'ear as 'ow they waan't pay no rates nor nothin'. And they waant pay no lishense for the dogs they do kip, and they waan't sell nothin' nor buy nothin'."

"No?"

"No, and they do live just like 'aythens."

"How is that?"

"Well, sir, I dunnaw nothin' but what people do tell me."

"But aren't they kind, and honest?"

"Kind? Aw, iss, I reckon they be kind; I hear as 'ow people can go into their 'ouses and take wot they like, and do what they like. People can go ther' and stay so long

as they've got a mind to, and they waant take nothin' for ut. An' I'm tould that ef anybody do larf at 'em, and chaff 'em, an' say ugly things to 'em, they doan't answer back, nor nothin' like that."

"Well, what is there wrong about that?"

"Aw, nothin' wrong, but tes so funny. I was tould that some time ago one of 'em got over the adge in Maaster Bedinnick's field, and took a turmut. Well, a turmut edn' nothin', but Maaster Bedinnick's hind, that es Aaron Beel, es awful bad-tempered—*ter'ble* bad-tempered, sure 'nough. Well, he seed this chap, and he went up to un and began to swear. But the chap didn't say nothin', he jist laughed and went on parin' the turmut. That made Aaron more maazed then ever, so 'ee jist up and given 'im a scat in the faace. But the chap didn't 'it back; though I spoase 'ee was big enough to ait he. All 'ee did was take some 'bacca out of 'is pocket and offer 'n sum. But there, I must be goin.' I caan't stop craakin' no longer. When you git 'cross King 'Arry's Ferry, sir, you jist ax for the Brotherhood Settlement, and anybody 'll tell 'ee where tes."

David thought he had never seen anything more beautiful than Truro River, as the man rowed him across. Green fields and beauteous woods sloped right down to the river's edge, while the clear water shone like silver, as the boatman rowed his little craft to the other side.

David found that the Cornish peasants were very fond of talking, and the boatman evidently desired to be friendly. He told him many stories about the "brothers," and seemed very anxious to know whether David belonged to the fraternity.

The night remained gloriously fine. The moon was nearly at its full, and scarcely a cloud hung in the great dome of the sky. The roads were dry and clean, for a keen frost had set in, while the trees which bordered the river were decked with ice crystals. All this made the valley of the Fal appear like a fairy glen.

"I'll go 'long little bit of the way, sur," said the boatman when he landed. "I shaan't 'ave nothin' more to do to-night, and I shall be fine and plaised to walk weth 'ee."



"This is very kind of you," said David, as they trudged along together.

"Nothin' of the soart, sur," said the Cornishman. "Be 'ee stayin' a goodish bit, sur?"

"Probably I shall stay a good while."

"Aw, tha's yer soarts. Well, sur, the Branite Chapel edn' fur from the plaace you be going to, and we sh'll be glad to see 'ee ov a Sunday. I be a local praicher myself. You can set with we ef you do come. Ax fur Thomas Trethewey's sait, sur. But law, I sh'll be there and see 'ee. We shall be very glad to see 'ee to a cup of tay, ef you do come."

"Thank you, you are very kind," said David. "Very likely I shall come."

"Aw, tha's yer soarts. Now, sur, you caan't miss et now. 'Bout a mile an aaf furdur on, and then you'll see a directin' poast. The gate laidin' to the farm es jist opposite. No, sur, I bean't goin' to take nothin' for shawin' 'ee the way. You've paid for your fare 'cross the rever, and tha's enough. Good evenin' to 'ee, sur."

"Why did I offer that man money?" asked David to himself, when he was alone. "Was it gratitude, or was it because of an old bad habit?"

His thoughts about Tommy Trethewey were soon dispelled, however, for a little later he saw the gates which blocked the way leading to the Brotherhood Settlement.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A NEW UTOPIA

A STRANGE feeling came into David's heart as he saw the road leading to his new home. For the first time he fully realised that he was treading a strange path, leading he knew not whither. He saw, too, that very possibly he might have failed to understand the true significance of the life he had sacrificed. Might he not have looked at the people who lived around Malpas Towers with jaundiced

eyes? Was there not much goodness and kindness of heart in places where he had seen only selfishness and thirst for gold and position? Was it true that all life was judged according to a base standard? He pictured the home he had left—the comfortable surroundings to which he had been accustomed for nearly a year. And he had left all—for what? For a chimera, a phantasm, a dream? Who were these people among whom he was going? What were their thoughts, their aims, their ideals? He knew nothing about them except what Langford had told him. He might be going among a set of lawless fanatics—of low-bred clowns. He felt utterly lonely, too. He had not written to Langford, so no one expected him. How would he be received, and what would be the outcome of the step he had taken?

But this was only for a minute. The memories of his experiences came rushing back to him, while utter discontent with his past life again possessed him. He was going to try an experiment, and he was fascinated by the promises it held out to him.

Moreover, there was something inviting in the look of the old homestead which revealed itself through the trees, and he felt sure he should find the fulfilment of his dreams among the men and women who lived there. In spite of his youth and splendid physique, he was far from well. The excitement and worry of the past few weeks had preyed upon his nerves, and he felt the need of rest amidst agreeable associations. Besides, he was young, and youth loves change, loves adventure, loves romance, and this experience of his was tinged with romance.

He was glad he had come, and it was with quickened step, and fast-beating heart, that he went up to the old house among the trees. A few minutes later he saw light shining from the windows, and he heard the sound of eager voices.

He knocked at the door, and waited.

No one, however, paid any attention to him, although he felt sure that some one must have heard him. He knocked again—this time much louder—and the noise resounded through the building.

"Come in," cried half a dozen voices.

He lifted the latch and entered. A minute later he found himself in a large, old-fashioned, low-ceiled room, which was reminiscent of a dining-hall in some old country-house. From what David could see—for the lamplight was rather poor—about thirty people had gathered together. Some sat on chairs, others on a long, low form, while a good number reclined on the floor near to a wood fire, which blazed up a huge chimney.

They were a motley-looking crew, and, as David's eyes grew accustomed to the light, he was able to distinguish the features of most of them quite plainly. The sexes seemed to be fairly equally divided, and their ages seemed to vary from about eighteen to thirty-five. No old people were present at all; not one, as far as David could judge, had passed the meridian of life.

Some of the faces he saw were thoughtful and refined; others again showed signs of coarseness. There were a few who appeared to be foreigners; these wore a ferocious aspect—at least, most of them did. One man almost made him afraid; his eyes shone so brilliantly, while his long black hair hung in tangled masses down his shoulders. The women were far from handsome—at least, in most cases. Moreover, David could not help being impressed by the fact that the women were as free from restraint as the men.

Nearly every one in the room was smoking. In most cases the men smoked pipes, while the women puffed cigarettes. All of them talked freely, while an air of "do as you please," pervaded the party.

They turned as David entered, and looked at him critically. None of them knew him, and as they noted that he was well dressed, they seemed to wonder what he was doing there.

"Will you come in?" said one; "there's plenty of room—plenty of room," at which saying there was a hearty laugh.

"Excuse me for coming," said David, "but I wanted to see Mr. Langford."

"Langford? Where is Langford?" cried one of the women.

"Oh, it is his turn to bed down the cattle to-night," replied another. "He'll be here in a few minutes. Did you want to see him particularly?"

"Yes," replied David. "Oh, you needn't go and fetch him. There's no hurry. But he's a friend of mine, so I thought I'd look him up."

"Oh, that's all right. Have you come far?"

"Yes; I have come from London."

"Oh, then you didn't walk?"

"Hardly," said David, with a laugh. "Three hundred miles are not so easily covered."

"Langford walked all the way. He's evidently more advanced than you."

"More advanced?" queried David.

"Yes. He doesn't believe in the exchange of money. He thinks it wrong to give anything like a money exchange. Didn't you know?"

"No. I didn't know he had gone quite so far as that. How long did it take him to come?"

"Oh, nearly a fortnight. He walked about thirty miles a day."

"But how did he manage about food, and where did he sleep?" asked David.

"Oh, he managed quite easily. He came in the summer, and slept mostly in the open air. As for food, he worked for it."

"I see."

"You don't believe in that, I suppose?"

"I hardly know what I do believe in. The question is such a big one that it confuses one."

"I don't see that," cried several, as if eager for argument.

"But I do," said one of the women, whom David had specially noticed, "I do. None of us are quite true to our principles; we only go as far as we can. We are all dependent on money. We had to buy our seed corn last year, and we are obliged to pay for our clothes. Goodness knows, I tried to get the shopkeeper who sold me mine to allow

me to work for them ; but he wouldn't. When our ideas are more generally accepted we may manage, but until the country gets more civilised it will be impossible."

"Don't use that hateful word, Bertha."

"What hateful word ?"

"Why, that word 'civilised.' Civilisation is the great curse of the nation. It lies at the basis of the system against which we protest."

"Hear, hear !" cried several, while others shook their heads as if in doubt.

"Let's have the truth," said the woman called Bertha. "Let's face facts. I hate the vile system as much as any one. All the same, we are obliged to compromise with it. It's no use hiding the fact. We are Socialists."

"No, no, we are not Socialists—we are Anarchists. Socialism aims at the equal division of money. Anarchists don't believe in money at all."

"All the same, we are practically Socialists ; we are working here, and living here on that principle. You know we are. We couldn't get on without money. Each of us brought what little we had, and put it into the general pool. That's Socialism."

They had evidently forgotten David ; at least, some of them had, for they argued eagerly on the question which seemed to have a great interest for them. As for the young man, he sat down on the chair which had been offered, and listened.

"I contend we are not Socialists," said a buxom woman of about thirty years of age, who had not hitherto spoken, but had been scrutinising David very closely. "Socialism believes in force. Socialists would use the forces of the State to make rich people disgorge, they would have all capital nationalised ; we, on the other hand, although we have not altogether succeeded, have gone far towards making money unnecessary. We do not believe in it, and we have come out from the world in order to show the world what real Christianity is."

"Well done, Lavinia !" shouted several around. "Ah ! here comes Langford."

As Langford entered the room, David turned eagerly

towards him. As yet, in spite of the free-and-easy ways of those around him, he did not feel quite at ease.

"Here's a friend of yours, Langford," said one of the women, pointing to David.

"Good Heavens!" cried Langford, as he held out his hand.

"Yes, Langford. You scarcely expected to see me, I suppose!"

"By King Henry's bones, no! What in the name of the four winds of heaven brought you here?"

"You did."

"I! How?"

"Well, your letter."

"I never asked you to come, in the letter."

"No, but you described the happy life you were living here, and as I was sick and tired of everything, I thought I'd come and look you up."

"Good, good!" cried the woman who had been called Lavinia. "Our principles are taking root. Here is another convert."

"Are you a convert?" asked Langford.

"I don't know. I think I am. Anyhow, I am tired of the world of money. I am tired of a life where everything is sold to the highest bidder. So far I've gone. How much further I shall go I don't know."

Some of the women clapped their hands, but the men, on the other hand, looked dubious.

Langford looked for a moment like a man stunned, then his face cleared.

"We'll have a good long jaw after you've had supper. Is there anything ready? I suppose you are hungry?"

"I don't know," said David. "I had something to eat at Plymouth, but nothing since."

"Plymouth! Why, man, you must be starving! What is there to eat, girls?"

"We've boiled some onions, and there's plenty of bread and butter, and tea."

"Good! Fetch it up, and let the man have something to eat. Meanwhile, let me introduce you. This," said Langford, turning to the company, "is a friend of mine. We were pals at Cambridge, and he is the best of good

fellows. This," turning to David, and holding one of the women by the hand, "is Lavinia Meadows. She is one of the moving spirits of the colony. This is Bertha Gray; she's very fond of an argument. This is Eva Rivers; she is one of the most advanced spirits among us."

And so on. Each of the women shook David's hand, and uttered some words of welcome. Evidently they were pleased to see him, and, from the look on their faces, one might judge that they admired him greatly.

The men did not seem to regard him so kindly, although all professed to welcome him. Perhaps some had kinder feelings towards him than they were able to express. Three of the men were Russian refugees, and spoke English very badly. Two others were Belgians, each of whom possessed but a very limited English vocabulary.

After the introductions came the supper, which David did not relish much. Here again no formalities were observed. There was no cloth on the table, while the knives and forks were constructed on the most primitive plan. The cocoa, moreover, did not taste any better because he had to drink it out of a thick pint jug.

Supper was over at length, however, and afterwards they scattered themselves around the room and prepared to listen to what David might have to say for himself. The young man, by this time, however, began to feel more self-controlled. Now that he saw the life of which he had dreamed face to face, he began to feel more critical—more desirous of asking questions about it.

"Well, tell us about yourself," said Langford, as the community, more quiet and subdued than usual, closely watched the new-comer.

"Presently, Langford," was David's reply. "In the meantime, I am very interested in you. You've been here several months now; tell us how you find things."

"Oh, splendid," replied Langford. "Physically, I never felt better in my life. We spend most of the day in the open air, and in the evenings we gather here for conversation. Sometimes we have set debates. We discuss books, systems, men. We are all brothers and sisters, and we get on well together."

“Do all live here?”

“What, in this house? No, not all, but a good many. There are two or three small houses in addition to this; some live in them. But this is a big house, and contains a lot of rooms. The man who used to own it gave it to us for the use of the Colony. I say, where is Treloar?” This to the other occupants of the room.

“Oh, he’s gone over to the Muswells, at Muswell Hall. There has been some difference between ourselves and them, and he’s gone to try and settle it.”

“Muswells?” said David, at once interested, remembering that Malpas Towers originally belonged to the Muswells. “Who are they?”

“Oh, they are an old county family here. They hate us like poison. I doubt whether Treloar will do any good with them. I am afraid it’s rather a ticklish business on which he’s gone. Ah, here he comes. He’ll tell us all about it. Treloar, here is an old friend of mine, who has come to see us.”

David paid more than ordinary attention to the newcomer, for, although he could scarcely explain why, he became very desirous of knowing more about the Muswells.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF LIFE AT THE BROTHERHOOD SETTLEMENT

TRELOAR did not immediately answer the questions put to him; instead, he left the room for a few minutes, during which time David had an opportunity of speaking alone with Langford.

“Of course, no one knows anything about me here, Langford?” said David.

“No, not a word. I have had no occasion to speak about you.”

“I am glad of that, for, in truth, I do not wish either my name or my affairs mentioned. No, I am simply a



nobody, tired of the ways of the world. Some day I will tell you my reason for this. As you know, my full name is David Wardlaw Baring. I shall be glad if you will let the Baring drop."

"Very well, my dear fellow. No questions will be asked. There are several people here with peculiar histories, and no one will resent your desire to keep yours to yourself."

"That's all right; let that be understood. I have special reasons for my request—reasons which have become apparent these last few months."

Langford opened his eyes as if in wonder, but said nothing, and as Treloar returned at that moment, all attention was directed to him.

"Our difficulty with the Muswells is just this," Treloar said to David, presently. "Our farm joins the Muswell estates. The ring fence belongs to them, and it is their duty to keep it in repair, which they refuse to do. As a consequence, their cattle come on to our land. This, when the crops begin to grow, will be disastrous. At present, moreover, we are so busy on the land that we cannot afford to spend time on repairing hedges. If we do, it will mean starvation next winter."

"I see. Well, and what was the outcome of your visit?"

Already the young man was interested. He felt himself, for the moment, to have interests in common with the Brotherhood people. Besides, he was eager to obtain information about the Muswells.

"Oh, I went to see Mr. Muswell, who, I suppose, is a fine specimen of the old-fashioned Tory gentleman. He has strong prejudices; he hates everything that does not agree with his ideas, and feels a sort of call to put down innovations with a strong hand. I had already seen his steward, Jobling, who is entirely of his employer's way of thinking, and had evidently prepared the old man for my coming."

"Well?"

"Oh, well, he was evidently pleased that his cattle were daily getting on our fields, because he hates what he calls our topsy-turvy notions. He is, also, mad with me person-

ally. He thinks I am abusing the heritage of my fathers. In his own peculiar way, he declined to interfere with the management of the estate, and referred me to Jobling. Jobling knew the law on the matter, and, if I doubted this, well, I had better consult my own solicitor. When I told him I had no solicitor, he said it was a misfortune, and then laughed in a grim sort of way."

"But what are you going to do?" asked David.

"Oh, nothing."

"Nothing!"

"No, nothing."

"But you say it will mean taking away your food for next year."

"It will mean taking away some of it—but what of that? We shall manage to live."

"But you say it is his fence, and, therefore, his duty to keep it in repair."

"That is so."

"Well, then, are you not encouraging him in wrong doing by letting him alone?"

"No, I don't think so. Besides, why should we destroy the serenity of life by a quarrel? Why should we help to keep up an evil system? I have been to him quietly, and told him what seems to me right, and he refuses to see it. Well, we must be as kind and neighbourly as we can, and then, perhaps, he'll become ashamed of himself. No real good has ever been the outcome of force, and, certainly, I shall not appeal to it."

There was general approval of this, and, to crown the unanimous opinion that the Brotherhood position was right, the woman, called Bertha, read a few passages from Thoreau's *Walden*, which were much enjoyed.

Evidently there was much desire to hear what David had to say for himself, but Treloar, seeing that the new-comer scarcely felt free to speak, carefully kept the others from questioning him, and presently, when the community retired for the night, he had spoken to no one of the reasons which had led him to come among them.

Six other men slept in the room where David rested that night. Indeed, the place looked more like a soldiers'

barracks than an ordinary bedroom. There were no bedsteads, and very little furniture in the great bare chamber. For an hour or so after they had stretched themselves on the mattresses, there was a general hum of conversation, then, little by little, silence reigned.

Although Langford was near him, the young fellow felt very lonely, but he drove away depressing thoughts, and, after a time, fell asleep. As soon as it was daylight he awoke, and found that the room was empty. The others had risen quietly and left him while he was asleep. He afterwards discovered that they had gone to the farmyard to attend to the cattle, and to help in the house. It soon became evident that each was servant to the other, that no one gave any orders, that no one reproached another with failing to do his duty. At least, that was the ideal which was set up for their guide. Sometimes a bit of human nature manifested itself, but complaining one of another was never encouraged.

When David reached the great room he found that breakfast had been prepared. It was of a very simple nature. Some had basins of milk and bread, while others ate large quantities of porridge. Each chatted pleasantly with the other during the meal, then prepared to go out.

"What are our watchwords for to-day?" asked the woman called Bertha.

"Here they are, all ready," said Langford, lifting a large blackboard against a wall and placing it so that all could read.

This was what David read :

*In the absence of the highest aims, of pure love of knowledge, and surrender to nature, there is the suppression of life; we have the factitious instead of the natural, tasteless expenses, arts of comfort, and the rewarding as an illustrious inventor whosoever will contrive one impediment more to interpose between the man and his true object.—EMERSON.*

*I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of the clothes.—THOREAU.*

*Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.—THE GALILEAN CARPENTER.*

"Your selection, Langford?" said some one.

Langford nodded.

"Good," said some.

"Could not be better," remarked Treloar.

A few minutes later, all the men and a large number of the women had left the house. No one asked David what he was going to do, or how he was going to spend his time. At first he felt uncomfortable, thinking they wished to boycott him; but he soon found out his mistake. Their ideal was perfect liberty for the individual; while the duty of all was to create such an atmosphere that each man and woman should be ashamed to eat the bread of idleness.

He discovered, moreover, as the days went by, that each morning, after breakfast, the blackboard was uplifted, on which was written the thoughts of great men, which were to be a guide and an inspiration through the day. The writers whose words were most frequently quoted, were Epictetus, St. Francis of Assisi, Emerson, Thoreau, Ruskin, Carlyle, and Tolstoi. The passages usually selected were finely worded, and contained some ennobling thought. Certainly their mental pabulum was of a very high order; if lofty ideals, expressed in good English, could ennoble a community, the Brotherhood Settlement would have attained to a high standard. Nearly all the maxims poured scorn on wealth, and on the comforts which men usually believe that wealth commands. In fact, David was not long in discerning that civilisation, as it is usually understood, was regarded as a curse, and they held that the nearer they could get to primitive standards, so much would it be better for them.

"Where are they all going?" asked David of one of the women who assumed the duty of looking after the dairy.

"They are off to the fields," was the reply. "Planting time is upon us. Oats ought to be in, so did potatoes."

David put on a travelling cap which he had placed in his overcoat pocket on the preceding evening, and went out in the yard.

"I'm afraid he's not far advanced," said one of the women to another, as he left the house.

"No? Why do you think so?"

"Oh, he's like a man dazed. Besides, look at his clothes."

"But he looks very nice."

"That's a matter of opinion. He hasn't got the Brotherhood stamp upon him, anyhow."

"Well, I like those Norfolk suits, and those light felt leggings make him look like a country squire."

"He may be, for all we know."

"Ah! well! I don't think he'll stay long."

"But I do. He's got spiritual eyes. He's tired of the sordid life of society. He's chosen to come to the world of ideas and ideals. He'll soon see the uselessness of wearing starched things around his neck. All I hope is that we shall not quarrel about him."

"Quarrel about him, why?"

"Oh, he's so handsome that the girls will think he's their affinity."

The other, who was the woman called Bertha, was silent for a few seconds. "Yes," she said, presently, "who knows, he may find some soul here that goes out to his own."

Meanwhile David, seeing Treloar in the yard, walked up to him.

"I say, Mr. Treloar," he said.

"Excuse me," answered the other, "we have no 'Misters' here. I am Treloar—Conrad Treloar—but Conrad hasn't a brotherly sound, so I am always called by my surname."

"Very good," laughed David, "Treloar, then. You seem to be the man of authority here."

"Excuse me again; nothing of the sort. We are on the same level. It is true I have to do certain things, because, according to the old ideas, I owned this place, and thus know some of the people in the neighbourhood; but we have no man in authority."

"Anyhow, I should like a chat with you."

"About yourself?"

"Yes."

"Langford has already told me all that is necessary. You got tired of the world of money, or rather of what money means, so, hearing of us, you gave up an unnatural for a natural life. We are all heartily glad to see you."

"But I want to do something."

"What can you do?"

"I don't know. Not much, I'm afraid."

"Well, what would you like to do? I can't ask you to work with Langford, because he has just left for Truro, while I have to go to Falmouth; but our people are busy carting manure, digging ground, and planting potatoes. What would you like?"

"If you would just point out those fences which you say border the Muswell Estate, I think I might perhaps be able to mend them."

"Do you know anything of hedging?"

"Not much, but I spent a vacation with a farmer once, and just for fun I worked with him at repairing hedges."

"Couldn't be better. Let me see, you'll want a digger, a shovel, a hook, and possibly an axe. You can find them in the toolhouse yonder. If you'll come with me, I shall just have time to show you the ring fence that needs repairing."

They accordingly left the yard, and went out among the fields, and presently reached an elevation. Treloar pointed out the fences concerning which he had visited Squire Muswell on the preceding night.

"I think I should begin down here, near the river, first of all," he said. "That's where Muswell's cattle are capable of doing most harm. I hope you won't feel lonely. To-morrow, I daresay, Langford may want to work with you. Good morning. Oh! by the way, we generally all gather for the mid-day meal about twelve o'clock. It's just eight now, so you'll have four hours' work. Usually we regard four hours a day as enough for any one to work, but you have happened upon us at the busy season."

A few minutes later David made his way across the

fields towards the spot which Treloar had indicated. Arrived there, he found that the fence had been broken down in several places, and that a regular thoroughfare for cattle had been established.

He did not set to work immediately. Everything felt so strange that he was unable to make a beginning. Besides, he felt interested in the country in which he had come to live. He had never been to Cornwall before, and the gentle undulations of hill and dale, and the richly wooded landscape attracted him. He saw that the river was a tributary of the Fal, and that it rushed on at a merry speed in the direction of Falmouth. It was like and yet it was unlike Surrey, but whichever way he looked, loveliness abounded. It is true winter had barely departed, but the air was soft and balmy, especially in the valley through which the river ran.

Presently he heard a clock striking, and looking in the direction from which the sound came, he saw through some giant trees an old house nestling.

"That is the home of the Muswells, I expect," he said to himself. "I wonder if they are in any way associated with the people who lately owned Malpas Towers?"

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DAVID RENDERS A SERVICE TO MISS GRACE MUSWELL

DAVID found it rather difficult to mend fences. Perhaps this was because he was unused to the work, or it might be because he felt himself to be acting the part of a madman. Even while he was cutting turf and driving stakes into the hedge, he could not help laughing at his new experience. Here was he, who had lately possessed enough to buy up the whole countryside, doing the work of a day labourer. He who had never done manual labour, was toiling as though his very life depended on his industry. And yet he felt happy. The air was fresh and sweet, and

the smell of the newly turned soil was healthy and invigorating. Besides, he was doing something real and tangible. He was doing Nature's work, the work which the Creator had allotted for man. Presently he caught himself singing. Perhaps the chirping of the birds and the gurgling of the river, swollen by winter rains, stirred the music of his soul. The lowing of the cattle and the bleat of the sheep made him feel the sweet restfulness of nature.

He had been working perhaps an hour, and was beginning to congratulate himself upon the progress in his work, when he heard the sound of horses' hoofs.

"It's quite pleasant to hear signs of a human being near," he laughed. "My word, this is country life with a vengeance."

Looking, he saw what had hitherto escaped his notice, a lane winding through the fields until it came to the river. Here there was a ford for cattle and vehicles, while a narrow wooden bridge had been placed for the convenience of foot passengers. The hedge of the lane was so high, however, that it was impossible for him to discern any one who might travel along its crooked course. Indeed, as David afterwards discovered, this, like other lanes common to Cornwall, had hedges ten and twelve feet high, which were covered with a thick growth of hazel bushes, brambles and honeysuckles. Thus it was, that while he heard the clatter of horse's hoofs, he could see no living being.

After a few minutes, however, the sound became plainer, and then he saw a horse and rider go up close to the ford of the river with the evident purpose of going across. In summer this would have been a very easy matter, because in those months the now rushing river would be nothing but a little meandering stream. Now, however, the current was swift and strong, and while at the fording-place the stream was wide, it narrowed on each side of the ford to a gully of about fifteen feet wide, the banks of which were covered with thick withy bushes.

David saw that the rider was a woman, and as far as he could judge a young woman. She sat her horse, which



looked young and restive, with perfect ease, and did not seem to regard the crossing with any apprehension whatever. The horse, however, was fearful of the swift moving waters, and started pawing the pebbly banks nervously.

"He does not seem to like his task," thought the young man. But he did not move from his position by the hedge side. Indeed, there seemed no reason for his doing so. Doubtless the young horsewoman was acquainted with the river, and had possibly forded it scores of times.

Still he watched with interest as she urged the animal to take the stream, and felt inclined to laugh as he tossed his head impatiently and snorted as if in anger.

Whether the young rider was aware that David was watching her or not, I do not know. Perhaps she was, for presently she grew impatient, and struck the young horse a smart blow with her riding-whip, whereupon he plunged madly into the stream. For a few steps all was well, but presently reaching the middle of the river, the force became so strong that the horse, frightened at what was evidently to him a new experience, grew unmanageable. At first he tried to turn back, whereupon his rider struck him again, then, taking the bit in his teeth, he rushed down the main current of the stream, where the water grew deeper and swifter at each step, towards the spot where David stood.

The young rider controlled herself wonderfully. She did not cry out, neither did she seem in any danger of losing her seat. Nevertheless, her position was not pleasant. The withy bushes which banked the river grew so thick and strong that in some places they almost joined in the middle. Thus it was that, try as she might, she could not save herself from being struck by the branches. Moreover, the banks did not improve farther down, neither, as far as David could see, did the stream stretch out into any wide shallow place.

Of course there was no difficulty in the young man grasping the situation, and immediately he dropped his tools, and rushed forward to offer what help might be in his power.

"Don't be afraid," he cried cheerfully. But whether the young rider heard him or not it is difficult to say. The roar of the stream was loud, while the plunging of the frightened horse increased the difficulty of hearing him.

Seeing an open space between two thick bushes he rushed close to the river; then, holding a thick willow branch with his left hand, he stretched out as far as he was able, and thus, when the horse came up, succeeded in catching the bridle rein with his right.

"Steady, my boy, steady," he said to the horse, and skilfully drew the horse's head to the bank.

But the difficulty was far from being overcome. The bank was steep, and as I said, thickly wooded. Moreover, the water reached the horse's belly and was rushing swiftly. If he climbed the bank, he would drag his rider through such thick undergrowth that, possibly, she would be pulled from his back in the process.

Still David had managed to stop him, and the very fact of a strong man's hand on the bridle had evidently calmed the frightened animal somewhat.

"Can't you lead him up the river to the ford?" cried the girl, excitedly.

"That is impossible, I am afraid," said David, looking at the girl's excited eyes and flushed face. "You see the bushes are too thick. But don't worry. I'll manage."

He saw that the bottom of her riding habit was floating down by the horse's fore legs, while she was wet and uncomfortable generally. Even then he thought she seemed somewhat familiar to him; but he could not call to memory wherever he had seen her before.

Still holding the thick withy branch with one hand, and the bridle with the other, he let himself down into the water, and in a few seconds he felt himself standing on the river's bed.

"Take your foot from the stirrup," he cried.

The girl obeyed without hesitation.

"Now," he said, "I am going to let the bridle go, and then I can lift you to the bank. Be ready, for I expect the horse will begin to plunge the moment he is free."

The girl nodded.

"You are free from the pommel of the saddle, aren't you?"

"Yes."

In another second he released the horse, and had lifted the girl, in spite of willow branches, on to the bank.

"Are you all right?" he said. "These thick bushes have not hurt you?"

"No. Thank you, so much."

Contrary to his expectation, the horse had not rushed away, so he caught the bridle rein again.

"I am afraid I cannot get your steed out here," he said, with a laugh. "I'll have to get him back to the ford again."

"But you can't. He won't go against the stream unless he's led. I tried him."

"We'll see," said the young man, confidently.

The water reached his loins, but he did not seem to heed. Indeed, he appeared to regard the matter as a joke. He was young, and strong, and vigorous, and for a man who had spent days in snipe shooting, a wetting was nothing to trouble about. Besides, during the last winter he had grown to be a good horseman, and felt perfectly at home on a horse's back.

A minute later, in spite of the difficulty in mounting, he bestrode the animal, and was urging it against the stream. For some time the beast refused to budge, but presently he mastered it, and a little later he had reached the ford, where he had no difficulty in guiding it to the road.

"I am afraid you are rather uncomfortable," he said, as he rejoined the young girl. "Your dress is very wet. I fear ladies' riding habits are not suitable for rivers."

"No, I must go home," said the girl. "I never expected such an adventure as this. I can't imagine why Bob behaved in such a way. I never knew him like it before. I am very annoyed."

"I am so sorry it happened," said David, which was scarcely the truth.

"Oh, I don't mind for myself," she hastened to say;

"getting a little wet is nothing. Only I hate to be mastered by a horse, especially as——" here she stopped, as though the words she was about to say could have no interest to a stranger. "But you are terribly wet," she went on; "you need to change immediately."

"Oh, it doesn't matter," laughed David. "I have been as wet a dozen times this last winter, and have not changed till night. Besides, it's not at all cold to-day. At least, I don't feel it so. I hope you'll be none the worse for this little mishap."

"Oh, no, and I thank you so much. I am sure I don't know what I should have done if you had not been near."

"I daresay you would have managed. Still, I am glad I happened to be close by. Will you continue your journey?"

"Oh, no—I shall ride back home. I do thank you very much, and I am sure my—that is, the friends with whom I am staying, will be glad to know who—that is, they will be able to express our obligation to you."

For the first time since he had seen her, he realised his position. She had spoken to him as an equal, doubtless regarding him as one whom she could meet on friendly terms. The thought somewhat confused him, he was not anxious for this girl to know that he had come to live at the Brotherhood Settlement.

"Do you live near here?" he asked, somewhat awkwardly.

"Yes—that is, I am staying at Muswell Hall," and she looked towards the old house, which David had seen nestling among the trees. "I am staying there with my uncle. I am Grace Muswell."

Evidently she was much excited, or she would not have told him who she was. Perhaps, too, her gratitude towards the young fellow who had helped her out of an awkward situation led her to be more frank than she would otherwise have been.

"Then you are not a Cornishwoman?"

"Oh, no, that is——" then she added, with heightened colour, "no, I am not a Cornishwoman."

He looked at her steadily for a few seconds.

“Do you know, I believe I have seen you before?”

“Indeed! Where?”

“It must have been in Hertfordshire, or Cambridge-shire. It was last June, I think. I was lying on a bank by the roadside, and you drove up with an old gentleman. I believe I unfastened your horse’s reins, or something of the sort.”

“Oh, yes. I remember now. How strange!”

“Yes, the world is not very big, is it? Ah, but you are shivering. If you are going to ride back to Muswell Hall, I will take your horse across the ford, and you can get across by the foot-bridge.”

“Thank you; you are very kind. And I am afraid I am cold.”

David led the horse to the lane again, while the girl walked by his side. Truly, his first day had afforded him an unexpected experience in Cornwall. It was far from unpleasant, too. To have helped a young girl under such circumstances aroused the romance within him, and gave life rosy-tinted hues.

“Of course, you know this district well?” she said presently.

“No. I never saw Cornwall till yesterday.”

“Then you are a visitor?”

She was still excited, and perhaps the fact of their former meeting had strengthened her curiosity concerning him.

“Yes, I suppose so—that is—well, I may probably live here permanently.”

“Then you do not know my people?”

“No, I do not know them.”

She was evidently desirous of knowing who he was, possibly for the purpose of being able to tell her friends, who would, she thought, call on him.

“Look,” he said, as if wishing to change the conversation. “You cross by the little wooden bridge. I will ride Bob. I am afraid you do not care to venture crossing the river with him again to-day.”

He laughed as he spoke, and there was something in

his frank, honest face, which made the girl feel friendly towards him.

A few seconds later they were together again. Bob, under the young man's masterful hands, had forded the river without difficulty, and seemed to be quite subdued.

"Can I help you to mount?" said David. He held out his hand, and the girl put her foot in his palm. A moment later he had lifted her into the saddle.

"Thank you, very much." She hesitated a second, and then: "I hope—that is, I am sure Mr. Muswell will be glad to know you." This she said hurriedly.

Still he did not tell her his name. The truth was he did not desire her to know it. He imagined that she might be connected with the Muswell family who had owned Malpas Towers, and if she were, she would doubtless have heard of David Barton, and of David Baring. He could not at that moment have given a reason for not letting her know who he was, but he refrained nevertheless. The meeting had been pleasant, and he would have liked to have seen the girl again, but probably they would be strangers in the future, and he saw no reason for giving her information about himself.

"Thank you, you are very kind," he said, lifting his cap.

The girl waited a second as if she expected him to say more, and then she galloped away.

"He is scarcely polite," she said to herself as she rode along the lane. "I gave him every opportunity of telling me who he was, so that some one could call and thank him, but he rudely kept silent. I hope he's a gentleman. But of course he is. I wonder who he is, though?"

As for David, he stood watching her until she was out of sight.

"A bright, bonnie girl," he said to himself. "Yes, it was she who sat in the carriage with that old man. I thought I remembered her face. She seemed less haughty to-day than then, too. But I suppose she felt it her duty to be civil. Still——"

He stood looking up the lane even when he could no

longer see her, and there was a strange far-off look in his eyes.

“ Evidently a healthy-minded girl, in spite of the canker-ing influences of our modern social life,” he continued. “ My word, it seems strange. When I saw her first, I was on my way to possess my fortune, and now, when I see her again, I have just abandoned it. Well, if abandoning it has given me a chance of seeing her and speaking to her again I—but what a fool I am ! ”

“ Grace Muswell,” he repeated, “ a sweet-sounding name, and, if I mistake not, a good girl. I wonder if we shall ever meet again ? I wonder if, when she knows I am a member of the Brotherhood, she will care to speak to me again ? ”

He felt himself wet and cold, and slowly retraced his way towards the Brotherhood Settlement.

“ This is a strange place,” he thought, as he looked at the old house, “ and I feel as though I have had an interesting experience this morning.”

## CHAPTER FIVE

### “ I AM A MEMBER OF THE BROTHERHOOD SETTLEMENT ”

DAVID was received with a great deal of merriment at the Settlement. He did not feel called upon to tell them the incidents which led to his wetting, and they inferred that it had come about through his being engaged in work to which he was unaccustomed. Although it was but eleven o'clock, he found that some of the men had returned to the kitchen, just, as they declared, to have a little chat. This he discovered was no uncommon custom in the colony. The most perfect liberty existed under every circumstance. Sometimes, when work was very pressing, members of the fraternity declared that they saw no reason for putting themselves to any inconvenience. They had come there, so they said, to live a natural life, and to be free from worry therefore ; when reading Emerson

was more in accordance with their feelings than digging, they read Emerson. As no one was master no one interfered, and although a man might be idle for a week, it was not felt right to disturb his repose by accusing him of laziness, for by so doing they would have to destroy their own tranquillity by making the accusation. Moreover, such a course would be in direct opposition to the ideals which they held up.

Therefore, as I said, when he returned to the house several of both sexes were there to greet him, and to laugh at his accident. Their remarks were entirely good-natured, and most of them seemed to regard his wetting as something to be proud of, being so much better, as they declared, than to keep dry by remaining in an office, engaged in useless drudgery.

Some of them offered him clothes; but this the young man refused. Whereupon others offered to sit with him in his bedroom, and talk with him while his wet garments were dried before the huge kitchen fire. As it might seem churlish to refuse again, the young man accepted the offer; but he soon found that refusal would have been useless. As a matter of fact, privacy was practically unknown in the Settlement. They boasted that they had "all things in common," and, as a consequence, a man could not be sure even of the privacy of his own bedroom.

Still he enjoyed the free-hearted way in which the fellows spoke to him. They told him frankly of their lives—how they grew tired of the grinding, sordid drudgery of civilisation, and of the cankering influence of private possession, and how in the Settlement they found what they desired—absolute liberty of conscience, and entire freedom from the paltry conventionalities of modern life. Others were strong in their praises of England. One especially, a Russian refugee, who was a member of a religious order corresponding very nearly with that of the Stundists,—and who as a consequence refused to bear arms,—told him that although England was entirely in the dark in relation to the greatest truths of life, it was still the best country in the world.



"You give us all a home," he said, in broken English. "You ask no questions, you impose no conditions. We come here, and we say what we like and do what we like. That is why I like your country."

"No," said another, an Englishman, "it is a God-forsaken country. It is on the point of ruin."

"Ruin?" questioned David.

"Yes, ruin! Its ruin lies in its apparent safety. Its poverty lies in its wealth, its weakness in its power."

"A very sweeping statement," remarked another, "but true. I will tell you why. She depends on great armies and navies for safety, whereas these things are dragging her to the dust. She believes that money will buy prosperity, whereas everybody who is not mad knows that money is sapping the nation's life. Money supports every corruption, keeps up every abuse, feeds every evil passion, destroys all spirituality."

"England has no ideals," said another.

"What is your ideal here?" asked David.

"Our ideal is to live a natural life. With us serenity of soul is above everything. We say in relation to life, nothing compensates for the disturbance of one's peace of mind. Therefore live for that. Why, think of us here. We live together, a band of happy people. We have no treasures on earth. We fear nothing about the future. We live in the present, and we are true to the best life."

"I take it you do not believe in force at all?"

"No; in no form do we believe in it. Force never did any good, never will. It always harbours, ay, and intensifies, evil passions; it fans the flames of hatred, it keeps up the worst traditions of the race."

"I am rather interested," said the young man; "suppose now, in relation to this trouble with the Muswells, Mr. Muswell should determine to grasp the whole of your farm, what would you do?"

"We should let him take it."

"You would not produce your claims to it? That is, you would not adduce any legal evidence that the land is yours?"

“Oh, no.” I believe Treloar has destroyed all vestige of proof that the place was his.”

“So that if any one saw fit to drive you out, you would not resist?”

“Resist! Certainly not. As though land or home were a sufficient reason for the destruction of the serenity of one’s soul! Supposing we resisted, we should be worried, we should have to prepare our defence, we should be full of anxiety, we should have to use the machinery of a bad civilisation, we should encourage evil and rancorous feeling—and all for what? A bit of land! No, no; we should be stultifying the very purposes for which we came here.”

“And yet it is by those very laws of England, laws founded by force and maintained by force, that you are allowed to live here, quiet and unmolested,” remarked David.

“We can’t help that. We do not appeal to laws; we, as far as we can, ignore them.”

This topic formed the basis of a long conversation, which I will not try to reproduce here. I have only written so much to show the influences which were brought to bear upon David’s life. For, as we have seen, the young man was working out the great problem of how best he could use the gift of life; he was trying to discover how he could wisely spend the years of his existence here on this earth.

By afternoon his clothes were dry, but he determined not to be placed in a similar predicament again, so he arranged to go to the station on the following morning and get his luggage. He saw now that he ought to have brought it with him, as no means had been offered whereby it could be fetched.

The next day, therefore, he brushed his clothes, and then prepared to walk towards the ferry, whereby he could cross the Fal. Owing to various circumstances, he did not start until towards the middle of the forenoon, and as a consequence it was nearing mid-day when he caught sight of the river. He had not reached it, however, when his heart gave a sudden leap, for coming towards him he

saw Grace Muswell and a young man, who might be some four or five years older than herself.

They were both on horseback, but David saw the girl turn towards her companion and say something which drew the young man's attention to himself.

When they came up to him, therefore, he was not surprised that they stopped their horses as if desirous of speaking.

“ Excuse me,” said the young fellow, “ but my cousin informs me that you were kind enough to help her out of a very awkward situation yesterday.”

“ It's not worth mentioning,” replied David. “ I simply happened to be by, and so—well, but it is nothing.”

“ My cousin thinks otherwise,” said the young man. “ Anyhow, I am glad to have this opportunity of thanking you. I did not know your name, or I would have found you out yesterday. You think of living in the neighbourhood, I believe you told my cousin ? ”

“ Yes, possibly.”

“ Would it be impudence to ask where ? ”

David was silent.

“ Excuse me for asking,” said the young man, “ but I only thought that—that——” he looked at David closely as if to take in at a glance the *tout ensemble* of the man—“ that is, I hoped we might arrange to meet again.”

David made a sudden resolve. It was no use hiding his position any longer.

“ You are very good,” he said. “ Under some circumstances I should have been delighted. But as I am situated, it is, I am afraid, impossible. My conception of—of things—will be different from yours. I am a member of the Trewinnick Settlement yonder.”

“ What ? ”

“ I am a member of the Brotherhood Settlement,” repeated David, quietly.

“ What, that—that Socialistic—that is——”

“ Yes, just that.”

“ But, but you are a gentleman, that is——”

The young fellow had uttered the words almost without

thinking. The surprise had been so great that he could not govern his speech.

"Yes, I hope I am," said David, quietly.

"Excuse me," said the other, "but—but I cannot control my surprise. With the exception of Treloar, who used to be a good fellow, I thought that the community was comprised of a lot of Russian refugees."

"There are several refugees who come from Russia," said David, and he could not help laughing as he saw the look of utter astonishment on the young man's face.

Perhaps the laugh did something to put both more at their ease, for the young man spoke more freely.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I am sure this is a joke of yours. This is an age of experiments, and you, for the sake of a new sensation, have come here—well, just for the fun of the thing."

"No," said David, "that is not so."

"But do you really mean that—"

"I am a member of the Trewinnick Brotherhood? Yes, I do not believe in private property, or the struggle for riches. I do not believe in force of any sort. I do not believe in the world's standards."

"Then you are a Socialist?"

"No, the word is scarcely descriptive. If I am anything, I am an Anarchist."

The young fellow uttered an expression which I will not write down.

"It is very kind of you to be so friendly," said David; "but now you know what I am—know that I've neither position nor property—I am afraid you will regard your proffered kindness as impossible."

"At least, I am much obliged to you for helping my cousin," he said cordially.

"I hope you are none the worse for the little mishap yesterday," said David, turning to Grace.

"No, not at all, thank you."

The girl had listened to the conversation in amazement. His every word and action suggested that he was an educated gentleman, and as such he contradicted every idea she had associated with the Brotherhood Settlement.

"I am glad you suffered no harm," he said pleasantly. "By the way, I am afraid I was very rude yesterday. You were gracious to me, while I did not even tell you my name. Not that it can matter to you," he said stammeringly, for the sight of the young girl's face excited him. "I am poor and unknown, and must remain poor and unknown,—my name is David Wardlaw."

"Any relation of the Wardlaws of Dartmoor?" said the young man.

"No, I am afraid not," replied David. "I am not aware that I am in any way associated with a notable family."

He spoke so pleasantly, that in spite of the social gulf which he had opened up, neither Grace Muswell nor her cousin thought of him other than as an equal.

"My name is George Muswell," replied the young man. "I am afraid that you will not think very kindly of me, especially as my father has refused to comply with certain requests which your Brotherhood has made. Of course, you know all about it?"

"Yes, I know all there is to know, which is very little."

"Does Treloar intend going to law?"

"Oh, dear no. He does not believe in force of any sort."

"Excuse me, but may I ask what you intend doing?"

"Oh, yes. I am going to mend the fences myself. Fortunately, I was engaged on that work yesterday when I had the honour of meeting Miss Muswell."

"You mending fences?"

"Yes. I shall, all being well, be engaged on that work this afternoon. I am afraid I am not an expert, but I hope to keep your cattle from getting on our crops."

"Will you forgive my asking what is, I am afraid, an impudent question?" asked young George Muswell.

"Oh, I dare say you'll not ask anything concerning which there is a need for forgiveness. Ask anything you please."

"Well, then, what led you to be masquerading after this fashion?"

“ I can assure you I am not masquerading.”

“ Then will you tell me what led you to adopt such a mode of life ? ”

“ That would be a long story, I am afraid.”

“ Forgive me if I touch upon delicate ground ; but you are a man of the world—you know the world—therefore, to see such as you among such a—a crew—well, it is surprising.”

“ Oh, I'll answer you as well as I can. I am tired of the world, and the world's hopes. I find that the basis of society is false. It is built upon utterly poor ideals. Money, and not worth, is the secret of success and honour. Nearly everything in life is sold to the highest bidder. Love is bartered for money. A rich man or woman cannot be sure that the one he or she may marry, does so for love, so much is marriage made a matter of barter. Religion is degraded into a question of money. Cures of souls in our National Church are sold to the highest bidder. Everywhere the poor parson is afraid of offending the rich pewholder. And then, nearly every vice and crime of our time find their *raison d'être* in the same evil. Virtue, truth, honour are sold every day—for what ? Money. The very basis of English civilisation is just here, and the result is deplorable. In the Settlement we do not participate in the thing at all. We do not let money have any dominion over us. We judge of men and things from a higher standpoint than that from which the world judges.”

George Muswell was silent for a few seconds, while Grace listened in speechless astonishment.

“ What you say is very interesting,” he said, presently, “ but we must be going. Good morning, and thank you again, very much, Mr. David Wardlaw.”

About a week later the members of the Brotherhood Settlement were much excited on account of a letter which had arrived from Mr. Muswell, to the effect that in relation to the dispute concerning the fences, he would be glad if Mr. David Wardlaw would call at Muswell Hall, when he hoped that they would be able to make some satisfactory arrangements.

“ But why Wardlaw ? ” asked many voices.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE OPINION OF THE ELECT

“ BUT why Wardlaw ? ”

That was the question repeated again and again from all parts of the room. The letter had arrived one morning, before the members of the fraternity had gone into the fields, consequently the whole of the colony was present.

“ That I am sure I cannot explain,” remarked Treloar ; “ perhaps Wardlaw can tell us.”

David was silent. He thought he knew the reason, but he did not feel free to tell these people. No one was aware of his meeting with Grace Muswell, or of his subsequent encounter with George Muswell.

“ Yes, surely Wardlaw must know,” remarked Eva Rivers, who was one of the most advanced members of the community, and had shown great partiality for David. “ Perhaps he knows Mr. Muswell, the owner of Muswell Hall. Do you, Wardlaw ? ”

“ No,” said David, glad of a chance of answering in the negative. “ I never heard of this Mr. Muswell till I came down here, and I have never seen him at any time—that is, to my knowledge.”

Langford kept his eyes keenly fixed on David, but he said nothing.

“ I think I heard you were a Cambridge man,” continued Eva Rivers.

“ Of course we all know that,” said Langford. “ He and I were at the same College.” He said this hastily, as though he were anxious to shield his friend from unpleasant questions.

“ Then may not some of the Muswells have heard of him there ? ”

“ Of course that may be possible,” said Langford, “ but all these conjectures can do no good. Muswell has asked to see David, and I think it will be better for him to go and have the matter out.”

"I'll tell you what it is," said Bertha Gray, "Muswell's people must have seen Wardlaw mending the fences. There's no doubt about it, he has the look of a swell, and they are curious to know him, and that's all about it."

"I think that's very probable," said Treloar. "Let me see, Wardlaw, didn't you go to the Brianite Chapel last Sunday?"

"Yes, I did," answered David.

"And did you talk with any of the people?"

"Oh, yes. I had a long chat with an old local preacher called Tommy Trethewey."

"Then that's how it has come about. Tommy has by some means told your name to some one who lives at the Hall. I have heard that the people in the neighbourhood regard you as something of a mystery. Indeed, a man asked me only yesterday if you were a lord, or something of that sort. All this will have reached the ears of the Muswells."

By this time David felt quite at his ease.

"I can see I am an important man," he said, with a laugh. "I prophesy that those fences will be mended immediately. Who knows? The whole lot of us may be invited to the Hall at the next great social function."

"When does he wish to see you?" asked Bertha Gray.

"He mentions to-night."

"Well, can you go to-night?"

"Oh, yes, one time is as good as another."

"Then I should say to-night. But look here, David, you'll not bow the knee to Baal, will you?"

"What do you mean?"

"You'll not lower our standard? You'll not make any compromises? You'll not admit in any fashion the right of the individual to our private property? You'll disclaim all association with force of any sort, won't you?" The woman spoke with great earnestness, and there was a light, almost fanatical, in her eyes.

"Perhaps some one else had better go," said David.

"Oh, no, I didn't mean that. But somehow I can hardly feel that you are one of us. Perhaps you can't feel as strongly as some of us feel. I know the meaning



of the evil of competition and force, and I realise the cankering influences of money standards. I was brought up in a suburb of London. My father owned a grocer's shop, and I know how that shop poisoned our lives. We were just afraid to speak, because by telling the truth we might lose a customer. We were led to respect our customers according to the amount they spent at the shop, and we were almost ready to fall down and worship those who came to us in a carriage. Oh, I know! People who kept the chemist's shop over the way would hardly speak to us, because we were grocers, while the lawyer's daughters would hardly notice the daughters of the chemist. And I tell you it made life just a miserable bit of flunkeyism. I went to chapel, and it was the same at chapel. It was all money and position—all money and position. And so, now that we are here as equals in God's sight, having destroyed all those paltry things—well, I can't bear the idea of any one who is associated with us falling down and worshipping the golden calf."

There were tears in her eyes as she concluded this long speech, and David felt sure that she was sincere in every word she said.

"Life is so different here," she went on. "We all work, but we work one for another, and for the love of the work. We all speak our minds, and what we say is respected, not according to any position we may hold but for the value of our words. Every morning now I feel thankful that I have a chance of thinking honest thoughts, and of being true to the best that is in me. I never had such a chance before; that is why I am impatient at the thought of any one of us going to the man of money, cap in hand."

"Oh, I don't think you need fear," said David. "If I go up to the Hall, which I don't much relish doing, I have no intention of being servile. I shall speak to Mr. Muswell as one gentleman speaks to another."

"I don't like the term 'gentleman,'" said Eva Rivers. "We've dropped all that. You mean you'll speak as one man to another—as one soul to another."

"Yes, assuming that we both have souls, and that

we can both speak with the soul, it shall be as you say," and David laughed cheerfully.

"That's right. Let's see, what are our mottoes for to-day?"

"Here they are," said Treloar.

David turned and read:—

*"Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of kings ridiculous."*—EMERSON.

*"If it profits me to own a piece of land, it profits me to take it from my neighbour."*

*"If it profits me to own a garment, it profits me to steal it."*

*"And hence wars, seditions, tyrannies, conspiracies."*—EPICTETUS.

*"It is morning when I am awake, and there is dawn in me."*—THOREAU.

"It might be stronger," said Eva Rivers, "but it is very good. Think of those things, David, when you go up among the money-bags."

A little later David was at work mending fences. As it happened he was alone. During the last three days Langford had been with him as a companion, but to-day other things had claimed his friend's attention. Perhaps his solitude was good for him, for he was able to think of his position.

On the whole he was happy—happier than when he had been the Squire of Malpas Towers. Life was less sordid, less hedged in by convention. Now he was respected for himself, and not for his position. Freedom from anxious thought, and plenty of healthy work, had brought the roses back to his cheeks again. He could eat the plainest food with relish, he could labour for a day, and not feel tired at the close. Moreover, he looked forward with interest to their evening gatherings. Many wild, foolish things were said, but they were said honestly—sincerely. Besides, the very strangeness of his surroundings had a kind of fascination. Money was never mentioned, save as a superfluity of which they had no need. There was never any worrying about keeping up appearances,

or meeting bills. It is true the authorities would come upon them for rates and taxes, in spite of past protests, and they had to pay for certain necessary things. Still, they had as little to do with money as possible, and of course no one ever thought of saving.

Sometimes he was met by awkward doubts ; but concerning these he spoke to no one, although they naturally coloured his thoughts. One question which naturally faced him was of much importance. Had he reached his life's ideal ? Did his present mode of existence satisfy him, and did he intend to remain on the Colony during the rest of his days ? He was but a youth even yet, and although his experience had made him old beyond his years, he could not help remembering that he was of an age when, according to the ideas of the world, he was but on the threshold of his career.

Naturally, too, he thought much of Nora Brentwood. Not that he troubled much about her. He realised that whatever might have been the case if she had been worthy of his thoughts concerning her, his love for her was not very deep. Indeed, he could think of her without a pang, save that pang which came from the fact that she lowered his ideal of womanhood. Still, his experiences with her led him to ask himself whether he was to live his whole life without ever thinking of love and marriage. Moreover, if he were to marry, where was he to find his wife ? It is true there had been much talk at the Settlement about affinity of soul, and many revolutionary ideas had been expressed about the evil of existing marriage laws, but he had not found his affinity in the Colony, neither did he believe much in their ideas about marriage.

In spite of all these things, however, he was content ; nay, more, he was happy, and he could look back without a sigh towards the artificial life he led when he was Squire of Malpas Towers.

When evening came, he became much interested in his mission to Muswell Hall ; he wondered much what kind of reception he would receive at the hands of Mr. Muswell, and whether by any chance he would see Grace. He also spent some little time on his toilet, and ransacked his bag-

gave to find some of the " starched " garments so despised in the colony.

" No, David, no ; surely you are not going to wear those things ? " said Bertha Gray, as he appeared in the large room prior to leaving.

" Why not ? " asked the young man, with a laugh.

" Why not ? Well, it is a mark of the old, evil life. It is encouraging a system whereby unnecessary work is done."

" Unnecessary ? I don't quite see it."

" Of course it is unnecessary. For, first of all, starched things are uncomfortable, and, second, they are useless. What does Thoreau say about uncomfortable and useless things. They occupy the time which should be spent on something better. Life is given to us to feed the mind and to cultivate the soul, not to be wasted on the evil customs of a false civilisation."

" Just so," laughed the young man, " only one of the glories of this Colony is that each one can follow his own sweet will. Now, honestly, I feel better for having some clean linen around my neck, and for the life of me I can't see why one cannot as well wear linen as flannel."

" Of course, of course," said Bertha Gray, " only it seems like lowering one's standard."

" Yes," said Eva Rivers, " and I feel that when one of us goes among these worldlings, he should admit of no compromise. I sincerely hope that David will let in some truth to their darkened souls."

" I will let in all I can," laughed the young man, " but then I must ask you to remember that I have not advanced as far as you have. I am here largely as a learner, and not as a teacher."

" For my part," said a Russian, " I think that perhaps it is better for these people to see one of us who is not so far advanced. He will be able, as it were, to prepare the way for the greater, and fuller truth."

" A sort of John the Baptist ? " suggested David.

" Ay, that is it," said the Russian.

" Oh, let us have no compromises," said Eva Rivers. " Let us have no parleying and quibbling about our sacred mission. Let Wardlaw remember these things : First,

that the world is groaning under a false system. Second, that this evil system is because of the love of personal property and all the abominable laws which have come to surround it. And third, that the only cure for the evil—the only means whereby we can lift from the suffering millions of the world the crushing weight of poverty, crime, competition, sweating, war, and all the kindred evils—is by giving up all thought of personal property, to discard all law, and all force, and to live in the spirit of brotherliness and loving-kindness.”

She would have enlarged on these three points, because she was fond of making speeches, and prided herself on being a good debater; but by unanimous consent it was decided that this was scarcely the time for orations. She saw, moreover, that David was scarcely in the mood for being impressed, and as she was anxious to have his good opinion she apologised for her warmth.

“I hope I haven't hurt your feelings, David,” she said, evidently with some degree of anxiety.

The young man assured her to the contrary.

“Besides, she went on, “although I don't like these starched things, and although I believe they help to keep up a correct civilisation, I must admit that you look very nice. Of course, we are all sure that you were a swell before you came here, and we think all the more of your sincerity because of it.”

“Yes,” said Bertha Gray, determined not to be outdone by her friend, “we quite feel that sometimes our unconventional ways must be a little strange to you, and that you must now and then yearn after the flesh-pots of Egypt; all the same, you, like the rest of us, revolt at the evil of the world and desire to live the ideal life. And I am sure that if any one could influence Muswell to give up the old bad life, it is you.”

“Don't, don't,” said David. “I am getting giddy with so much praise—but there, I must be off.”

He walked to the door, and looked out. The night was rather cold, but it was clear and bracing nevertheless. He had not left the house, however, when he felt a hand on his arm.

"Here, David," it was Eva Rivers who spoke, "here is a warm neckcloth for you. Be sure and take care of yourself, won't you? I shall be very lonely until you come back, and do forgive me if I have hurt your feelings."

David looked, and saw that the girl's eyes were humid, and that her lips trembled, but he said nothing save a simple word of thanks, then hurried towards Muswell Hall.

"What does she mean?" thought the young man, as he trudged along, but his mission soon drove all thought of Eva Rivers from his mind.

When he came to the foot-bridge which spanned the little river, he could not help remembering his meeting with Grace Muswell, and he wondered whether he should by any chance meet her that night.

"I can hardly believe what I see, and hear, and feel," said the young man. "Everything is topsy-turvy, everything seems unreal; but I suppose it is natural. Perhaps a talk with Mr. Muswell will bring me back to realities."

A little later he had passed the lodge gates, and after following the windings of the carriage drive for some distance, the great house appeared to his view.

"Perhaps they will expect me to go to the kitchen door," thought the young man, as he rang the bell. "If Mr. Muswell has such strict notions of caste, he may take it as an unwarrantable liberty on my part to appear at the front door."

He laughed at the thought; all the same, his heart beat fast as he heard approaching footsteps.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE COMING OF LIFE'S MASTER PASSION

"MR. DAVID WARDLAW?"

The name was mentioned in a questioning manner as the young man was ushered into the presence of John Muswell, the owner of Muswell Hall, and the estates which accompanied it.

He was a man fast approaching seventy, but evidently hale and hearty. He stood perfectly upright as David entered, and gave one the impression that he was on good terms with himself and with the world generally. Belonging to an old county family, and occupying the leading position in the district, he received the homage of the people around quite naturally. As became his station and education, he repudiated all the new ideas which have caused such a change in society. Had you asked him his views, he would have told you that God intended some to be rich and some to be poor, that He made peer and He made peasant, and it was the bounden duty of the latter to pay homage to the former. It was an institution in the parish for all the children belonging to the Church Sunday School to be in their places at the Parish Church at five minutes to eleven, and also that each one should rise on the entrance of Squire Muswell, and that none should take their seats again until that gentleman had deposited himself in the great pew belonging to the family. Had the ceremony been omitted, both vicar and the village schoolmaster, who superintended the Sunday School, would have been severely reprimanded. If any one should fail to make his or her obeisance to him when he happened to be riding through the village or the country lanes, he was much perturbed. Not that he regarded it so much as a personal slight to himself as a violation of those principles which he believed sacred.

For Squire Muswell believed in the divine rights of the aristocracy, as much as Charles I. believed in the divine right of kings. This being so, he regarded himself as a sort of God-appointed guardian of the parish—one whose word should be law.

Let it be also stated that he had a high conception of his own duties. He took a deep interest in those poor of the parish who paid him his due meed of respect, and never failed to attend the Parish Church. He was a good landlord, and a just magistrate; he was affable to his equals, and although patronising, was kind to his inferiors, always assuming that those inferiors recognised his position.

He was exceedingly bitter towards the "Brotherhood

Settlement," because, according to his ideas, the members broke the laws which he, John Muswell, regarded as God-appointed.

When David entered the room where he sat, he looked at him keenly. He boasted that he could recognise a gentleman at a glance, and was apparently disappointed at the young man's appearance. He had expected to see a somewhat superior mechanic—a young man of more than average intelligence, perhaps, but not a gentleman. No gentleman, he argued, after he had heard his son George's description, could behave in such an unseemly manner. When he looked at David, however, he felt somewhat shaken in his conviction. The young man was well dressed, and carried himself with all the ease of a man brought up in his own class. For the life of him Squire Muswell could not speak to him as an inferior. Here was a man who was his equal in every respect, save that he had lowered his dignity by living at the Settlement.

"I have come in answer to your letter," said David, quietly. "I hope my visit is not inopportune."

"Oh, no! I expected you. My son George—ah! here he is—told me he had met you some days ago, and, as there is some slight disagreement between my man of business and Treloar, I thought that—ah!—that is, if you came up the matter might be settled."

"I am afraid I know very little about the matter," said David. "I was told that you did not see your way to mend the fences, and so—well, I am mending them myself."

"You?" The Squire lifted his eyebrows significantly.

"Yes. I am afraid I am not very expert at the business, but I am doing my best."

The Squire looked at David steadily, while the young man stood before him. He spoke quite naturally, as though mending fences were as much the duty of a gentleman as drilling soldiers.

"Won't you sit down?"

This the Squire said, as if in want of some better remark.

David accepted the seat to which he pointed, while



George Muswell sat near, as if interested in finding out who the young man really was.

"Perhaps we had better come to a more definite understanding," said the Squire.

"I shall be very glad," replied David quietly. "At the same time, it may be well for me to say that my friend Treloar, who is nominally the owner of Trewinnick, does not intend urging any claims he may have."

"But it would be so easy for him to submit his deeds to his solicitor," remarked the Squire.

"Yes, but you see he has no solicitor, and the general agreement among those with whom he is associated is to let the matter drop. You do not see your way to mend the fences; therefore I offered to do it myself."

The Squire was burning with curiosity, and although he did his best to stifle it, he was not altogether successful.

"And you find it strange work, I imagine?" he said.

"Yes," replied David, "it is rather strange yet; but I improve daily."

"I am naturally interested in people who live in the neighbourhood," said Mr. Muswell. "As an old resident—indeed, my ancestors have lived here for many generations—I like to know what is going on in the vicinity. And, may I say it, I have been much puzzled by the attitude of—of your friends. As an old-fashioned man, moreover, I cannot say that I have been much pleased."

"I am very sorry," replied David.

"It might help me, therefore," went on the Squire, "if you would tell me why you have taken this peculiar attitude."

"I am afraid I do not quite understand."

"No? I am sorry I have not made myself plain. You see, when you have connections with people, it is necessary that there should be some common basis of action."

"Yes, I see that."

"Well, you see, Treloar will not meet me on ordinary terms. He will not submit our differences to ordinary means of arbitration."

"I suppose not. Instead, he yields entirely to your position. As a proof of that, I have been for the last week mending the fences."

David spoke very quietly and respectfully, and although he put his case in a few pointed words, the old man could not take exception to them.

"You see," said the Squire, "I have my own position and rights to maintain. If it is my duty to attend to this matter, of course it shall be attended to. But Treloar has adopted an attitude so peculiar that—well, you see my difficulty," and the old man shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"Don't you see it?" he continued.

"Scarcely," said David. "If you wish to know the legal rights of the case, there can be nothing more simple than for you to consult your own solicitor."

The Squire was nonplussed. Evidently this was not the answer he wished.

"It would be interesting to know exactly how you look at the matter," said the Squire.

"In what way?"

"Well, to know what has led you and others to adopt a position so much out of accord with the accepted customs of the country."

"Oh, as to that," replied David, "I am afraid I am a poor exponent. For my own part my position is simply this: I am tired of money standards and ideals. I am tired of personal possession and all that it means. I am tired of living in the mental and moral atmosphere which these things create. It seems to me that the life of the world is not natural; it is utterly artificial, and so—well, I have come to live among people to whom money and position is nothing, but with whom character is everything."

"Will you explain yourself more fully?"

This was the point at which the Squire had been aiming all the time, and after a few well-directed questions, he succeeded in making David talk freely. He gave no clue to his previous position, but he spoke plainly and forcibly on the views he had been led to accept.

Every sentence seemed to surprise the Squire more and more; he had never dreamed of the thoughts which had for years been surging in men's minds. To him David's position was that of a madman, and yet the young man

spoke with so much conviction that the old man could not for a moment answer him. Besides, there was something of more than ordinary interest in the picture of the handsome, educated man before him. Here was no foul-mouthed Socialist, but one who had read widely, and who was conversant with the ways of society; here was a man to whom he could not help speaking as to an equal.

"But it is rank atheism," he ejaculated at length.

"Is it?" said David. "Well, let us see how far it accords with the teachings of the Founder of Christianity."

"No, no," said the Squire. "Forgive me, but I do not wish the sacred subject of religion dragged into the matter. I am an old-fashioned man and believe in the Bible."

"So do I," remarked David, "and, would you believe it, I have been led to adopt my present attitude very largely through reading the New Testament."

"Indeed," said the Squire, coldly. "Ah, well, we read differently, don't we? But do you know—of course, I do not wish to make personal allusion—but it strikes me that if a fortune were left to most of your friends—well, they would see differently."

"Perhaps so," said David quietly, "but that would not affect the principle, would it?"

"Wouldn't it? Well, I am glad to have had this chat with you—very glad. It clears the ground, doesn't it? By the way, I hope we shall have no further trouble with your friends about rates and taxes, and that kind of thing?"

"I—I hope not."

"Ah, I am glad to hear you say that—very glad. By the way, could you drink a glass of wine before you go?"

"No, thank you."

"Ah, then perhaps you would like a cigar? George, you have some cigars here, haven't you?"

David took a cigar from the box and lit it. It was the first he had smoked since he came to the country, and he enjoyed it—George Muswell, who had been silently sitting by all the time, joining him.

"Does it burn all right?" asked the young Squire.

"Yes, thank you. This brand was much in favour among some of our fellows when I was at Cambridge."

"Are you a Cambridge man?" asked the Squire, quickly.

"Yes."

"Ah, that is interesting; so am I. What College, may I ask?"

David told him.

"Why, my old College!"

A great deal of the Squire's reserve broke down in a second. After all, the man must be a gentleman.

"George, my son, preferred Oxford, but I would rather he had gone to Cambridge. I haven't been there for years now. I suppose great changes have come over the place?"

For the next few minutes they talked freely, the Squire becoming more affable each minute, and when at length David rose to go, George said he would accompany him a part of the way. Evidently the young Squire was much drawn to their visitor, and desired to be friendly.

"Do you know, in spite of what you have said, I can hardly make you out," he said, as the two young men walked along together.

"No?"

"Not but that I sympathise with you in many things. Of course, my father belongs to the old-fashioned school, and taboos everything new. But I could not live with—that—that is, those people up at Trewinnick. All the same, there is much in our modes of life that I hate."

"Yes—what?"

"Oh, our ideas about marriage, for example. It is a matter of barter with us, very largely. A man is not allowed to love a woman oftentimes. He has to love estates, and—and families."

"I suppose so."

"Yes, it is so. I have found out that, and I am afraid that my cousin Grace will——" He stopped suddenly. He felt he had said too much.

"Yes," said David, almost eagerly, "you were saying something about your cousin."

"Was I?"

"Yes," said David. "I hope she is quite well?"

"Yes, quite well, thank you."

David saw that George Muswell did not wish to discuss his cousin, but he suddenly became so interested that he pushed his questions almost to rudeness.

"Is she going to get married?" he asked.

"I am afraid so—that is, but I must be going back. Good-night."

For the next half mile David Baring scarcely realised where he was. For the first time in his life the fate of a woman was more to him than anything else on earth. He realised then that Nora Brentwood was only a name to him. And he rejoiced with a great joy that he had been saved from making her his wife. He asked himself a thousand questions as to what George Muswell's words might mean, and imagined all sorts of gloomy pictures concerning Grace's future.

To whom was she to be married? To George Muswell? Surely no, or the young man would not have expressed himself in such a way. To whom, then? Was she to be a chattel in the sale of marriage, which the young Squire had mentioned? The thought was madness. He called to mind his surmises concerning her past history. Was she one of the Muswells who had been expelled from Malpas Towers? And was she, in her poverty, to be married to some rich man?

Well, and what then? What had he to say in the matter? He had voluntarily cut himself off from that class of people. He had come to live among those who looked upon them as the enemies of true civilisation. He had become poor that he might fulfil his ideals of life. He had given up all position, and spent his days in mending fences; he had accepted the fortunes of the "Brotherhood," in order that he might live a true life and be freed from hollow conventions.

And yet he loved Grace Muswell. He realised it now. He knew he loved her, because his whole being went out to her, and although he had seen her but three times, he knew that she fulfilled every longing of his life. But by his own action he had rendered his position hopeless. He could not go to her as an equal, and tell her his story. He had no

home to offer her, even if she might ever learn to love him.

Oh, he had been mad—mad. And yet had he? Supposing he had retained Malpas Towers, and was still a rich man, and, under these circumstances, he had come across Grace Muswell and fallen in love with her; well, what then? Possibly her relations would have advised her to marry him, but would she have loved him? If it were possible to gain her affections really, she would love him as truly while he was poor and despised as when rich and courted. He had vowed that if ever he married, the woman must love him for himself. Well, why should he not seek to win Grace Muswell?

When he reached the Settlement he was asked many questions, which he answered as well as he was able, and then, pleading weariness, went to bed. The next day he toiled at mending fences—toiled grimly and silently—and all the while he sought to meet the questions that faced him.

On the following morning Treloar met him with a laugh. "You will have a change of work to-day," he said.

"Why?" asked the young man.

"Oh, your mission was a success. Muswell has sent me word that the fences will be repaired forthwith."

But David paid little heed: he was thinking of something compared with which all else seemed as nothing.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### LEAP YEAR'S PRIVILEGE OUT OF SEASON

FOR some time David neither saw nor heard of Grace Muswell. He worked on the farm with the rest, and felt himself growing stronger and healthier each day. Moreover, he enjoyed the evening discussions. Although the members of the Brotherhood did not believe in the use of money, they had so far sacrificed their principles as to buy a number of cheap copies of the classics. They had gone so far as to

obtain a printing press, whereby they had been able to produce several of Tolstoi's shorter works, which were eagerly read, and, perhaps, more eagerly discussed. Indeed everything which favoured their ideas was, if possible, obtained, and made the subject of their deliberations. Thus it was that the thoughts of Max Nordeau, Francis of Assisi, Edward Carpenter, William Morris, Laurence Oliphant, and many others formed the daily subject for conversation. The entire freedom from conventionality, and the utter absence of class distinctions, were very pleasant to the young man, and he felt that the life he lived in the Colony was far higher than that of a country Squire.

All the time, however, he was much exercised about Grace Muswell, and he realised that each day he loved her more. So constantly did she fill his thoughts, that he almost forgot the existence of Emily Baker. He had made arrangements with Mr. Jay to pay her employer the amount agreed upon, and hearing nothing from her, the girl began to fade from his mind.

One morning, however, some three months after he had settled at the Colony, he received a letter from the old solicitor, which also contained two enclosures. One was from Emily, which ran as follows :—

“RESPECTED SIR,—I take my pen in hand to thank you for your great kindness to me, and to tell you that I am getting on A1. I am getting on a fair treat with the dressmaking, and Miss Perkins says as how I have improved like anything. I hope soon as how I shall be able to set up for myself, as I want to get on and make a bit of money. I keep mother in hand pretty fair, but I have to be jolly careful not to let her have any money. Even as it is, she have took one or two nice things, which I have bought for the house, to the three balls, and was roaring drunk for three days after. I hope I am much improved in my looks. What with havin' reg'lar meals, and bein' able to buy a few togs, I don't look like the same. I hope you will not be offended at my sending you my likeness. As you will see I have a regular new rig out. I find that it pays to dress well. Miss Perkins says as how my clothes is a good advertisement for her establishment. I often think of you, and I hope you think of me. If ever I get up in the world I shall owe it all to you. I have changed houses, so, if you would be so

kind as to write me, my address is Number 17, Paradise Terrace, Cardwell Street, Whitechapel. It is a much better house.

“Your obedient servant,  
“EMILY BAKER.

“P.S.—Please excuse my bad writing. I do hope you'll think I am improved in my looks, and I should like for you to see me again. I am trying to be a good girl.—E.B.”

David closed the letter with a sigh. He felt sad at heart ; why he could not tell ; and yet the girl's communication made him think of her pitifully. It was the letter of a respectable working girl who had received a scanty education ; but it also struck a sordid note, which was unpleasant.

He looked at the photograph which she had sent. Yes, she had improved in looks. The face was fuller, and the eyes had a less haunted look, but there was an attempt at finery in her dress, which revealed the influences of her surroundings. If this girl were differently circumstanced, she would be the equal of—but there, she was only an East-end dressmaker, brought up amidst all the sordid surroundings of her class.

The other enclosure was a letter from the people's lawyer, in Mile End Road.

“As per instructions, I have made inquiries about Emily Baker,” the letter ran, “and I have the following communications to make :—

“1. That her parents are dead.

“2. That my late clerk and his wife took her when her mother died. My late clerk had been in the army, and was an officer's servant. This officer was called Captain Levant, and was sent to India. He left his wife at home, and at that time the woman Baker worked for Mrs. Levant. When the child, Emily, was born, Mrs. Levant died. The man Baker and his wife took the child, and then wrote to Captain Levant in India. The letter was never answered, and the man Baker heard that he had died there of fever. Baker kept the child in the hope that rich friends would turn up. Baker was doing his best to make inquiries, when the woman Baker, who had always been a bad nut, got



into a scrape, and Baker hurried off here. I gave him odd jobs, and afterwards employed him regularly. While with me I noticed he had something on his mind and he often gave me hints, but never told me anything direct.

"3. I have discovered that it may be possible to find out something about the girl's friends, but that it would be a very expensive affair. It is very probable that the girl has good connections; but I could not undertake to find them for less than £50.

"4. I have everything in training, and no one is in the position that I am to discover full particulars.

"5. If I receive your instructions to proceed, containing £20 for preliminary expenses, with banker's reference for remaining amount, I will at once proceed to carry out the matter to your entire satisfaction.

"If you will come and see me, I will place before you full particulars of my inquiries."

To this was added a postscript, that the girl was in good employment, and was keeping herself respectable.

David read through this letter several times. It seemed to be straightforward enough, but it was very vague. It might easily be the concoction of a clever man who wanted to make money.

What should he do? Should he give instructions to Crowle to proceed with the matter, or should he let it rest? Suppose the man's letter contained the truth and she was the child of an army officer, would she, if taken by her parents' friends—supposing that any existed—be likely to live a better, or more useful life, than as an East-end dressmaker? He was tired of the artificiality of girls in so-called good society. On the other hand, did not her letter reveal the fact that life, as a dressmaker's assistant, was making her vain and sordid? Which was better? a life of respectable idleness, or that of a toiler among other toilers?

Two years before he would have had no difficulty in answering the question, but now he felt differently. Taken as a whole the respectable poor lived just as happily, and, generally, far more usefully, than those who were supposed to move in refined circles. Nay, more, life

was often more truly lived. And yet when he thought of the sickening sights of Whitechapel, when he remembered the things he had seen, and the language he had heard, when he called to mind the atmosphere of the district, he felt that, if possible, Emily, who, as yet, was a pure-minded girl, should be taken from such surroundings. Perhaps, after all, Crowle's letter was pure fabrication, and even if it were not, why should he take part in such matters? He had come away from the world; he had seen its hollowness, and had entered upon a life which aided him in his endeavours to keep his thoughts on things which up-lifted. Perhaps Emily was just as well off where she was. Life, whether at Mayfair or at Mile End Row, was a matter of barter, and everything was sold to the highest bidder, and he doubted much whether there was not just as much real honesty of purpose at the latter place as at the former. Once he thought of trying to get her to come to Trewinnick, only to dismiss the idea quickly. The girl would be out of her element there, and the life would be utterly unbearable. No; he could not entertain it, especially when he thought of Grace Muswell.

The next day he wrote to Mr. Jay, enclosing Crowle's letter, and telling him that he should like to know whether there was any truth in the man's story. He referred to the moiety of the fortune which he still retained, and told him to make use of a part of it for this purpose.

"I am afraid I am a good deal of a humbug," he said to himself, when he had sent it off. "I still hunger for the flesh-pots of Egypt."

It was now summer, and the whole countryside was a picture of loveliness. The valley of the Fal from Truro to Falmouth was a veritable Paradise. Green fields and shady woods sloped down to the clear waters of the river, which glistened like glass in the light of the sun. Flowers bloomed everywhere, while birds and beasts sported in the warm summer air.

The novelty of his life had not yet worn away. There still remained the romance of the life of the Brotherhood. He had been longing for reality, and here, he thought,

he found it. He was living the life which nature intended. He had discarded luxury. He worked for the food he ate. He was freed from all thoughts of barter, while the worldly spirit of competition never entered the Settlement. The work, too, now that he had become used to it, was pleasant and healthful. God had placed the first man and woman in the garden—well, and he had come to work in a garden. For such the farm truly was. His companions were, like himself, tired of the world's artificiality. Class distinctions were abolished, the grocer's daughter stood on exactly the same level as the Russian Count, who, because of his refusal to bear arms, had been expelled from his country. Here, the subjective was everything, the objective nothing.

Yes, so far, all this was fine, it was glorious; and yet, when he faced the future, he began to doubt. Would he be content to spend the whole of his life there? While he was young and strong all was well, but when he grew old—what then? But what had the world to offer him? He thought of Colonel Storm. Of what use was he? What happiness could there be in such a life?

No, no. He could spend his days there quietly and happily. He could dig, and plant, and gather in the harvests. After all, the value of life did not depend on circumstances, but on his thoughts, his ideals, his emotions. He remembered the words of the Founder of Christianity, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," and thought how true they were.

And yet, all the time, his heart was hungering with a great hunger. He continually thought of Grace Muswell, he constantly dreamed of meeting her, of seeing the flash of her eyes, of feeling the pressure of her hand. But he did not see her, although he heard that she still lived at Muswell Hall. Occasionally, too, he heard gossip to the effect that Squire Brewer was paying her attentions, and had asked her to become the mistress of Penrose, which for generations had been the home of the Brewers.

When August came, two events happened which led him to examine his heart more deeply, and to make a great decision.

The first was nothing more nor less than the announcement that Grace Muswell was engaged to Squire Penfold Brewer, and that the marriage would, in all probability, take place in the late autumn, or at Christmas. The news was discussed freely at the Settlement, for David found, that in spite of all professions, the members thereof, especially the women, dearly loved a bit of gossip.

"Of course," he heard Eva Rivers say, "it is nothing but a matter of barter, as most marriages are. The Muswell girl is poor and proud, and so she has just consented to marry Brewer for a home."

It was at this juncture that David left the house, driven from it by maddening thought. He had not gone more than a mile or so when he met two horsemen. The one was George Muswell, the other was Mr. Penfold Brewer. The former nodded to David, but the young man's attention was directed to the latter. He was a flacid-looking man of from forty-five to fifty years of age. He had a large fleshy face, with thick lips and small eyes. Possibly he was a kind-hearted man and a good landlord, but to David he looked a mere sensual animal. And Grace Muswell had promised to marry him!

He heard Brewer give a great hoarse laugh as he rode along, whereupon the young man set his teeth, and vowed that he should never marry her.

He stayed out alone until it was night, then, as he was returning, a second event happened. He had barely entered the road which led up to the house when he saw Eva Rivers.

"Where have you been, David?" asked the girl.

"Oh, only for a walk," said the young man.

"Alone, David?"

"Yes, all alone."

"I'm glad of that. I have come out to meet you, and I've been waiting for you such a long time. I wanted to speak to you."

"Oh, what about?"

"Do you like me, David?" asked Eva Rivers.

"Certainly," said David.

"I thought you did. That is why I came. As you

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know, David, we here in the colony have given up all false notions about the position of the sexes. We don't believe in the abominable customs of a false civilisation. They are abhorrent to us. That is why we can speak so freely. David, I feel that you are the man to whom my soul has gone out; you are my true mate."

"What do you mean?" gasped the young man.

"That I love you, and have made up my mind to tell you. It seems rather sudden to you, but it came upon me the night I saw you first of all. Heaven mated us before we saw each other. Why should I keep it from you? There is an affinity between us, and so——"

"Do you mean that you wish me to marry you?"

"Certainly, David, that is ——"

"Eva, it cannot be," said the young man; "it cannot be. Think no more about it."

"Oh, don't mistake me," said the girl. "I've no false notions about——"

"It is impossible, impossible," cried David. "Think no more about it."

"Oh, but I shall, David," said the girl. "I shall. It's bound to come. I expected this at first, but when you've thought about it you'll see I've been right in speaking to you."

"Don't, don't," cried the young man. "I tell you it is impossible."

"I shan't give up hope," said the girl.

The next evening David made his way towards Muswell Hall. He had determined to see Grace Muswell, to speak to her, and to tell her—he knew not what.

## CHAPTER NINE

### DAVID MAKES A MOMENTOUS CONFESSION

It was an August evening when David made his way to the house where Grace Muswell lived. All around him the harvesters were at work, and the merry shouts

of men and boys were heard on all sides. Perhaps the happiest times in the country are during the haymaking and corn-gathering seasons. Especially is this true of Cornwall. There the farmers do not usually engage men from a distance to do the work. It is true a farmer may engage one or two extra men for "a month of harvest," but mostly they belong to his own parish. The work is generally done by people known to each other. During August the schools are closed, and then even women and children work in the harvest fields. Moreover, it is a very ordinary occurrence for men who usually work at some trade—masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, and the like—to leave their ordinary avocation to give what they term "a harvest spell" to a neighbouring farmer. Often, too, miners, their hours in the mine being only few, turn into a harvest field, and labour without a thought of reward.

As a consequence harvest time affords the country people a chance for social communion. Especially is this true at what is called "croust time." "Croust," which is a corruption of "carouse," means an interval about five o'clock in the evening, when work is suspended for an hour, and when all gather together amidst a ring of golden sheaves for rest and refreshment. Then it is that stories are told, men and women joke with each other, youths and maidens flirt, and children romp. Usually at such time the farmer's wife and daughters bring into the field an extra quantity of ale, a huge pitcher of cocoa, and special harvest cakes.

The towns may offer great fascination, but I know of few sights more beautiful, neither do I know of merrier, happier hours than those of the "croust times" in a Cornish harvest field. The people who gather there are very simple and very rustic; they have very elementary ideas about politics and religion, which are very popular subjects of discussion among the older portion of the harvesters, but on the whole they are very happy, very contented, and well-behaved.

As David wended his way towards Muswell Hall he passed a harvest field, where the harvesters had gathered. He heard them pass their jests, which, although sometimes

a trifle coarse, were free from harm. He listened to the merry shouts and laughter of youths and maidens; he noticed a young farmer who had come in from a neighbouring farm, sitting apart with the daughter of the farmer to whom the field belonged. He knew by their laughter that they were happy. After all there was a great deal of joy and music in the world. Whitechapel did not comprise the whole of humanity, and even there, amidst squalor and dirt, there were thousands who lived clean, wholesome lives.

These people did not trouble about the thoughts which had so worried him; they never dreamed of the great social movements which stir the minds of men in great centres of population, and yet they were happy and God-fearing.

Presently he followed the footpath which led right through the field where the people had gathered.

"It's the young lord," said one.

"Iss, so tes," said another. "Bra' keenly chap, ed 'na?"

"Iss. I d' 'ear as 'ow ee've been to college, and oal the rest of it."

"Good-evenin'," said old Tommy Trethewey, who had dropped in to give Farmer Bennett a harvest spell.

"Good-evening," replied David. "Glorious weather."

"Aw iss; we sh'll 'ave a fine month, I reckon. Ave ee saved moast of yore corn over to Trewinnick?"

"There is but little to save, but it is all stacked."

"Put in mows, you do main?"

"Yes."

"Aw. Ow many be 'ee ovver ther naow, makin' so bould?"

"I really don't quite know. Nearly forty, I think."

"Be 'ee then, for sure. I do'ant never see noan of 'ee up to chapel," said Tommy Trethewey.

"No. I think I am the only one who has been."

"Do'ant 'ee b'lieve in goin' to chapel an' church, then, my dear?"

"Not much, I am afraid."

"Why, then, my dear?"

David looked at the simple old man, and the rest of the rustic congregation, and decided not to tell him why. Why should he disturb their simple faith? They were happy, and had no doubts about their religion. Why should he show the disparity between the fat rector of the parish and the Divine Carpenter, whose minister he pretended to be? Why should he show that conventional religion bore but the faintest likeness to the teaching of Jesus Christ?

"I suppose it is largely a matter of taste, isn't it?" he said.

"Es et?" said old Tommy, eager for argument. "It do'ant seem to me as ef et es. Tell 'ee wot, maaster, the world ed'n goin to be saved by new-fangled ways. I am a braave ould man now, but as far as I can zee, they that do live according to the Bible, and go to chapel and church, and do a fair job for fair pay, git on best.

"Do they?" said David; "perhaps they do."

"I've 'eerd as 'ow you zay things be oal wrong, and you've come down here to git out of the world. Well, do'ant you think that's a coward's trick, maaster?"

"Perhaps it is," said David. He had no heart to argue. His mind was torn with doubts and fears.

He walked along the path towards the hall, and as he did so he heard a man say:—

"You wad'n very respectful, Tommy, but you be a beggar to argy."

"He've got the makins of a man in un," said Tommy; "I wish I could have un livin' with me for a month. I've axed um to come to our 'ouse to tay two or dree times, but he wa'ant come."

David could hardly help laughing when he heard this. What would these people say, he wondered, if he told them his experiences?

These thoughts were soon driven away, however, when he remembered his mission. He had come out that evening with the intention of going to Muswell Hall, and asking to see Grace Muswell. He had determined to try and persuade her against marrying the man Brewer. It seemed easy to decide on doing this some hours before undertaking



the mission, but as he drew nearer the house he realised the madness of his quest. What right had he to go and speak to this girl? He had voluntarily given up those things which according to the ways of the world would give him the right of meeting her as an equal. He was a homeless, landless wanderer. He had neither position nor means of making it. But what of that? He had not given up his manhood, he had not stultified his conscience; he was as worthy of her now, nay, more worthy, than ever he had been.

As he drew near the lodge gates his heart beat wildly, he felt that he was taking an important step in life; but he did not seek admission, for at that moment he heard the sound of voices, and a second later he knew that Grace Muswell was near him. The gate opened, and some half-dozen people walked along under the shade of the broad-spreading trees. They had not seen him, but he had seen her and had heard her voice.

Hardly knowing what he did, he walked slowly behind them. He knew that it was useless now to go to the House, and although he could see no use in so doing, he kept the party in sight. He heard their merry laughter, but was too far away to catch a word that was uttered. Naturally he did not wish to play the eavesdropper, and yet he instinctively followed them for nearly a mile.

Presently he stopped suddenly, while the blood rushed madly to his face. He saw Grace Muswell leave her companions and walk alone towards him. It seemed as though Providence was favouring him. He would have his chance of speaking to this young girl—of telling her all that was in his heart.

He walked rapidly towards her, but she was hidden from him by a turn in the lane. A minute later they met face to face.

He lifted his hat as she came up, but was too excited to speak.

“Good-evening,” said Grace, and was about to pass on, when David stopped her.

“Pardon me, Miss Muswell,” he said; “may I walk back with you?”

The girl flushed as if slightly angry. To say the least, it was presumption on the young man's part to ask such a thing. As she looked at him, however, her anger seemed to die away.

"I am afraid I am presuming a great deal," went on David; "and I would not have asked for the favour if I had not grave reasons."

She saw that he was much wrought upon, and he was not an entire stranger. Besides, he had rendered her a service, and both her uncle and her cousin had spoken of him as a gentleman.

"Certainly; you may walk back with me, if you care," she said, realising at the same time that she had, perhaps, spoken too freely.

"Thank you," said the young man; then there was an awkward silence between them.

"I am afraid you will be very angry with me," said David presently, realising the position in which he was placed; "but I hope you will listen to me patiently."

The girl did not reply, but she gave a questioning glance. Again his appearance was in his favour. His eyes were clear and honest, his every movement betrayed a refined, sensitive nature. He was well dressed, too. In coming to see her he had again abandoned the coarser attire of the Settlement.

"I have no right to ask this favour of you," he went on, "save the right which I believe inalienable to every English gentleman."

Somehow his way seemed easier when he had said this, and so he spoke more freely.

"What I have to say has been in my mind and heart for months," he continued, "almost ever since the day when I saw you riding with your cousin. As I said, I am doubtless presumptuous beyond words, but I cannot help speaking. I love you with all my heart and life."

The girl stopped suddenly, then walked on again, with heightened colour.

"I should not have dared to tell you this," and David spoke quickly, "had I not heard that you were under a promise to marry the man Penfold Brewer."

"How dare you!" said the girl.

"I dare because my life is at stake," replied David. "I dare because, although I have seen you only a few times, you are all the world to me. I dare, too, because it would be a foul crime for you to marry that man. He is not your equal in any respect. True, he is a rich landowner, but he is a clown, a man without education, without ideals, without the knowledge of what a refined girl like you must feel."

After this the two walked together for a minute without speaking, then the girl looked at him again, and the anger died out of her heart. She forgot that they were not social equals, forgot that he was a member of a community which she regarded as a horde of wild fanatics. For a moment he was a man who loved her, and who told her so in earnest, honest words.

I suppose that no woman is indifferent to an honest man's love. When any man truly declares this master passion of life, he for the moment breaks down a thousand barriers, sweeps away a thousand hindrances. Life suddenly becomes primitive, and for the time the forces of environment become almost as nothing.

"I daresay I speak roughly," said David; "but I cannot help it. The very position in which I am placed makes me take what I am afraid you will think an unpardonable step. I am alone in the world. By force of a certain set of circumstances I cannot meet you as an equal in Society. You are a lady bearing an old name, and you live among people who despise such as I. But love is not love which stops at the world's conventions. I do not know you—that is, as the term is ordinarily understood. Our education and associations have, I suppose, been entirely different, but that counts as nothing with me. It is said you are to be mated with a clown; it is rumoured you are to marry him simply because you are poor, and that they desire you to have a position worthy of your name. I do not know the truth of this. It may be only the gossip of people who delight in such things, but it has made me speak. It has made me tell you what for months I have locked up in my heart."

"You cannot expect me to answer you?" said the girl.

"Why not?" said the young man. "I love you. In the sight of God we are equal. I could make you a thousand times happier than the man of whom I have been speaking. You could not live with him. It would be hell to you."

"But you forget," said the girl. "You do not realise——"

She stopped, as though she did not know how to finish the sentence.

"I forget nothing," said David. "I know I am a member of a despised community. I know that those of whom that community is comprised desire to be true to their ideals; but that counts for little with the world. I know that I cannot offer you home or position; but I love you truly, and—and—I am not a clown."

"Besides," he went on, after a second's pause, "in love, in true love, the person should be everything, the position nothing. Tell me, Miss Muswell—tell me, can you ever care for me, can you ever love me?"

"It is impossible," said the girl. "I do not wish to hurt your feelings, but you must see that it is impossible."

"Why?"

"Why? Surely you can see?"

"No, I cannot."

"But our—our associations——"

"What are they? If love is love at all, it is above and beyond all that. No matter what your position might be, if you were a dairy girl, a scullery maid, if it were you, I should love you just the same. What has association, position to do with our love? You are a woman; I am a man. I am not as good as you are, as pure as you are—for I believe that women are better than men—but I am sincere. I love you truly. I know it seems like boasting, but I am a thousand times more your equal than the man with whom your name has been associated."

"I—I don't wish to offend you—to hurt your feelings," said the girl, "but it is impossible, quite impossible! Don't press it, don't, don't!"

The girl was in earnest, and she spoke kindly. The habits and ideas of her class had not led her to despise this man. Besides, she was poor herself, she was dependent on her relations for a home.

"You are not angry with me, are you?" said David. "Believe me, I would suffer anything to save you from pain."

"No, I am not angry, no; but I never dreamed of this."

"Then be kind to me a little longer," he said. "Is the gossip true?"

She was silent.

"Suppose," said the young man, "suppose I was equal in what the world calls fortune and position to that man, what then?"

Still she continued silent.

"Oh, I know it is true; I know you do not love him," he cried, "you cannot. But should there be marriage without love? Should money and position decide it?"

"Good evening," said she. "I—I cannot say more."

"You will give me no answer? no hope, no encouragement?"

"I have given you an answer. It is impossible, impossible."

"It is not, it is not," said the young man. "You could love me, you can love me. Oh! forgive me, but I cannot help speaking plainly."

"No, no, it is impossible!"

"It is not impossible," he cried. "I will not take no for an answer. But I have been rude, harsh. I ought not to have spoken in such a way, but I could not help it. Think of what I have told you. Let me see you again."

"No, no, it cannot be!"

"But it must be, it must be. And you must not marry that man. You must not. It would be sacrilege, it would be blasphemy. Even if you cannot love me, I will pray that you may be saved from that. But you can learn to love me. Listen, I will come here again a week to-night, and you must meet me."

"No, no, it is absurd for you to ask. I could not think of it."

"But you must, you must. It is a matter of life and death with me."

He left her hurriedly, while Grace Muswell went slowly up the drive, and into the house without speaking a word.

## CHAPTER TEN

### HEART SEARCHINGS

GRACE MUSWELL was very angry. Angry with herself, angry with David Baring; moreover, she was disappointed with herself because she was not more angry. She felt that she ought to have indignantly told the young man to leave her, that she ought not to have listened to his words. She ought to have made him realise the absurdity, and, more, the presumption of his avowal. Fancy the idea of a young fellow whom she had seen only a few times, and who belonged to a socialist, anarchical sect, daring to make love to her! He ought to be punished by law. She would tell her uncle, and he would see to it that she should be free from such affronts in the future. How dare he speak of what gossips said about an engagement between her and Mr. Brewer? And, more, how dare he utter such words about it? "Sacrilege." "Blasphemy." By what right did he intrude on her affairs?

But what was worse, she had listened to this young man, and had even told him that she was not angry. Nay, more! Even when he had commanded her to meet him a week later she did not utter a scornful rebuke. Yes, she would tell her uncle about his insolence. She would ask her cousin George to horsewhip him out of the parish.

When she met her uncle, however, she spoke no word of what had happened, neither did she inform her cousin concerning her sanguinary desires. Instead, she went into her room and sat for a long time staring into vacancy.

Yes; the fellow was rude, of course he was rude—inso-

lent, in fact. How dare he? But then he was young, he was handsome, he was sincere—and he was a gentleman. Yes, she was sure he was a gentleman. Besides, he was so different from—

And then the girl shuddered like one afraid.

It was sweet to be loved. Yes, she could not deny it. She could not forget the words the young man had uttered; she could not forget the tones of his voice or the flash of his eyes. She did not wish to forget. She was almost alone in the world, and had to depend on the charity of her relations. Oh, it was terrible to be poor. Her soul recoiled from eating the bread of others. She had thought of getting a situation as governess, but her uncle had forbidden her. The one in Hertfordshire had forbidden her, who was her mother's half-brother; her father's nearest relation, whom she called uncle, also forbade her. She had lost her fortune, but she was still a Muswell; and no Muswell had ever become a hireling.

“No,” these uncles had said, “stay with us, Grace, my dear. You will soon find a rich husband, and will be able to hold up your head with the highest.”

This had been uttered, not in so many words, but in effect. She must not work for an honest living, but she must show her beauty and accomplishments to rich, marriageable men, that she might be sold in the marriage market.

This young man was right, she hated the man Brewer, she loathed his sensual presence, she shuddered when he held her hand, looked at her face, and uttered his coarse, horsey laugh. And yet her uncle would have her marry him.

“He has a fine estate, my dear,” Squire Muswell had said, “a very respectable rent-roll, and can give you a good position. It is true he is older than you, but that's nothing. As for those stories told about him, don't you take any notice of them. All young men sow their wild oats, and now he'll settle down as a kind, good husband.”

She had not accepted him, she could not. But her relations regarded the matter as settled. Indeed, what could she do? She was dependent on them for everything; how, then, could she refuse the husband they had provided?

Many another poor woman of good family had obtained a home and position that way, and why not she ?

Then she thought of David's avowal ; she remembered his every word. Yes, she was angry with him, naturally, but, but, but——

But facts had to be faced. Mr. Penfold Brewer had offered her his hand in marriage ; her uncle had told her that it was her duty to accept, and she had promised to give her answer by the end of August. Of course the gossip about their being already engaged was false, still no one thought of denying it. Her uncle and cousin regarded the matter as settled, even though her word had not been given. But could she accept ? If she did, she would be ashamed to hold up her head again. It would mean that she had, for the sake of a home and position, become—, no, she could not bear to think of it !

But what could she do ? Suppose she refused, what would become of her ? She could not stay on at Muswell, and she did not care to ask her other uncle, John Winfield, to give her a home. Yes, it was while she was with him that she had first seen this rude young man. She remembered that she thought him very handsome as he sat by the roadside ; she called to mind the amused smile on his face as he answered Squire Winfield's questions. She little thought then that she would meet him under such circumstances.

Of course his avowal was madness, pure madness. She ought really to laugh at it, to tell of his audacity to her friends so that they might regard his declaration as a huge joke. But she could not do this, no, she could not. After all he was sincere and earnest. Naturally she could not think of meeting him ; why, the thought of such a thing was reminiscent of the cook in the kitchen who met her " young man " under the huge sycamore-tree every Thursday night. Besides, it was part of his creed to discard all possessions, to live in defiance of all custom, among a set of unreasonable fanatics. He had no home, no property. He could have neither, according to the principles by which his life was to be governed.

But what should she do ? The question was before her,



and had to be answered. Within two weeks she must either accept or reject Mr. Brewer's proposal, and her whole future hung upon her decision.

"God help me," she cried, as she burst into tears. "God help me."

Meanwhile David found his way back to Trewinnick. He had seen Grace Muswell, he had spoken to her; he had declared to her the love that was in his heart. On the whole he ought to be satisfied. She had not regarded his declaration as an insult, she had not bidden him leave her. So far all was well. But then she did not love him, he saw that the moment he had made his declaration. The thought of it was utterly strange to her. She had simply regarded him as a stranger who had one day crossed her path, and that was all. She might not marry this Brewer; in his heart of hearts he did not believe she could; but she could not any the more care for him.

When he reached the house he was again met by Eva Rivers.

"David, you look very pale," said the girl.

"Do I?" said the young man, with a wan smile.

"Yes, you do. You have something on your mind, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have," said the young man, without realising what he was saying.

"I knew you had. I have seen it for a long time. You need a loving partner that you can confide in. You want a companion soul that has affinity with your own. Don't deny it, David, you do."

David looked at the stout, buxom young woman, and could scarcely refrain from smiling, but the smile soon died away.

"We have both broken away from the world, David," she went on; "we have both come here to settle down for life. We need each other. We must not live our lives in loneliness. You have thought better of what I said last night, haven't you?"

"It is quite impossible, Eva," he said, "quite impossible; good-night."

The young woman was doubtless in earnest, and what

is more she did not intend to be turned aside from her purpose. As she had said the previous night, they in the colony had broken down all ordinary restrictions concerning who should speak under such circumstances. The woman, they argued, had as much right to speak as the man, and she had acted up to the commonly accepted doctrine. Marriage, they declared, was affinity of soul, nothing more, nothing less; this being so the ordinary views concerning marriage were utterly false. Indeed, according to the Brotherhood standard, nearly everything in ordinary life was wrong.

The next day David was much disturbed. He discovered that the members of the colony regarded his spiritual marriage with Eva Rivers as an accepted fact. The young woman had informed the members of the community that she had chosen David, had told him so. Whereupon the Settlement regarded the marriage as a certainty.

"I say, 'David,'" said Langford, "I had no idea you had fixed upon Eva Rivers."

"Neither have I," said David.

"But she has been proclaiming that she has chosen you," said Langford, with a laugh.

"I cannot help that, can I? Neither by word nor action have I given the girl to understand that I am in the slightest degree interested in her. I must make this known."

"I think it will be well, old man. But, I say, is anything the matter with you?"

"Why?"

"Oh, you look so worried, so woebegone."

"Do I?"

"Yes. I say, David, do you regret the step you have taken in coming here?"

"Oh, no. I am a better man, and a happier man for coming. Here, at least, one is removed from the false atmosphere of the world."

"Ah, that's right!"

Although David had made up his mind to contradict the report which Eva Rivers had so diligently set abroad,

he almost wondered if, from the girl's standpoint, she was not right. If he were to remain at the colony all his life, could he stay there in loneliness? A man's heart longs for congenial society. And thus certain questions faced him. Did he intend to stay there all his life? Did he intend to live according to the ideas of the Brotherhood? If he did, was not his declaration to Grace Muswell a mockery? What right had he, if there was the slightest possibility of her returning his love, to declare it? Could he expect her to live there on the colony? Even if she would, would he desire it? The question staggered him.

Then again, if he intended remaining at the Settlement, could he do better than accept Eva Rivers' affection, which was evidently sincere?

But this thought he discarded at once. He could not think of it. He did not love her, he did love Grace, and the idea of wedding another was sacrilege.

Two days later was Sunday. On this day there was a general holiday on the Settlement. Not because the members regarded it as in any way sacred, but because they believed that, according to physiological reasons, one day a week should be set apart for rest and quiet communion. They admitted that Moses, or whoever it was who wrote the Pentateuch, was a man far ahead of his age. Indeed, they often spoke of him as the greatest statesman and the wisest lawgiver that the world ever knew. Of course, they said his ideas on the land question were very faulty; as also his opinions on many other matters; but on the whole he saw things pretty much as they saw them themselves, and therefore was not far from right.

Sunday morning began by the exhibition of a longer list than usual of wise sayings from the sages. The writers quoted most frequently were those who gave expression to the most revolutionary statements, and when they could find nothing sufficiently sweeping in the writings of Tolstoi or Epictetus, they reverted to other thinkers, sometimes one of themselves. After breakfast there was a general discussion of the mottoes on the blackboard.

This discussion generally lasted about an hour and a half, after which, with the exception of those whose turn it was to cook a very simple meal, they all strolled around the countryside. At one o'clock dinner was served, which was composed mainly of vegetables. Indeed, no animal food, save milk, butter and eggs, was ever eaten on the Settlement. The afternoon was also spent lazily, tea was dispensed at five o'clock, after which a service was held. To a certain extent this service was religious. One or two hymns were sung (these hymns, by the way, were taken from a so-called labour hymn-book), some passages were read, either from the Bible, or from the writings of their favourite authors (the most popular of whom was Francis of Assisi), an address was given, and then a discussion took place. This Sunday service, moreover, was open to the public, and not unfrequently a few people came in from the countryside to hear what was said. The thoughts uttered were usually regarded as quite beyond the comprehension of the farm labourers who came, while those who did understand regarded them as pure insanity. Still there was a certain novelty in the gatherings, and so a few people preferred the Brotherhood services to those of chapel and church.

The Sunday in question was very fine. The air was hot, and somewhat sultry. To remain indoors was almost impossible, therefore it was generally agreed to have the service beneath the shade of a huge sycamore-tree in the garden.

The subject decided upon for the address was Count Tolstoi's *Kreutzer Sonata*, and the speaker was the Russian Count who had been obliged to leave his country because he would not bear arms. The women seemed to be especially interested, because the book attacked the conventional ideas of marriage. David had suggested that the book was one scarcely likely to lead to much edification, but he had been over-ruled.

"We are not children, David," said Bertha Gray, "we are emancipated men and women," and they flocked to the garden with a look of eager expectation on their faces.

The meeting commenced with a labour hymn. It was not, according to the Cornish idea, sung with much heartiness, but it came to an end presently. No prayer was offered, but a chapter from the New Testament was read, after which another hymn was given out. So far it had not been altogether unlike what might be seen and heard in any village chapel.

While they were singing the second hymn David looked around and saw a dozen or so strangers. Among them he noticed George Muswell and Squire Penfold Brewer. Both of them seemed somewhat amused; but they paid close attention to the proceedings.

Presently the Russian Count began to speak. He described Tolstoi's book in the light of Russian customs and Russian society. While he was giving this part of the address David noticed that both George Muswell and Brewer seemed much interested. After the book was described and analysed, the Russian went on to tell of his impressions of English marriage. Then he spoke of what marriage really should be. In so doing he attacked all property qualification, all legal bonds, in short, all the safeguards which English law has established. Finally he concluded by painting a picture of what family life would be if his ideals concerning marriage were realised.

David felt very uncomfortable during the address. Much as he hated the competitive system in the commercial world, strongly as he believed that the present ideas of money were eating out the best life of the nation, he abhorred the views which many held about marriage. Once or twice, too, he glanced towards Muswell and Brewer, and noted the look on the latter's face, and as he did so he felt like getting up and combating the Russian's words. But by a strong effort he controlled himself and waited until the end of the address.

The meeting was then open for discussion, and immediately Eva Rivers got up to speak. No sooner did David see her rise than a dread apprehension possessed him; he felt sure that she was about to make some wild statement.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### DAVID MAKES A SPEECH

DAVID was not mistaken when he believed that Eva Rivers intended making a wild declaration. He saw that she looked much in earnest; moreover, she was one who prided herself upon being "very advanced." During the ordinary discussions in the "great room" of the house, every one looked to Eva to carry their opinions to what they called their "logical issue," which meant that the girl was in the habit of going to extremes, and she gloried in the distinction. Besides, David believed that in respect to the confession she had made to him, she was determined to make it as public as possible, and that was why he hated the thought of her making her usual wild speech when such people as Brewer and George Muswell stood by. As a matter of course everything would be reported to Grace, who would naturally conclude that he had given the young woman grounds for making her declarations.

Eva Rivers spoke with great volubility and freedom. Her training at the Settlement had developed a natural gift in this direction. She was accustomed to the sound of her own voice, and she delighted in making speeches. She began by saying she was glad that the country had an opportunity of hearing the truth, and she trusted that the strangers present would give publicity to those high standards and ideals at which the Settlement aimed. After this she went on to attack the accepted idea of marriage, and drew terrible pictures of men and women being obliged to live together, according to some unholy laws, when all affinity of soul was gone. She quoted George Eliot's opinion of the central position of Jane Eyre, and declared that the law which held Rochester to his legal bonds was born in hell, and that each link of the legal chain was forged by human fiends. After this she attacked what she called the brutal custom of the woman being obliged to wait until the man proposed marriage to her.

"This means," she said, with great emphasis, "that in the eyes of the world the woman is inferior to the man, and that it is the man's prerogative to speak. Out with such blasphemy! Often men are afraid; they doubt the disposition of the woman, and thus a lifetime of loneliness may ensue. Thus the woman often *ought* to speak, and tell the man she intends to marry him.

"We must be free or die, who speak the language Shakespeare  
spake,  
The faith and morals hold which Milton held."

"For my own part I will be confined by no laws, no customs. I will follow the dictates of my heaven-sent desires. And thus, I here and now declare that I have an affinity of soul with David Wardlaw, and that I choose him as my husband."

There was not often a sensation at the Brotherhood, because of any sentiment which might be expressed; but on this occasion there was quite a "stir in the camp." Some of the women looked shocked, others scornful and angry; while others apparently enjoyed the scene. The men, however, did not appear well pleased at such a statement being made in public, especially as so many strange rumours had already been circulated.

No sooner had Eva Rivers sat down than David rose to his feet, and in order to give emphasis to what he wished to say, he went to the little platform on which the Russian had been standing, and faced the assembly. In doing this he noticed that both George Muswell and Mr. Brewer were, to all appearance, deeply interested in the proceedings. Both seemed much amused, and from the look on the face of the latter, as he made some remark to Muswell, he regarded Eva Rivers' speech as a very spicy subject for gossip.

"We are in the habit of speaking very freely in our Settlement," said David, "perhaps too freely. There are certain matters which should never be mentioned in public, for the reason that they provide food for morbid minds, and thus they do more harm than good. Still, rightly or wrongly, nearly all of us regard every subject as legitimate

for public debate. There seems to be a general opinion that discussion leads to truth, and that truth can never do harm. I will not combat this just now, but I do most emphatically protest against personalities being dragged into an open assembly such as this.

“I have two things to say. One is, that I utterly and entirely disagree with the speeches we have heard. While I believe there are doubtless faults in our marriage laws, and admitting that they have been much abused, I hold that they are the outcome of the needs of a mixed humanity. The views expressed may be all right if men and women lived the ideal life. But as a mass, they don't. We have to take men and women as they are, and the marriage laws of England to-day are just the outcome of the struggles and thoughts of many generations. They have been formed by necessity, because of the lives and habits of men and women as a whole; they have been beneficial to the community, and they are the best that can possibly be adapted to that community. With the great basic reason for the existence of this Settlement, viz., that money lies at the root of our civilisation, and is destroying our best life, I am in entire agreement, but with the opinions expressed about marriage, I disagree; I believe them to be abominable, and if generally carried out, they would drag the lives of men and women to perdition.

“But I doubt if I should have risen to speak, if this were all. Eva Rivers has singled me out for special mention, and thus I am in duty bound to speak. She has elected to express herself freely, and I am obliged to follow her example. Not only do I disagree with her views on marriage generally, but I entirely decline to be associated with her sentiments. She has declared that she has selected me for her husband, and much as it naturally pains me to utter what seems slighting words to any lady, I must say that I totally and absolutely decline the honour she would confer upon me. I am sorry to have to say this in public, because doubtless this scene will become the subject of gossip for the countryside; but in self-defence I am obliged to do so. Eva has diligently spread the news that she has spoken to me, and that she intends



to marry me. I as explicitly state that never by thought, look, or word have I given her any grounds for making this statement; that when she spoke to me, I told her that what she wished was utterly impossible. I have respected her as a sincere and honourable young woman, but I must decline the honour she would confer. There is no affinity between us, and I can assure her there never will be."

As may be imagined, David's speech made a further sensation. Hitherto he had rarely spoken in the discussions, but had been content to listen quietly. Some had imagined that he returned Eva River's sentiments, and while some of the women were angry, and perhaps a trifle jealous, most of the members of the Settlement regarded the matter as settled, and wondered how the experiment would work out.

David's outspoken words, therefore, were eagerly listened to, and there was quite a hush while he was speaking. It was not what was expected, and there was a general feeling of dissent from his views. Many were annoyed, moreover, that he should have spoken so plainly before Muswell and Brewer, as well as before the dozen rustics who stood by.

Doubtless, however, the presence of the two men was the real reason of David's plain speech. Had Eva made her confession in the "common room," he would have probably treated it as a joke; and while making it plain that he could not take her as his wife, would have used such words as to take away a great deal of the sting from his refusal. Now, however, this was impossible. He knew that both Brewer and Muswell would laugh about it at the Hall, and he could not bear the idea that Grace Muswell should think of him as having an intrigue with Eva Rivers, while at the same time he professed to love her with all his heart and life. Moreover, he noted with satisfaction the nods which these men gave to each other while he was speaking, and he hoped they would repeat his words to Grace.

But the affair was not ended yet. David had evidently given Eva Rivers great offence. Her eyes flashed fire,

and her face became crimson. Although she professed to have broken away from the world's conventions, that human nature, out of which many of the world's conventions have arisen, expressed itself. She was still a woman, and the trite saying about a "woman scorned," must be for ever true.

"Concerning Wardlaw's rejection of myself, I have nothing to say," she cried. "I made my statement in public, and I suppose he had a right to answer it in public, although I must say his action does not bear out his sentiments as to the way men ought to treat what he has called 'the weaker sex.' But I don't care about that. I decline to be treated with any leniency because I am a woman, and I shall regard his refusal of my sentiments just as one of you men would regard the refusal of your proffered friendship."

Tears stood in the girl's eyes as she said this, which showed that she was still a woman, and her boast a vain one.

"But what I wish to say is this," she continued. "Wardlaw came here as one of us. He has professed to hold our views on all vital matters. This is a vital matter. And he scornfully repudiates our views. How is Wardlaw to be regarded? Is he still to be trusted as a member of our fraternity? I claim that we have been mistaken in him, that he is an outsider, and should be treated as an outsider."

At this there was general confusion. Some declared that Eva Rivers was right, while others maintained that her position struck at the root of the liberty of the Settlement. Party feeling ran high, and, had David desired, he could there and then have divided the camp. Moreover, had he been ambitious in that direction, he could have become the leader of a new sect in the Brotherhood order, and completely separated his sympathisers from the others who saw differently.

But this was no part of the young man's programme; he hated scenes and disruptions of any sort; and without waiting to hear the end of the discussion, he left the garden and went away alone.

Naturally he was much excited, especially when he thought of what Grace Muswell would think of it all. Presently, however, he saw how ridiculous the whole business was, and he laughed immoderately. "It would form a good subject for a *Punch* cartoon," he said. "Fancy a woman getting up to make such a speech, and my answering her so seriously. It will be sure to get in the papers." This thought made the matter less pleasant, and in spite of himself he was led to think seriously.

For an hour or more he walked among the fields, and presently he found himself down by the river, at the very spot where, months before, he had helped Grace Muswell out of a very awkward situation. The scene, of course, had entirely changed. Then an angry torrent rushed down the valley, while now only a tiny stream rippled along the stony bed of the river; then, all the trees were denuded of leaves; now, the whole countryside was covered with the glory of rich summer foliage.

He stood for some time on the little footbridge, looking at the willow-covered banks of the river, and wondering whether he should see Grace Muswell, when he went to the lane near the lodge gates of the Hall, as he had declared he should. He felt the madness of it all, but still he determined to go. Just as Eva Rivers' words, and the announcement of Grace's engagement to Brewer, had determined him to speak to her a week ago, so the scene that evening and the look on Brewer's face determined him, mad as the action undoubtedly was, to go to the lane and wait, if need be, until midnight for Grace's coming.

"Good-night, Brewer."

"Good-night; it has been a fine time."

"Yes; a very funny business."

"By Jove, that love-making girl was——" and then David heard no more, for the man spoke in low tones. A minute later, however, the sound of Brewer's laughter reached him, laughter which made him think rather of an animal in rude health than of a man who was supposed to belong to the gentry of the neighbourhood.

David knew what it meant. The two men had left the Settlement, and had come to the crossroads, where

they were separating. The discussion had evidently been a long one, and he wondered what had happened. Doubtless some hard things had been said about himself, and he wondered whether he was in his proper element among this strange community.

A minute later George Muswell came up to him.

"Ah, Mr. Wardlaw," said the young man pleasantly, "enjoying the quiet of the Sunday evening?"

"As well as I can," replied David.

"There has been rather a stormy scene up at the Brotherhood Settlement," said the young man, leaning on the iron railing of the footbridge, just as David was leaving.

"Was there? I came away early."

"Yes; I saw you going."

"But you waited to the end, I suppose?"

"Yes. I had often heard of these services of yours. My groom has gone several times, and has told me of your discussions on the land laws, a standing army, and similar questions; and so I thought, as they were public, I would just like to listen for myself. It seems I happened on a fortunate night. That was Brewer's opinion."

"Of course that was Mr. Brewer who was with you?" rejoined David.

"Yes; he has wished me to accompany him for a long time. He thoroughly enjoyed himself, and says that he quite fell in love with that amorous young lady. He says he shall cultivate her acquaintance, and that possibly she will propose to him."

David did not speak. He did not enjoy the conversation.

"Your speech did not seem to be much appreciated," said Muswell presently.

"I suppose not."

"I say, Wardlaw."

"Yes?"

"You'll excuse my asking a plain question, won't you?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Then, how the d— can you remain with such a crew?"

"Muswell," said David, "will you excuse *my* asking a plain question?"

"Oh, yes," said George Muswell, perhaps not altogether pleased that David had adopted his own manner of address.

"Then, how can such a fellow as you live amidst the artificial shams of so-called society?"

"Excuse me, do you know anything about society?"

"Oh, yes," laughed David.

"What do you know of it?"

"Oh, I know the marriage market. I know that money rules it; I know that true lovers often fail to be mated because of the want of it. I know that pure girls, who happen to be poor, are sold to fellows like—like—well, say the owner of Penrose, just for the sake of home and position."

George Muswell was silent.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM

"If ever there was a madman outside Bedlam, I am he," said Baring as he wandered along the lane. "And if ever there was a man who deserves to be put in Bedlam, well, I am the man. Here am I now, a penniless, homeless wanderer, actually waiting in the lane here for one who will not think of me, I suppose, save with contempt. Followers are not allowed to go into the kitchen, and so——"

He laughed in spite of himself. No one could see the humorous side of the situation more clearly than he, and yet he was deadly in earnest. He was in earnest when he gave up his beautiful home, in earnest when he tried to understand the life of the people by whom his money was made, in earnest when he made his home with the "idealists" at the Settlement, while now he felt that the happiness of his lifetime might depend on the events of that night.

"Love, true love is affinity of soul," he cried. "If

she really loves me, then money, position, name, have nothing to do with it. If she could love me as the Squire of Malpas Towers, and not as David Wardlaw, then,—well, it would not be myself who would be loved, but my name, my position; and I could not bear that—no, not even for her.”

The influence of Nora Brentwood was greater than he imagined.

He waited until daylight died away, but no one came. The harvesters were gone to their home, the sound of voices had ceased, and a great silence fell all around him. Now and then he heard the noise of a night-bird, which the country people called “a corn-crake”; but beyond that nothing.

Of course he was mad to stay there, but he could not help staying. He gave up hope of her coming, but wandered along the lane—waiting, listening, wondering.

He had not spoken to Eva Rivers since the scene described in the last chapter. The young woman was, naturally, offended deeply, and she took care to show it. But David expected this and laughed at it. He did not believe she cared for him really. She was fond of experiments, and perhaps she regarded this as one of them. Of course she was wounded; but the very principles she held would lead her to feel less than women living the ordinary life. No, he would not trouble about her. He did not think she would bear enmity long. She had so often enlarged upon Tolstoi's explanation of the Sermon on the Mount, and so often protested against the spirit of retaliation, that she would hardly be likely to seek revenge.

And yet he was not sure. He reflected that no one could live Christ's teaching without possessing Christ's spirit, and he had very grave doubts about Eva in this direction. She had not suggested to him that she possessed the Christian spirit at all, but had quoted the words of the Founder of Christianity because they seemed revolutionary, and if carried out, would destroy the existing state of things.

It was after nine o'clock, and still he was alone. Would Grace come? Of course not; but suppose she did, what

should he say to her? Only what he had said. Well, what then? Suppose she could care for him, suppose for his sake she was prepared to sacrifice the home and position which were hers for the acceptance—what then? What had he to offer her? He had given up home, wealth. Could he ask her to live with him on the Settlement? No, he could not, he could not! He liked the life himself; there was much in it that was desirable. As a man, too, he could bear the hardship it involved; but he would not bring Grace to it. Why he could not tell, but he would not.

Then what was the use of his waiting to speak to Grace Muswell? There was no use, and yet he waited, he could not help waiting. All his life was gone out to her, and he longed to see her.

The Hall clock struck ten, and still no one came. Now and then a bird rustled among the leaves, and again the summer wind sighed its way through the cornfields, but there was no sound of a human voice. Sometimes it seemed to David that the rippling of the river in the valley was like the singing of many voices in the far distance, but presently its very music became torture to him. His heart was yearning for Grace, and he still waited, although he felt sure she would not come.

Eleven o'clock. What was the use of it? Most likely every one at the Hall was asleep. What right had he to wait? What right had he to expect her? Even if she thought of him kindly she would not think of meeting him alone at night. But still he waited. He would not turn back to the Settlement until the clock struck midnight, and after that—well, he would not think of the future.

Presently he heard the sound of carriage wheels and the tramp of horses. There was merry laughter, too. Who was coming? Probably some party had been to the seaside, and was now returning. But why were they coming towards him? And the village lay in the opposite direction, and no house was near save the Hall.

He drew close to the gates. A few minutes later a gay party came up. Yes, he heard Brewer's voice. There was no mistaking it, and surely that was Grace speaking!

His heart sank like lead. Even while he had been waiting

for her she had been in the society of this man. She was like the rest of the world, then, she was prepared to sell herself for money! It was all money—all money. All the world was a great market and anything, everything, could be bought; and he who made the highest bid obtained the coveted article. As for those who could not, or would not bid,—well, they could possess nothing. Thus it came about that the lust for money became the master passion of life, and as a consequence everything became a mere matter of barter, and all life was degraded thereby. How could men and women be true and pure while the moral atmosphere of the world was rank poison?

All these oft-repeated thoughts flashed through his mind in a second, and just as suddenly left him.

There were two carriages, and, as far as David could see, there were three or four people on horseback. On coming up to the park gates several dismounted, and he heard some say that they preferred walking up to the house. The hour was late for the country, but they were young. Life to them was full of romance, and the night was full of beauty.

David could not help envying them. In spite of the hollowness of civilisation, they were happy; besides, was not such society preferable to that at the Brotherhood Settlement?

He felt like an eavesdropper, and a spy, as the party dismounted, and he tried to drag himself away out of sight and hearing, but he could not.

“Well, good-night, Brewer. It is too late to ask you up to the house.”

“Yes, it is late; but I feel as though it were only just sunset,” replied Brewer. “I am as fresh as a daisy,” and the Squire laughed loudly.

“Well, you have a good ride to Penrose.”

“Yes, and a lovely one. I must think about the pleasures of the day. I hope you’ve enjoyed yourself, Miss Muswell?”

“Yes, thank you.”

It was Grace who spoke, and David’s heart beat loudly as he heard her voice.



"By the way, I must arrange for a gathering at Penrose soon; that is, before your friends leave you. Of course it has been delightful at the seaside to-day, and the ride back has been glorious; but I like picnics in one's own grounds best."

"Do you? Oh, by the way, just one word before you go, Brewer. Grace, will you wait a minute, or will you overtake the others?"

"I'll walk on, George, thank you."

Muswell walked a few yards down the lane with Brewer, while Grace entered the park gates alone. The rest of the party were some distance ahead. The girl did not seek to overtake the others, but sauntered quietly along.

It was a glorious night, almost as clear as day. The great harvest moon shed its silver light upon the scene, and every tree in the park looked as though it were decked by the hands of angels.

"Excuse me, Miss Muswell."

It was David who spoke. No sooner had he seen her walk away alone, than, unmindful of everything, he hurried after her.

She turned on him sharply. "Mr. Wardlaw!" she said.

"Yes," replied David. "I have been waiting for you for hours. I told you I should, you know."

"Waiting for me!"

"Yes, don't you remember? I told you last week that I should come to-night, and wait in the lane. I came about eight o'clock, and I have been there ever since."

"But I told you not to come; I told you that what you asked was impossible."

"But I could not help it," said David; "and you knew I should come, didn't you?"

"But, excuse me, I cannot allow you to walk with me. My cousin will overtake me in a minute."

"I could not help coming, I could not help waiting," said David. "How could I? I have been hungering for a sight of your face ever since I saw you last. You know that, don't you? Have you ever once thought of me?"

In spite of herself, the young man threw a kind of spell

upon her. There was something strong and masterful in his presence, in spite of his humility. Besides, he was in every way superior to the man who throughout the day had been thrusting himself upon her.

She did not answer his question ; neither, on the other hand, did she repeat the desire that he should leave her. Away in the distance they heard the sound of those who had left them. How happily pealed their laughter.

"I must tell you something, I cannot help it," cried David.

"It is no use ; besides, what will George think ? He will overtake us in a minute. I believe I hear his footsteps now."

Her answer was not a dismissal, and even David felt it. It suggested that if there was no possibility of their being disturbed she would listen to him.

"Let us turn in here," said David. "It leads through the shrubbery, and of course joins the main drive again."

Was it the influence of the summer night, or did the man's presence overpower her ? Certainly she turned aside with him into the path, which threaded its way through a maze of flowering shrubs.

"I have been thinking so much about what I told you last week," said the young man ; "I have realised that I acted like a boor, a clown. I had no right to speak to you in such a way. But I hope you will forgive me, for I could not help it. Will you forgive me ?"

She meant to have spoken in a chilling way to him, but she could not.

"There is nothing to forgive," she said. "Of course what you ask is impossible, but——"

"But why, Miss Muswell, why ? Oh, I do love you !"

He was only a boy after all, a boy filled with all sorts of strange fancies and impracticable thoughts ; and she—well, she was only a girl, who had not become sordid and calculating, in spite of life's atmosphere.

"How can you live amongst such people ?" she asked suddenly.

"I want to tell you," he said ; "I ought to have told you last week, but I did not think. When you saw me

lying on the bank that day, such a long time ago, I was not poor. I was rich, very rich. My money had been left me by one who had made his riches by grinding the poor. Because I was rich I was courted, and made much of by every one. I saw that it was not I for whom they cared, but my money, my position. No one heeded how it was made, no one thought of the suffering and pain and sin which it cost. I was rich, and that was enough. I was introduced to a young lady who afterwards professed attachment to me. I thought I cared for her at the time, but I didn't. Still, I proposed to her, and she professed to love me; but as soon as I told her that I might soon have to give up my money she laughed at me, and treated my declaration as a farce. I am glad she did now, because I have found out that I never loved her. But I saw that, as a rich man, I could never be sure that any one ever really cared for me. Oh, I was miserable! All life seemed a hollow sham. Every one and everything seemed sordid and heartless. Then I went among the people where my fortune was made, amidst the dregs of London life. It was in the East End of London. I saw the drunkenness, the immorality, the squalor, the sweating, out of which my fortune had been made. Oh, it was horrible; and I hated money. It seemed to me the poison which has caused our great national cancers; sweating, bad houses, oppression, vice of all sorts, gambling in every form, wars of nations and wars of individuals, all found their root in money. None of these things would exist without it. Even religion and love seemed to have become a matter of barter. I did not see the use of trying to live a true, conscientious life; in fact, I did not see how one could live the Christian life in a world where money was the governing force.

“But I must not weary you with that; perhaps you can scarcely understand me, and yet I believe you can. Anyhow, I determined to give it all up, and hearing of the Settlement, and being told that it consisted of a body of men and women who had left the world in order to be true to their consciences, I came and joined it.

“The rest you know. I have been fairly contented there, and really it is a more healthy life than that of the

ordinary society man or woman—ay, more true to one's best ideals than that of the competitive money-loving world.

“But lately all has been different. I have learnt to love you; I—— But you know, don't you? Is there any chance for me? Can you care for me?”

Grace was silent.

“You don't care for money and that sort of thing, do you?” went on the young man. “You believe that love is independent of all that, don't you? You can love me for myself, can't you? Oh, say you can!”

There was passionate pleading in David's voice, and it thrilled the girl's heart. After all, she was a girl, young, ardent, romantic. She could not help comparing him with the rich Squire who had offered her his hand.

“You understand me now, don't you?” went on David. “I am so strangely placed that I am obliged to take such means as this of speaking to you. It ought not to be, for I love you; and you, surely, yes, you love me!”

“No, no!” said the girl.

“Yes, you do—you must; you cannot care for that man! You don't, do you?”

“No,” she replied; “no, I cannot.”

She did not mean to say this, but somehow the words seemed dragged from her.

“And you will not marry him, whatever happens—will you?”

“No, never!”

She uttered the words savagely, as if she found it hard to be obliged to say them.

“Thank God for that,” cried David; “thank God for that! And you can learn to love me, can't you?”

Somehow the atmosphere which he had created around her had made Grace forget the peculiar situation in which they were placed. She forgot that they were comparative strangers, forgot that, according to her uncle's ideas, she was compromising her position in society by speaking to him in such a way.

“And if I could, what then?”

She spoke the words involuntarily. She seemed to

instinctively realise their position. Certainly she had never arrived at any conclusion by carefully thinking about it.

"What then?" cried David. "Why, I should be the happiest man on earth! Tell me, can you? Oh, I do love you!"

"I am poor, too," she said. "My father—that is, I am dependent on my relations. What would become of me?"

"Oh, I would give you a home."

"How? You could not, if you believe what you have been telling me!"

She had not meant to answer him at all. She had not meant to say anything, for she did not know her heart. Indeed, she spoke at random; her thoughts were incoherent, uttered under the influence of excitement.

"Love makes all things possible," he cried; "if you can love me, there must be a way! Tell me, can you?"

"No, you must go away; I am sure you must."

They had reached an open space. In the near distance great trees grew, and flowering shrubs abounded; but just there the moonlight fell, and he could see her face plainly. To him it was fair beyond words, for his whole heart had gone out to her.

"Must I go?" he said; and they both stood still.

"Yes, you must. We are near the house."

"But will you send me away without one word? Tell me you love me, and all things will be possible. Tell me."

"I cannot," said Grace; "I cannot; I—I don't know."

He caught her hands in his, and she did not draw them away. Thus they stood face to face. She was a tall, finely formed girl, but he towered above her. She felt how strong he was, how masterful.

"Look at me," he said.

She tried to disobey him, but she lifted her eyes to his.

"I love you," he said, "love you with all my heart. I am poor, I am homeless, I am friendless; but I can do all things for you. Can't you care for me, can't you give me a word of hope?"

He had forgotten all save her presence. His life on the Settlement seemed some far-off dream to him now.

They two were 'all the world. Theories of life, and all men's arguments about them, were nothing. He loved this maiden, and that was all, save his over-mastering longing for her to love him.

Grace did not speak.

"Will you send me away?" he asked again, and his voice was husky with passion. "My heart is aching for just one word. You will not send me away without a word, will you?"

Her eyes turned towards the ground, and she tried to speak, tried to tell him that his words were madness, tried to answer him angrily, but she could not. Then their eyes met again; his eager, burning; hers dim with tears.

Her head dropped upon his breast, and she burst into tears.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### DAVID BEGINS TO REALISE HIS MADNESS

It was past midnight when David reached the Settlement, but he had no thought of time. Life to him was changed. It could never be the same again. Words were ringing in his ears which he would never forget, hopes were stirred within his heart which would never die. He was living in the blissful present. Grace loved him. She had struggled against it as though it were madness, but it had conquered her. He had nothing, and yet he possessed all things. She loved him for himself, for himself alone. This was the thought which thrilled his heart, and transformed the countryside into a beautiful paradise.

He did not think of the future; the present was enough for him. Grace loved him, she had confessed her love, and he was happy beyond words.

When he opened the door of Trewinnick House he saw Eva Rivers standing as if awaiting him.

"You are late," said she.

"Yes."

“Where have you been?”

David did not reply.

“I suppose you’ve been among the money-grubs,” she said. “You’ve been hobnobbing with those locusts which blight the beauty of life; those parasites which suck the life-blood of the land.”

David laughed; he could not help it, but the girl was terribly in earnest.

“This is no place for you,” she said. “You are still longing to be amongst the flesh-pots of Egypt. This is a place for people with ideals and principles. You are dilly-dallying, that’s what you are. Even now you long to be among the pagans.”

Perhaps she had not waited for him for the purpose of saying this, but she flung her words at him savagely. Doubtless she was a well-meaning girl, but he had publicly refused her love, and—well, in spite of her disavowal of the inequality of the sexes, she was still a woman.

“Good-night, Eva,” said David, and he went to bed.

He did not sleep, he could not; and when morning came he rose and went out among the fields. He was very happy, for as yet he realised nothing save that Grace loved him. Moreover, all nature ministered to his gladness.

Those who live in the cities know nothing, can know nothing, of the beauty of sunrise in the country. We speak of the beauty of eventide, but it is poor compared with sunrise, for dawn must ever be more glorious than sunset. All nature bursts into life; flowers, trees, and all living things enter upon a new day. Every meadow tells the story that it has been peopled by angels, every hilltop becomes an altar of God, every valley a temple where the choirs of the Almighty pour forth their praise. Birds and beasts and flowers all feel the touch of the Divine; river and rippling rill breathe forth their music to welcome the dawn of a new day.

And David realised it all. He bared his head, and drank deep of the sweet morning air. The world was full of beauty, and God loved him. He had manifested His love in the love of the woman who was all the world to him.

For hours he wandered without one anxious thought. He was young, and he was happy. He loved, and was loved; but what of the future? He had given up the world, given up its riches, given up his home; what should he do?

Should he bring Grace to that Settlement, even if for love of him she would come? It was impossible. The people among whom he lived were honest; they were trying to be true to their convictions, and to a large extent he was at one with them, but he could not bring Grace among them. All their discussions were free from wrong thoughts, and there was no manifestation of base desire; but he would not have Grace there. Why he could not tell, but he could not bear the thought of her being alone with Eva Rivers and Bertha Gray, the Russian refugees, and the rest of them. He would not like her to take part in such discussions as those which Bertha Gray delighted in. No, this class of "New Woman" might be all right from the standpoint of experiment-making, but as associates for the woman he loved—no, he could not think of it.

But what could he do? Well, he could make a home for Grace; he could—— But he stopped short. That meant going back into the world of competition; it meant taking part in the struggle for existence, which lay at the root of nine-tenths of the evils of life. Should he lower his ideals, should he succumb to the first temptation?

After all, were not his words to Grace a mockery? What right had he to tell her of his love? She was poor, and he gloried in her poverty. She had preferred him and poverty to another man with wealth. But meanwhile she was dependent on her relatives for the food she ate, for the clothes she wore. Could he who pretended to love her leave her so?

These and a thousand other thoughts filled his mind, and he was sorely perplexed. He remained in the fields for hours, and although he thought hard, he could not solve the problem of his life.

He went back to the house in time for breakfast, and was met by a confused shout of voices. The subject of the previous Sunday night had cropped up, and it was being



eagerly discussed. When he entered, however, many relapsed into silence. His views had displeased many, and had created some amount of resentment. "If existing marriage laws are the outgrowth of life's necessities," they urged, "cannot the same be said of the rest of the things which civilisation has sanctioned?" According to them, civilisation was corrupt to the core, and must be swept away. What was the use of compromising? The abuses which he admitted were simply the natural outcome of an evil system, and they stood for an utter revolt against the system. Thus it came about that he was treated somewhat coldly.

It is said by some that bigotry is dead. I doubt if it is; I doubt if it ever can die; and perhaps there are few people in the world so bigoted as those who declaim against bigotry. There is no theologian as narrow as the broad theologian, no more intolerant person than the man who declares himself to be an advanced radical. I suspect that every earnest man must be a bigot when his position is carried to its logical issue. These people claimed to be the broadest of thinkers, whereas they were as narrow as lines. And a line, according to Euclid, is length without breadth.

David realised this as he sat down to breakfast that morning.

"What are our mottoes for to-day?" said somebody presently.

They had exhausted, so they said, the principal sayings of their favourite teachers, and a month before it had been decided that every member in the fraternity should in turn write precepts for the other. It happened that it was Eva Rivers' turn that morning to provide texts for the day.

Eva, on hearing the question which I have just mentioned, exhibited the blackboard before her fellows. This was what David read:—

*"Who is the real traitor? It is he who, having ideals, lowers them for the sake of policy. The true man is he who, having an ideal, remains true to it, even although it may be impossible, and even although his faithfulness may cost him his own life, and the lives of others."*

*"Who is the man who has lost his soul? It is he who gives way to selfishness. What is the cause of selfishness? The worldly spirit of competition and personal possession. Therefore he who seeks personal possession lives in hell, and is an enemy to his race.*

*"What is one of life's greatest fallacies? To believe that charity expressed in gifts to the so-called poor can help them. Thus all endeavours to alleviate poverty by poor laws, establishing hospitals and the like, are like putting sticking-plasters on a cancer. The only cure for poverty is to destroy the idea of personal possession.*

*"Therefore come out from among the ungodly, and touch not the unclean thing.'"*

"Eva is logical as usual," was the remark.

At that moment the postman came, and everybody seemed pleased except Eva. First, because no letters came for her; second, because his advent drew attention away from her composition. She had spent a good deal of time on it, and anticipated a good deal of discussion, and perhaps a few compliments. Every one who received letters, however, read them eagerly. They did not seem to realise that the postman who brought the letters was a unit in the great commercial system. They took no note that the paper which they scanned so eagerly was produced by men who were in the midst of the world's competition; but it is hard to be consistent in this world.

David took his letter out in the garden to read. It was very bulky, and he saw that it came from London. On opening it, he found several enclosures.

The first he read was from Emily Baker.

"RESPECTED SIR,—I take my pen in hand to tell you that Miss Perkins have given me the sack. She says that my wages was paid by you, and that as the money have stopped, and trade is slack, she can't keep me. What I shall do I am sure I don't know. Mother have stole some of my money, and she's been on the booze ever since. She came to Miss Perkins the other day, and kicked up a row. I haven't had no answer to my last letter.

"Yours respectfully,  
"EMILY BAKER.

"P.S.—I believe Miss Perkins would keep me on at 7s. 6d. a week but for mother; but she says it would kill her custom if she came again. It's hard for a girl to keep straight."

“Poor Emily!” said David, “what can be done for her, I wonder? And why is it that payment is stopped? I left instructions for Mr. Jay. I must see to this.”

He opened another enclosure, which was from Mr. Crowle, the “People’s Lawyer,” to Mr. Jay.

“BAKING AND BAKER.

“DEAR SIR,—I have made further inquiries, as per instructions, and have nearly concluded my case. As the amount you forwarded, however, has been already swallowed up in expenses, I cannot proceed further until I receive a further subsidy.

“I have been informed by Miss Perkins that the money she received for Emily Baker’s wages has been stopped. She has therefore discharged her. I have just heard bad reports about the said Emily Baker, and I am afraid that if something is not done for her, the girl will get in a bad way.

“Yours truly,

“J. B. CROWLE.”

“What can this mean?” asked the young man. “Ah!” here is a letter from Mr. Jay.”

It ran as follows:—

“DEAR SIR,—I herewith enclose two letters for your perusal. One you will notice is addressed to me from the man Crowle, of Mile End Road.

“As you will remember, you instructed me in our last interview to reserve a moiety of your estate for your personal use, the rest to be disposed of in other ways, you entirely refusing to participate in it.

“The moiety referred to is now exhausted, having been disposed of in the following way:—

	£	s.	d.
Paid to brotherhood Settlement, as per your instructions .. .. .	—	—	—
Paid to the man Crowle to make inquiries concerning Emily Baker .. .. .	—	—	—
Paid to Miss Perkins, for Emily Baker, as per your instructions .. .. .	—	—	—
My own fees .. .. .	—	—	—
Total ..	—	—	—

"You will see, therefore," concluded the letter, "that you have slightly overdrawn your account, and I shall be glad to hear from you in relation thereto at your earliest convenience.

"I am, moreover, sorry to find that no further help can be given to the girl Emily Baker. I hear she is in straits, and the woman whom she regards as her mother is a bad woman. What will become of her one does not like to think.

"Yours faithfully,

"JOHN JAY."

Opposite each item in the bill, Mr. Jay had placed the amount, and David saw that the total was somewhat in excess of the sum he had left in the lawyer's hands.

When David finished this letter he felt like one stunned. Never before had he realised what he had done as he realised it now. He had had no use for money during his stay at the Settlement. He had written to Mr. Jay shortly after his arrival, telling him of the name by which he wished to be called, and had given him instructions concerning the amount he wished paid to the Settlement.

He was utterly confounded. He counted the money which he had brought with him. It was only a few pounds, scarcely enough to pay what he owed to Mr. Jay. He had not calculated upon contingencies of this kind. The amount he had contributed to the Settlement, although there was no stipulation that he should give it, he regarded as his quota towards his maintenance. In principle they had nothing to do with money, but it had been a custom for those who had any to put it in what they called the "common pool," just because—well, because they could not live *without* money under the evils of civilisation.

Truly he had crossed the Rubicon. Well, he had thought it all out, so he imagined, and was prepared to stand by the consequences. But he had not realised all that might happen.

He realised now that money could do good, and that from want of it, that girl Emily Baker might drift to ruin. But what could he do? He was helpless.

And then there was the bill of the lawyer. Even although a man did not believe in money, it was not right to be in debt. He had given away his fortune, but he had no right

to give away what was not his own. Those few pounds which he possessed! Well, they must be sent to Mr. Jay. He must be honest, at all events.

But Grace! He had told her that he loved her, he had said he could give her a home. Well, so he could, according to the idea of the Settlement. He could have a little cottage on the farm, and they could live alone in their love. But would that be right to her? She had been tenderly reared. True, she was poor, but her associations had always been refined. Could he take her from a good home, even although it was not her own, to be subjected to the privations of the farm?

No, he could not. He remembered the "do as you please" habits of the Settlement. They made free of each other's rooms and houses, so free that the common privacies of life were ignored. No, he could not submit Grace to it.

But he could work somewhere. He could obtain a situation. Others had done it, why not he? But in doing this he would be going back to the sordid, materialistic world—the world of shallowness and sham, the world of greed and oppression. He would be selling his soul to gain the world.

He was sorely distressed. That which he considered to be his duty pointed one way, while his love for Grace indicated another. What should he do? Rather, what *could* he do? He was practically penniless, and he had thrown away the chances of obtaining a position which were in his hands when leaving Cambridge. Then, he looked forward to the possession of £300, by means of which he would be able to live, while he prepared himself for his profession. Now he had nothing; and, worse than that, his mode of life had utterly unfitted him for the ordinary work of the world.

Besides all this, the principles which he had accepted forbade his going back to the world. He did not believe in competition, did not believe in the world's barter. He believed that by living on the Settlement he was fostering ideals which were impossible in the world. He compared the thoughts and hopes of the Brotherhood Settlement with

those of the people he had met around Malpas Towers. The one represented reality, it despised class and money distinction ; it cared nothing for the artificialities of society, it was earnest, it was sincere. The other was reminiscent of shame, of hollowness, of lies. He remembered that everything was sold to the highest bidder, and that character was of little import. He had himself known that polite society winked at the basest passions, because they were associated with wealth and position, while at the same time it had treated homely virtues with a smile of tolerant contempt. No, he could not go back to such a life.

Throughout the day these thoughts filled his mind, and when evening came he received another communication, which excited him even more than the others. It was nothing less than a letter from Mr. Muswell, asking him to come up to the Hall immediately.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### THE SECOND VISIT TO MUSWELL HALL

THE letter was brought by a special messenger. This messenger, moreover, was recognised by various members of the Settlement, who watched David's face as he read.

"What time do you dine at the Hall?" he asked the youth.

"Half-past seven, sir."

"Tell Mr. Muswell I will call at nine o'clock," he said.

"A reversion to type, eh, David?" said Langford.

"No, I do not think so."

"You seem in favour among these people."

"I am afraid not."

"Afraid, eh?"

"Yes, afraid."

"I say, old man, shall I prophesy?"

"Yes, if you like."

“ Well, then, you’ll not be long before you are back in the world.”

David shook his head.

“ Am I not right ? ”

“ I could not go back if I would.”

“ No ? ”

“ No, I have burnt my bridges, and you know the width of the gulf.”

“ Would you if you could ? ”

“ As you understand it—no.”

“ You qualify, old man.”

“ Everything needs qualification in this world.”

“ The first step in the downward path is qualification,” remarked Langford.

“ Is it ? ” said David. He turned away with a weary sigh, for he was very tired. All through the day he had been trying to face life’s problem, but the light did not shine upon his way, save a light which threw everything else into deeper darkness.

“ I don’t often quote Scripture,” said Langford, “ but I remember one passage.”

“ Yes.”

“ ‘ If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother and wife, he cannot be My disciple ! ’ quoted Langford. “ I know the word ‘ hate ’ means to love less, but the principle is plain. If a man loves his own life more than he loves the truth, he cannot be the disciple of Him whom we profess to follow.”

“ That was the cry of those old persecuting Catholics who burnt their own children,” said David.

“ I know it ; but a great truth remains.”

“ And are you sure you have found that truth ? ”

“ I believe we more closely approximate to it than any other class of the community.”

“ Perhaps we do,” said David thoughtfully. “ But life is a big affair. It cannot be measured by the inch rule of our theories.”

“ Nevertheless, the distinction between right and wrong is very clear.”

“ Is it ? ”

“ Yes ; don't you think so ? ”

“ Yes ; but our conceptions concerning right and wrong differ.”

“ Give us an example.”

“ The subject of our discussion on Sunday night. The theory of the Russian Count, worked out to its logical issue, means free love. He believes it to be right. I, on the other hand, believe it to be of the devil.”

“ To the pure all things are pure.”

“ But to the impure ? ”

“ Nothing is impure.”

“ Then, according to you, nothing depends on law or circumstance, but on the character of the individual.”

“ That is it.”

“ Think where that leads you, Langford,” said David, and he went upstairs to dress for his visit to Muswell Hall.

He had not told Langford anything concerning his love for Grace Muswell. He could not. It seemed too sacred for speech. It was a matter between himself and Grace—and God.

He hardly realised what Squire Muswell's letter portended. Surely he could know nothing of what had passed between himself and Grace the previous night ! And yet such might be the case. Perhaps they had stayed longer together than he had imagined, and so Grace might have been questioned on her return to the house. Or perhaps she had been asked to give a definite answer to Brewer's proposal. Yes, he remembered now ; it was the last day of August.

He went into the fields again. It wanted an hour to the time when he must start on his journey to the Hall, and he could not stay indoors. He must go out into the open air. Besides, the conversation of his companions irritated him. They spoke as though they had solved life's mysteries, as though wisdom would die with them. They had found the truth, and those who disagreed with them were either liars, knaves, fools, or blind with selfishness. He went down to the river, and, sitting among the willow bushes, gave himself over to thought.

Meanwhile, Grace Muswell sat in her room alone. She had passed a terrible day. She had entered the house



on the previous night, unnoticed, and had tossed for hours on a sea of delirious joy. Like David, she, too, had been unable to see the clouds which hung in the sky. She lived in the blissful present. The awful gloom which had rested on her life had been rolled away. She felt brave enough to resist her uncle and all his persuasions. She would never marry Penfold Brewer now. During the past few months she had feared that she would be driven to this. She was poor, dependent on her relatives for everything, and thus harassed on every side, feeling the bitterness of poverty, forbidden to earn her own livelihood, she seemed to be carried on towards a doom at which she shuddered. She had thought but little of David until that night when he first told her of his love. How could she? She was ignorant of his feelings, ignorant of everything save that he was a faddist who had given up his chances in life to live among a sect of godless fanatics. She believed him to be a gentleman, and regarded him as an interesting fellow, who under other circumstances it might have been a pleasure to know, but beyond that nothing. But after he had told her of his love, after she had left him, she felt differently. Her heart was strangely stirred, she knew not why. Of course his love for her was hopeless, it was madness; and yet she thought of his words with pleasure. Moreover, they made her hate more than ever the idea of marrying Penfold Brewer. The Squire's heavy face, thick lips, and coarse voice, became positively loathsome. But she never thought seriously of meeting him, although she felt a strange desire to do so.

Meanwhile she knew that the dread day when her answer to Penfold Brewer must be given, drew nearer. Her uncle expected her to accept him, and had written to Mr. Winfield asking him to come down, so that they might arrange about settlements. The two together had determined that she should not be a dowerless bride, so John Winfield had decided to come to Cornwall.

When Sunday came, and George returned from the discussion at Trewinnick, she had listened eagerly to his description of the gathering. Moreover, her heart beat wildly when he related how David scouted the ideas which

were advanced, and had absolutely declined to accept the "New Woman's" proffered love.

"The fellow is evidently a gentleman," said Mr. Muswell; "the mystery to me is that he can live among such a crew."

She took no part in the conversation which followed, but every word made her think more kindly of David, and caused her to loathe the idea of marrying Penfold Brewer with greater intensity.

All through the day of the picnic a great burden rested upon her. She was haunted by strange fears, and she avoided spending a moment alone with the man who had asked her to be his wife. Indeed, she was glad when George had asked her on the night of the picnic whether she would wait for him or rejoin the others. It had given her a chance to be alone. She longed for society, and yet she was afraid of it. She had wondered whether David would come to the lane in the hopes of meeting her, and although she tried to persuade herself that he would not, she almost hoped he would.

Thus it came about, when David came to her and told her again of his heart's longings, that the partition between them, which had been weakening all through the week, fell down, and she had to confess that she loved him. For a time she seemed to have entered into the valley of peace. She was weak, but David was strong; that which she hoped seemed impossible, but David would make it possible.

When she arose in the morning her heart was full of joy; the world seemed full of music, and the storm which she dreaded was far away. On coming down she saw Mr. Winfield. He had come the previous evening, and had gone to bed before she had returned home. She was not surprised at his appearance, and during breakfast she was gay as the gayest.

During the morning, however, Mr. Muswell came to her.

"Will you come into the morning-room, Grace, my dear?" he said with a smile. "Your Uncle John and I wish to speak with you."

She followed him with a fast-beating heart, for she

felt that the interview was momentous. But she was brave, she was strong.

Mr. Winfield began the conversation

"And so it seems there will be one less bearing the name of Muswell," he said. "Ah, Grace, Grace, what a sly puss you are, never to write and tell me! But still, I am an indulgent old fellow. Brewer is not a nice name, but I hear he's a good, substantial man. Now, tell me all about it."

"There is nothing to tell," said Grace.

"Nothing to tell!"

"No. That is—except I am not going to marry Mr. Penfold Brewer."

At this there were many words, many confused, angry words, and for some time Grace feared to tell the glad secret of her heart.

Presently, however, Mr. Winfield asked her reasons for her behaviour.

"Because I do not love him," said Grace; "because I almost dislike him; because the thought of marrying him is loathsome to me."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Muswell; "nonsense! You must be mad, my girl!"

But this led to more questions, and a little later Grace told her uncles why she could not marry Mr. Penfold Brewer.

At first they could not understand her. Such a thing was impossible! A Muswell love a nameless fanatic—a man who lived amongst a lawless, immoral crew! Why, she had scarcely seen him.

But Grace was firm, and told them that she meant to marry the man of her heart.

Both Mr. Muswell and Mr. Winfield were men of the old-fashioned stamp. As we have before hinted, they had no sympathy with innovations; moreover, they could not brook opposition. Their will must be law, or what would become of the world? Presently, however, they cooled down sufficiently to ask her further questions.

"Well," said Mr. Winfield, "of course, if you marry

this fellow we can do nothing more for you. But what will you do? Can he give you a home?"

Grace was silent.

"Will you go and live on the Settlement?"

Grace shook her head.

"The fellow does not believe in private property; he does not believe in the use of money; he does not believe in competition; he can never, therefore, provide you a home. Child, you are mad."

A great weight fell upon Grace's heart. Yes, she was mad; but she could not help it, and she loved David.

Presently she went up to her room alone, leaving the two men together.

"This is a pretty business," said John Winfield.

"I should think it is. She ought to be put into a mad-house. If I had my way she should be"; and many other wild words were uttered.

"I thought he was a decent fellow when I saw him," said Mr. Winfield, presently.

"I believe he is, in spite of his tomfoolery," said Mr. Muswell. "I believe he is. I had him up here once. Do you know, he is a graduate of Cambridge University. He belonged to my old college."

"Perhaps he would listen to reason."

"He might. Shall I have him up here?"

"It might be best. Yes, it will be. Send him a note straight away, and ask him to come up to-night. If the fellow is not a villain, if he has any feelings of a gentleman, he will not stand in the girl's way."

"Let's hope not. Do you know, Winfield, I thought I had settled the girl's future splendidly. It is true Brewer has been a bit of a rake, but he has settled down now. He's between forty and fifty years of age, and ought to give up sowing wild oats. Of course Grace knows nothing about this, and we've taken good care to keep such things from her. George hasn't liked it; and I've had to take him to task severely. You see, Brewer has been a bachelor, and—well, one ought to excuse a great deal. He has a fine estate, unencumbered. I should think his rent-roll must be—let me see—well, a good way on in the four figures."

"It's madness to refuse such an offer."

"Of course it is. I thought the girl was well brought up, too, and knew what is becoming to her station. I had made up my mind to give her a fine wedding, and now——"

"Let's have him up here, Muswell; let's have him up. We'll talk to him. We must save Grace at all costs."

At nine o'clock David arrived, and on being shown into a room was told that Mr. Muswell would see him shortly. A few minutes later the door opened, and two men entered. Of course he recognised Mr. Muswell immediately, but the other he was not so sure about. He thought he had seen him before, but could not tell where. Then suddenly he remembered. This was Grace's other uncle. This was the man he had seen that day when he was walking from Cambridge to London.

"Good evening, Mr. Wardlaw," said Mr. Muswell. He spoke pleasantly, having made up his mind that he would have to be diplomatic. "This is Mr. Winfield, of Winfield Hall."

"We have met before, I think," said David.

For the life of him Mr. Winfield could not speak to the young man as he had intended. This man was his equal; he spoke with ease, he carried himself like a gentleman, and looked like one, too. He was well dressed, and his clear, frank eyes and finely-moulded face betrayed the fact that here was no money-seeking adventurer.

"We have asked you to come up to-night because—well, we wish to speak to you on a very delicate matter."

David waited quietly for them to proceed.

"Perhaps you can guess what it is?"

"Yes," said David, "I can guess what it is. At least I think so."

"Ah, that's right. Of course, as you may know, we are both related to—that is, Mr. Winfield is—but won't you sit down?"

"Thank you."

David sat down, and waited for them to proceed.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

“GIVE ME A YEAR”

“I AM sure,” said Mr. Muswell, “we shall be able to arrange—that is, our business very easily. Em—I believe that—that is, you have had some conversation with my niece?”

“Yes,” said David. “I have. I love Miss Grace Muswell. I have told her so.”

“Don’t you think you have acted a very unworthy part, young man?” asked Mr. Winfield.

“No,” said David, “I have done nothing of which I am ashamed.”

“Then you ought to be ashamed.” The young man’s coolness angered Mr. Winfield. It was unwarrantable presumption for him to lift his eyes to her, and he would make him feel it.

“Will you explain why?” He felt nervous when with Grace, then his words came stammeringly, confusedly; but with these men all was different.

“You have treated her as if she were a scullery maid. You have met her without the sanction—of—of—her guardians.”

“Yes,” said David, “I have. Under different circumstances I should have acted differently. But by my own choice I am living among people whom you regard as your social inferiors. You would not allow me to meet her as an equal, therefore—well, I may have transgressed conventional customs, but I have acted honourably.”

“Do you call yourself a gentleman, young man?”

“I do not call myself anything,” said David; “still, if I cared, I think I might lay claim to the name.”

“Then,” continued Mr. Winfield, “what right have you to clandestinely upset a young girl’s mind, when you have no home to give her, and when according to your professed beliefs, you do not think it right to seek to give her one?”

The man had probed David's wound almost at the beginning of their interview, and he was rendered almost speechless. Perhaps his early training, and the atmosphere of his early life influenced him; anyhow, he felt it was dishonourable to tell a young girl that he loved her while his professed conviction forbade him trying to give her a home in any way comparable with the one from which he would take her. Perhaps if John Winfield had stated this objection differently he might have confessed as much; but the old Squire's haughty tones angered him.

"You assume a knowledge which you do not possess," he said.

"Then," said Mr. Muswell, "we, as Miss Muswell's guardians, claim to know what your prospects are. I may tell you that she has not a penny piece in her own right."

"I am glad of it," said David.

"Glad!" exclaimed both men together. "Glad! Why?"

"Because you cannot accuse me of mercenary motives, and because I do not think money considerations should come in where love is concerned."

This was followed by a long conversation, which inevitably came back to the question which troubled David so sorely. It was the subject of which he was afraid; it was the only matter concerning which he could not give answers which satisfied his own conscience. After an hour's debate, which at times became angry, no real progress had been made. David refused to relinquish Grace, and yet he saw no way of providing her with a home.

"She has been tenderly reared," said Mr. Muswell, at length; "reared in one of the most beautiful homes in the country. She has every educational advantage; bearing an old name, she has been received into the best society. Ever since she lost her wealth she has been carefully protected, and has wanted nothing. Young man, I ask you by what right you act in this way?"

Truly, David was in a dilemma. He could see no way out of the difficulty. Although he tried to persuade himself that her life at the Hall was inimical to all that

made life beautiful, he could not think of suggesting that she might live the much-vaunted "natural life." He could not ask that she might live in a cottage on the Settlement, and be deprived of all the refinements to which she had been accustomed. It seemed all right for the women in the colony, but not for Grace.

"Can you not see how you are standing in her way?" said John Winfield. "By your act you are depriving her of a good home, of a kind husband, and of congenial surroundings."

To this, however, David could answer to some effect, and he was not slow in condemning the living death to which they would consign her. Indeed, he spoke so strongly that even these two men did not urge it again.

It was a strange interview. Again and again did Mr. Muswell and Mr. Winfield try to take an authoritative attitude, and command him to give up his unwarrantable presumption; but again and again were they defeated. He was strong in his convictions, strong in his faith in Grace. And they felt this. They had realised that Grace was determined. They could not force her to marry Brewer; moreover, in a year or so she would be of age, and thus able to act independently of them.

"Well, what are you going to do?" was the question often repeated.

"Give me a year," said David at last, in desperation.

"A year? Well, what then? Are we to understand that if, at the end of a year, you are not in a position to give Grace a home, you relinquish any claim upon our consideration?"

"At least, let me see Grace."

"No, never," said John Winfield; "not with my consent."

"I do not ask to see her alone," said the young man humbly, for he saw that these men were acting in what they believed to be Grace's interest. "I ask that here, in your presence, she be consulted. If, at the end of a year, I do not show that I have some claim on your consideration—then—then I will no further seek to influence her."



It tore his heart to say this ; but he felt it to be his duty. It would not be right to persuade her to adopt a mode of life with which she had no sympathy.

They felt like refusing this ; but the sincerity of his tones, the expression of his face, compelled them to acquiesce. Accordingly Grace was called in, and when she entered David felt that all his resolutions were being scattered to the winds. She looked so young, so fair ; so free from guile. Whatever her surroundings, she was a child of Nature ; she was following the promptings of her heart. Their eyes met, and instinctively they moved to each other, and before the uncles could interfere, he had caught her hand and kissed it.

“ Grace,” said Mr. Winfield, “ in consideration of what you said this morning, we have asked this young man to come here. He, we think, has taken a dishonourable advantage of your youth and your foolishness. We find it hard to be patient under the circumstances—but—but we are. He has no money, no position, no home, and by his professed principles he does not believe in working to obtain one. Yet he has dared to propose marriage to you.”

Grace looked into David’s face, and a look of trust came into her eyes.

“ We have had a long conversation,” continued Mr. Winfield, “ and he has asked for a year.”

“ For what ? ” asked Grace.

“ To provide you with a home worthy of you,” said Mr. Winfield ; “ if at the end of that time he is not able to do so, he promises to relinquish you.”

“ Is that true, David ? ” asked the girl.

“ In a sense he is right,” said David humbly ; “ but not—that is—Grace, will you trust me ? ”

“ Yes, David,” said the girl, without a second’s hesitation.

“ And if at the end of a year he cannot satisfy us—then this madness must be at an end. You understand that, Grace ? ” said Mr. Muswell.

“ I shall never marry Mr. Brewer,” said the girl, “ nor—nor any one else, but—but——” and then she looked towards the young man.

“And meanwhile you are not to see each other. You consent to that, young man?”

“Yes,” said David; “I consent. You trust me, Grace?”

Again their eyes met, and David had no fear.

“We must tell Brewer that the affair can stand over for a year,” said Mr. Muswell to Mr. Winfield, after David had left the house. “I hope, before that, the girl will have come to her senses.”

“Yes,” replied the other. “Muswell, if any one had told me three days ago that I should be a party to such madness, I—I should have——”

“And so should I,” replied the other; “but the matter is settled now. The fellow is honest, and he’ll come to see that he is acting dishonourably, while Grace will soon get over this nonsense.”

“There’s no trusting women, Muswell.”

“Not as a rule; but I trust Grace.”

Meanwhile David made his way back to the Settlement. He was happy, in spite of his fears. He knew that Grace loved him. She had braved her uncles’ anger, and she trusted him.

But what should he do?

That was the question which haunted him. He had a year—a year. He was young, he was strong, he had some education; but what could he do in a year? Besides, could he give up his principles? could he lose his soul by going back to the world? Should he become a part of that great competitive, fortune-hunting community? Should he participate in the life that meant the warping of his soul? Money! Money! It lay at the root of the world’s trouble. If money standards did not exist, naturally Grace would marry him; and now, if for her sake he lowered his standard and tried to win her a home, should he not, even although he gained his heart’s desire, betray his conscience? Duty, not happiness, should be first. But then did God lead him to love Grace, only that he should give her up? For he could not—no, he could not ask her to live with him on the Settlement. The life there would madden her. He had a perfect right to give up his position in the world; but he had

no right to persuade Grace. The Settlement might present a great object-lesson to the world, although at present it had not, as far as he could see, impressed the country-side very favourably.

Besides, could not a man live in the world without participating in its shams? Had not Langford admitted that very night, that to the pure all things were pure. Thus circumstances and conditions did not affect? All depended on the character of the individual! Grace had lived in the world, and she was unsullied. Even that very night she had promised to trust him. And she had sacrificed everything for him.

I will not try to describe all David's mental wanderings during the next few weeks. They can be better imagined than described. But each day his outlook became wider, and he was a constant thorn in the side of the advanced spirits in the Settlement.

September passed, and October came to an end, and he still remained on the colony. He wanted to be up and doing; he longed to go into the world and try and make a fortune for Grace; but something forbade him. He had heard nothing from her since the night when he visited Muswell Hall; but he had been informed that she had left the county. Where she had gone he knew not; but he trusted in her implicitly.

When November came, he received a letter from Mr. Jay. It informed him that Emily Baker was earning her living by playing a piano at a public-house, called “The Prodigal's Return.” Mr Jay also expressed the fear that the influences by which she was surrounded would ruin her. The letter also contained a Bank of England note. The lawyer told him that on again going into his accounts he had discovered a mistake, and that the sum he had sent was owing to him.

Throughout the day following the receipt of the letter, the young man went around the farm like one dazed; but when night came he had evidently made up his mind about something.

“I am going to London to-morrow morning,” he said to Langford after supper.

"For good?"

"No—at least such is not my intention."

"Why, then?"

"There are some people that I wish to see."

"You have something on your mind, David."

"I have a great deal on my mind."

Langford asked him many questions, but David told him nothing definite, and when he started on the following morning many strong sentiments were uttered. Eva Rivers' goodbye was characteristic.

"I told you that you longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt," she said. "Well, go. Go into business. Help in the system of grinding. Uphold the rotten system of injustice and fraud. Go! But I don't quite give up hope. You'll turn to the better life when you have tasted the husks."

By evening David reached Paddington Station. It was a November night, cold and murky, but the life of London still had its charm for him. The rushing vehicles, the cries of men and women, the ceaseless march of that great thronging humanity fascinated him.

For a few minutes he was dazed, then, realising why he had come to London, he went to the Underground booking-office and took a ticket for Whitechapel. When he got into Whitechapel Road, it seemed for a moment that he had never left it. There were the same shouts of the costermongers, and butchers, and hawkers of all sorts; the same trams and 'buses threaded the great thoroughfare, the same seething mass of people presented themselves to his gaze. But this was only for a minute. He realised that he had been living away, "far from the madding crowd," he remembered that he had been where strife and toil for riches did not exist. He had been living for ideals, for thoughts, and meanwhile the traffic and turmoil had still continued.

The life in Cornwall had changed him. He knew this because he looked at what he saw with different eyes. He did not cease to pity, and it still saddened him to see so many debauched, debased people. But he saw, too, that there were brave, patient men and women. There were husbands who accompanied their wives on their

shopping expeditions. There were youths and maidens who loved each other. There were many merry shouts, as well as hoarse cries. Life was not altogether bad.

He passed by a group of people surrounding a Salvation Army captain, who exhorted them to repent and turn to God. Close by was the Salvation Army shelter he had visited many months before.

“At any rate they are trying to do good,” he thought, “and what have I been doing?”

He trudged on towards Mile End Road. Everywhere the same life presented itself. Everywhere public-houses abounded—everywhere men and women plied their trades, and trudged the dreary highway.

He passed the People’s Palace, that fine institution which was largely the outcome of Besant’s great novel. It must have cost much money, and the work it was doing in the neighbourhood must be beneficial. Bad as White-chapel was, what would it be but for this and similar institutions? But what had he done, himself, for the city where his uncle had lived and had made his money?

Presently he came to “The Prodigal’s Return.” He had seen the public-house often in his frequent peregrinations through this part of the East End, and now he entered. A great number of men and women had gathered, and were making merry over their libations. It was a ghastly sight, while the language he heard was simply beastly. Presently above the shouts of men and women he heard the tinkling of a piano. The music came from another room, and David made his way thither.

Yes, there was Emily Baker sitting at the piano, tricked out in tawdry finery, while around her stood a group of men and women, who were singing “Soldiers of the Queen” to her accompaniment.

After the song was over, rude jests were passed, language unfit for reproduction was uttered, and Emily Baker heard it all. David watched her face, but she did not appear to blush, or be ashamed. Why should she? She heard it every night, and she had become accustomed to it.

Presently she looked up and saw David. Instantly she rose to her feet. “My Gawd!” she cried.

The young man walked towards her and held out his hand. "How are you, Emily?" he said.

"Oh, so, so. I thought I should never see you again."

The crowd around laughed as they shook hands, and passed the usual jokes.

"'Ee's come back to 'is little donah," cried one.

"Oh, Emily," cried another, "and this is wy yer woodn't love yer own Chawlie. A toff, too."

A great many other remarks passed which were freely garnished with oaths, but David took no notice.

"When can I have a talk with you, Emily?" asked David.

"Oh, twelve o'clock," said the girl; "but what's the good of it? I've come 'ere—and—but I couldn't 'elp it."

"Of course you couldn't."

"No, I couldn't," repeated Emily defiantly.

"Then shall I come back at twelve?"

The girl looked at him almost angrily. She seemed to be on the point of refusing him; then she said:

"Oh well, I don't mind, but I'm none of your sort."

"Very well then. I'll be here at twelve o'clock."

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### "THE TOUCH OF LIFE"

AT twelve o'clock David returned to "The Prodigal's Return." Outside were numbers of men and women, many of whom were drunk. Of course the great mass of the respectable portion of the community had gone to bed, but numbers had taken advantage of the public-house hours, and remained to the last.

"'Ere's Emily's toff," said one, as he saw David.

"Oh, yus," said another. "Wot, ole pal, av yer come fer yer little donah? O, crikey, int 'e a treet!"

But David took no notice of them. He looked towards the door of the bar-parlour, from whence, presently, Emily

emerged. A few minutes later they got away from the howling mob, and were able to speak in quietness.

“Why didn’t yer let me alone?” asked Emily.

“Because I want to help you,” replied David.

“’Ow kin yer ’elp me?” cried the girl angrily. She spoke the dialect of the district in a far more pronounced way than when he had talked with her before. “I’d better never ’ve gone ter that there dressmaker’s. I shouldn’t a know’d nothink ’bout bein’ in a nice place then.”

“Would you like to go back again?”

“I dunno. I has my liberty now, thet is, through the d’y, and there’s good company at the ‘Prodigal.’”

“Do you like it, Emily?”

“Wot did you come ’ere for?” asked the girl. “I should ev liked it orl right but for you. It wer you who made me discontented.”

“I am glad I did,” said David.

“What for? W’en the money didn’t come in she just sacked me. And then—well, I ’ad to do sutthink.”

“Would you like to go back again?”

“No, I wouldn’t. She wouldn’t have me, neither. She knows as ’ow I’m at the ‘Prodigal.’”

“But if I could get you another place—a better place?”

“I’m not fit for a better place.”

“But you’re a good girl still, Emily?”

“Yes, I am,” she said, passionately, “I am. I don’t drink—nor—nor—nonthink.”

David heaved a sigh of relief.

“But that plice is ’ell,” she continued, passionately; “it’s ’ell, that’s wot it is! I’d run away, but for mother.”

“How is your mother?”

“Oh, she’s just the same.”

A little later David left Emily at the door of the house where she lived, then he returned to the lodging-house where he had obtained a bed. He had promised her he would see her again before he returned to Cornwall, and tell her what he hoped to be able to do for her, but his heart was sad because he felt himself powerless.

“She’s much coarser than she was,” he mused. “In a little while she will take pleasure in that kind of life, and

then—God help her! And I can do nothing—nothing! After all, money is of use. I could do a great deal of good with it if I had it now. Which is wrong, I wonder—the individual or the system? Is it money that is wrong, or is it the men and women who control it?”

The streets were growing quieter, although many night birds still prowled around. Hoarse shouts and terrible oaths still reached him as he found his way to the lodging-house. Presently all he had done came back to him with renewed force. He compared the life of those men and women on the Settlement with those around him. What good were Langford and Treloar and the rest of them doing? Like the hermits and recluses of old times they had come out from the world, while all the time the great surging tide of humanity drifted—whither? The lust for wealth, the grinding competition, the disregard for human welfare were bad enough; but what was the good of going away from it all? Was it not cowardly? Would it not have been a braver, a nobler thing, to have remained in the world, to have fought its battles, to have tried to make it better, to have used its wealth in order to uplift life?

But it was too late now. He was a poor man. What should he do?

The next day, while walking along Fleet street, he felt a slap on his shoulder, and heard a cheery voice saying—

“Baring, surely it’s you!”

“Cyril Penrith!” cried David.

“It is. Where have you been, and what have you been doing?”

“Oh, various things.”

“Have you—well, I suppose you have. You rich fellows have a good time of it. I saw in the papers several months ago that you had left Malpas Towers, and had gone abroad for an extended tour; otherwise I should have looked you up. I say, old man, I’ve had no invitation, you know.”

“Haven’t you?” said David, like one dazed; “no, you haven’t.” He hesitated for a second, trying to decide whether he should speak freely, but decided to tell Cyril Penrith nothing, at least, for the present. “Anyhow, we



must have a good time now,” he went on. “It’s just lunch time, and you must come with me.”

“Good; I shall be delighted. Which is your club?”

The question staggered the young fellow. He had forgotten all about such luxuries; but he remembered that his subscription held good till the end of the year.

“The County Gentleman’s,” he said. “Come on.”

The two jumped into a cab, and a little later were ensconced in a comfortable corner in a West End club.

“And now tell me what you have been doing?” said David.

“Oh, I’ve picked up a living by journalism.”

“And have you got on well?”

“Amazingly, I suppose. I said I should, you know, when—in Cambridge, that afternoon—you know.”

“Yes, I remember.”

“It was a hard pull at first, but I did it. In a year and a half I have——” and Cyril Penrith proudly told of his successes.

“In fact, I’ve been in luck’s way,” he added, presently, “and now—well, it seems my articles have attracted the notice of the great capitalist, Sir John Mortell.”

“Indeed!”

“As you know, Sir John is a great philanthropist, and he contemplates starting a new daily paper.”

“What, for philanthropy?”

“Yes, and no. Of course, as you know, Sir John is a very religious man, but he is also a keen business man. He has very exalted ideas about the use of wealth. He says he is only a steward of the Almighty, and that it is his duty to use his money in doing good. He believes in making money—righteously, and in using it righteously. Money, he says, is given to us to make the world better. You see this is in entire opposition to your Socialistic ideas. By the way, what has become of them since you became wealthy, old man?”

“Go on,” said David, “we’ll talk about that presently. Sir John Mortell, you say, is——”

“Awfully kind, awfully conscientious, and yet is one of the jolliest old gentlemen you ever saw. He’s been

wonderfully good to me. But that's by the way. He believes that one of the greatest forces in the world is the press, and that a daily newspaper conducted on Christian lines can be made to pay, and do untold good. Still, although he makes no money by it, he is determined to run it."

"I see, and are you to be editor?"

"Not yet. That may come. I'm to be assistant editor."

"And Sir John, you say, is a great capitalist?"

"Yes, of course you know that. He's greatly interested in the East End, and he's going to tackle that," and then Cyril Penrith burst forth into an enthusiastic description of the paper's ideals.

"I doubt whether such a paper can be made to pay," said David, presently.

"I believe it can, and of course Sir John believes it can. He holds there is more Christian feeling in the world than the public generally recognises. He believes that the best part of the community is tired of the journalism which is tied to party and financial interest. He says that at present our daily papers are too often muzzled by sordid interests, and thus the public fail to understand all the truth. His scheme is to have a daily paper conducted on broad Christian lines, a paper practically governed by the Sermon on the Mount. His guiding principle is that every man should exist for the general good; that all our money, our brains, or whatever power we possess, should be used for making the world brighter and better. He is not an ascetic, rather he is a man who enjoys life. He patronises the arts, he can dance like a boy, he believes in good music, good plays; he upholds all clean, honest sport; but in all these things he uses his influence for the uplifting of society. He will in business touch no enterprise that is not clean and honest; all the same his business interests are very varied. He has made a huge fortune, but of this he spends only a moderate amount on himself, the rest he devotes to those things which he believes will be for the regeneration of the race. He has bought a lot of public-houses and is running them as temperance hotels, and he fills these hotels with

every possible attraction. Of course he does not allow gambling; but billiards, cards, bagatelle, and every form of game is introduced into them. Then he constantly arranges for balls and parties, which are conducted in a healthy way. He has established a number of workmen's clubs and workwomen's clubs, and they are splendidly fitted up. He has organised winter lectures and entertainments all over London.”

“It is very fine,” said David.

“Fine? I believe you. At first I took but little interest. I had little sympathy with it; but I tell you I believe if a hundred men in Sir John's position were to do likewise they would do a great deal to change the life of London.”

“And religion—does that come in?” said David.

“It comes in everywhere. Not ostensibly, but very really. Sir John's religion is just this. Love to Christ is love for one's fellow-men. If one loves his fellowmen he must try to serve them. Because of this, he believes every man is a steward of the Almighty. This is practical religion. Every power is to be used for God, and thus for the whole race. He is a great believer in those lines of Lowell's:—

“‘He's true to God who's true to man, wherever wrong is done  
To the humblest and the weakest, 'neath the all beholding  
sun,  
That wrong is also done to us, and they are slaves most base,  
Whose love of right is for themselves, and not for all the  
race.’”

“I see,” said David, with a far-off look in his eyes.

“He's not a bit dreamy and unpractical, although some men say he is,” went on Cyril. “He regards Christianity as a very positive thing. He does not favour the old monastic idea of going away into the wilderness to pray; he believes in prayer accompanied by deeds in the very centres of life's struggles. Unlike our old friend Langford, he looks upon money as a great gift from the Almighty; a great blessing to be used for the good of the community.”

“I see,” said David, again, but all the time he saw nothing. His mind was in a state of chaos.

Presently lunch came to an end, and Cyril Penrith looked around, like one waiting for something.

"Will you have anything more?" asked David.

"No thanks," said Cyril, "except a cup of coffee in the smoke-room."

"Smoke-room! oh yes, excuse me, I had forgotten."

"Forgotten your smoke?" cried Cyril.

"Yes. I haven't smoked for several months."

"No—why?"

"Oh, I'll tell you directly; but I'll have a cigar now. This is the way to the smoke-room."

A waiter brought coffee and cigars, and David lit a cigar.

"It is pleasant to smoke after a nine months' fast," he said.

"I should think it is, but why—I say, old man, you look different, and you have not told me what you have been doing this last year and a half."

"No, but I will."

The two young men drew their chairs closer together, and then David told his story.

For some time Cyril Penrith spoke no word; but presently when David related his interview with Mr. Jay, in which he stated his determination to give up his wealth, he gave an exclamation which was more expressive than elegant.

David paid no heed, however; he went on telling his story with perfect frankness. He described his experiences at length, giving in detail his life at the Brotherhood Settlement.

"And is that all?" asked Cyril.

"No, it's not all," replied David. It did him good to tell his experiences to Cyril; it enabled him to see the value of the course he had taken from a healthy young man's standpoint. For months he had longed for a friend to whom he could speak freely, and now he poured out his soul to his one-time friend.

"No, it's not all," he repeated, after hesitating a second, and then he told of his love, and of the peculiar situation in which it had placed him.

“You think I am a blithering idiot, Cyril?” he said, when he had finished.

“No,” replied the other, “I think you are one of the most conscientious fellows in the world. But that old lawyer was right; you were mad.”

“Men said that of Paul, and of one greater than Paul,” said David.

“True, true—but do you mean to say you are poor?”

“Jay sent me £20 the day before yesterday.”

“And that is all you possess!”

“Yes, and for myself I desire no more; and yet——” he stopped suddenly.

“But where is all your money gone?”

“I signed a paper giving Jay authority to give it away.”

“To whom—to what?”

“I never stipulated. I was too anxious to be rid of it. The whole business maddened me.”

A puzzled look came into Cyril Penrith’s eyes, but he said nothing.

“And what are you going to do now?”

“In a few days I am going back to the Settlement. I have decided nothing yet.”

“But what about this young lady?”

“God only knows.”

Cyril Penrith was a wise young man. He made no further remarks on David’s conduct. Perhaps he divined the thoughts which were working in his mind. Besides, his journalistic instinct manifested itself.

“Baring,” he said, “Sir John’s new paper will be out in a week or two, and I want good copy. Will you embody what you have told me in a series of articles?”

“What?”

“I will pay you, say, four guineas an article, and I can use, say, six. You need not spend the money on yourself—use it to help that girl you told me about—Emily Baker you called her, I think. You may be able to save her from ruin that way. I will speak to Sir John about her too.”

“I am afraid I can write nothing worth reading,” said David.

"Allow me to judge," said the other.

The two young men stayed together the whole afternoon. They had many things to speak about, and the time flew quickly. Both spoke eagerly, and they approached most subjects from opposite standpoints. The conversation was a revelation to both.

"I am not convinced yet," said David, when the clock struck five.

"No," replied the other, "your conviction will come to you when you are alone."

"I don't think I shall alter," urged David; "besides, if I did, it would not matter. I am poor, and I lack the money-making instinct."

"If you love that girl, you'll never rest until you give her a home. It is your duty, my boy. On your own confession you could not ask her to become a member of the colony."

"No, I couldn't."

"Of course you couldn't. You are not as mad as that. But what are you going to do?"

"It may be that I have done wrong in speaking to Miss Grace Muswell," said David. "Seeing that I determined to give up the world's wealth, and the world's luxuries, I ought also to have given up all thoughts of love. I am afraid I ought."

"You could not, man. God would not let you. You are young, and you could not help loving, and loving—well, you could not help telling her. But you must prove worthy of her."

"Yes, I must try."

"But what are you going to do?"

"I don't know—yet."

Three days later David Baring returned to the Brotherhood Settlement. During those three days he had made some temporary provision for Emily Baker, but he did not see Mr. Jay. Indeed, he went around the City like one dazed.

"I must think it out. I must fight it out in quietness," he said, as he came to Trewinnick Gates. "I wonder what God would have me do?"

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### THE END OF THE MADNESS

"HALLOA, Wardlaw, back again!" said Treloar, as he entered.

"Yes, back again."

"And just in time for supper," said Bertha Gray.

"Well, you've been to Babylon, I suppose?"

"Yes, I've been to Babylon."

"And how does it impress you after nine months' absence?"

"It's just the same," said David.

"Of course it is, and it always will be while the money system obtains. You will always have gambling, both in the Stock Exchange and in gambling hells—you will always have drunkenness and immorality, sweating and cruelty—until money interests are destroyed. Marriage will continue to be a market and virtue will still be bought and sold. Well, I'm glad you've come back to our simple life."

The girl was evidently eager for an argument, but David said nothing.

"The longer I live, the less do I believe in law of any sort, except the laws which spring from our own lives," she went on. "All law is wrong; all force is wrong. We must be free, absolutely free! For my own part I shall live my life untrammelled by the world's conventions; I am determined to be natural, and follow the dictates of my own being. We must each be a law to ourselves, and no system or government has the right to interfere."

There was general applause at this, especially on the part of the female portion of the community, and an eager conversation followed in which some very strong opinions were expressed.

"We must be logical," said Eva Rivers, "logical. We must face facts, and we must face consequences. I have done it in the past and I am prepared to do it again. I laugh at the opinion of the pagan world. I claim the

right to live my life as I will. I look at things from the highest standpoint, and I will not be restrained."

David could not quite understand why such heat should be manifested, but the reason for the opinions uttered, opinions which I will not write down here, appeared later.

During the next few weeks David worked on the farm as before. He was determined to act conscientiously, and he wanted to take no steps for which he would afterwards be sorry; but in the meanwhile events were making his course plain.

Although the summer had been fine, and the farmers of the district rejoiced in a good harvest, the crops at the Brotherhood Settlement had been very poor. This was largely the result of the fact that many of the members of the colony refused to work. Some had worked hard and willingly; others, however, had idled away precious hours. They had come there to live a natural life, they urged; why, then, should they work when their desires led them to rest, or to read good books? As a consequence of this there was a good deal of friction, but David had purposely avoided taking any part in their differences.

Just before Christmas, however, the consequences of this mode of life became manifest. The local authorities had come upon them for rates, and when, after a good deal of argument, they had been obliged to sell their produce in order to pay the demands, food became very scarce. They refused to work for wages among the farmers in the district, and they had little on the farm on which they could raise money.

In addition to this, it happened at this time that their numbers were augmented by converts from London, who had become convinced, so they declared, that the people on the Settlement were living the ideal life. But these newcomers brought nothing with them, and, as food was already scarce, their welcome was far from warm. Indeed, the Settlement broke up into two parties, one calling itself the "practical idealists," the other claiming for itself the title of "idealists," without the practicability being called into question.

The practical idealists declared that as food was scarce



new members should not be admitted unless they could bring some means to keep them alive, the others maintaining that all comers should be received, whatever their condition.

"We must be true to our ideals," these latter declared. "We will all share alike while there is anything to eat, and when it is all gone we will trust to Providence."

Eva Rivers belonged to the advanced school.

"What did the Carpenter of Galilee say?" she cried. "Did he not say, 'Take no thought for to-morrow what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink'? And again, 'Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment'? No, let us be true."

All the same, the position led to sore disruptions. Many angry words were bandied, and certainly the title "brotherhood" failed to describe their condition.

Presently, however, a more serious question cropped up. Claiming, as they did, absolute freedom from national law, and demanding the right to live according to the call of their uplifted natures, "free love" crept in. At first it was only mooted, but presently the "advanced spirits" became more pronounced. This was the subject which was being discussed when David returned from London, and it resulted in the strong opinions at which we hinted earlier in this chapter. Indeed, ever since the discussion on Tolstoi's "Kreutzer Sonata," the feeling on the question had been growing stronger and stronger, until "conventional barriers," as they were termed, were absolutely discarded.

"This is a terrible business," said Langford to David one evening as the two men went for a walk together.

"Yes," said David quietly.

"The Settlement will be wrecked, ruined."

"It seems like it."

"When we might have done so much good, too."

"What good have we been doing?"

"We have been an object-lesson to the world."

"And all the time the world has been unconscious of our existence," said David.

"But we have nothing to do with that. We were leaven, my boy, leaven."

David laughed.

“And now these evils have sprung up.”

“Langford, you have a sister. Would you let her come here?”

“No!”

“Why?”

“Well, you see, the thing has become a tragedy.”

“But is not everything the natural outcome of the principles professed? This financial condition was inevitable; as for the other miserable business—well, the moment the laws, which are the outcome of many generations of struggling and mistakes—were discarded, it also became inevitable. My God, we *are* an object-lesson to the world!”

“But our ideals are right!”

“But the individuals are at fault!”

“Yes, that’s it.”

“Everything would be right if we had a perfect human nature. But, you see, we must take human nature as we find it. Our colony consists of choice spirits drawn together by natural affinity, and see what the result is. But think of what it would mean if accepted by a mixed humanity?”

“Yes, it wouldn’t do!”

“Langford, isn’t everything a matter of the individual? Isn’t it better men who make better systems? Take money, now—wouldn’t money be a blessing if men used it right?”

“No, no, David, I see what you are driving at. It won’t do!”

“But you say that to the pure all things are pure.”

“Yes.”

“Then your words must apply to commerce, to business of all sorts—aye, to competition.”

“David, David!”

“Oh! yes, Langford, I’ve been thinking a great deal. You know my history!”

“Yes, I know.”

“Look you; supposing, instead of having given up my fortune, I had determined to use it for the purpose

of doing good, should I not have been a more useful member of society than by coming here ? ”

“ Of course not. No good can be done in the world while money lies at the root of our national life.”

“ Money is not at the root of our national life. We have not gone deep enough. Men are greater than money.”

“ But money kills manhood.”

“ Then, circumstances are more than character. I don't believe it. Langford, we are great fools. Christianity is not a negative thing, it is positive ; it is not death, it is life. Everything in life is given to us—not to be renounced, but to be used.”

Langford laughed bitterly. “ The old platitudes,” he said.

“ May they not be old truths ? ” said David. “ Why, think, as a colony we profess to discard money, to despise it, to regard it as the root of evil ; and yet think of the scene we have just left. Anarchy ! Good heavens, it is anarchy with a vengeance ! ”

“ Yes ; but that is because we are surrounded by an evil system. We can't break it down all at once ; and as a consequence we are obliged to compromise.”

“ ‘ We fail to be logical,’ to quote Eva Rivers,” laughed David ; “ but think, my dear fellow—roads must be kept up, children must be educated, and——”

“ I object to that,” said Langford ; “ that is, you look at the question from a wrong standpoint. If each man were to do his duty, all this could be done without compulsion.”

“ But would each man do his duty ? Suppose the country made no laws, would the children be educated, would the order of the district be maintained ! If human nature were perfect, yes ; but then it isn't. Why, even on our colony of select souls, men won't do their duty. As for these ideas about marriage—well, while men and women are what they are, our very ideals become excuses for every kind of devilry.”

“ But think of life under existing circumstances. Think of the marriage market of the world.”

“ Even that is better than what we have on the colony. You know, Langford, that even now Bilson is vowing vengeance on Crowlewith because the latter has—— but you know. Why, the thing is hellish.”

“ But Bilson’s wife does not care for him.”

“ Langford, it won’t do. Just as there must be authority in the home, so there must be authority in the State. If men and women were perfectly wise, and perfectly virtuous, there would be no need of law; but they are not; they are foolish, and they are frail. Oh, I know! the lust of the world, the lust for gold, position, for possession, is terrible! It is maddening, but ours is not the right method for changing it all. Moral platitudes are right enough, but they can only act as guides to those willing and wanting to do right. What is needed is that the disposition of the individual shall be changed, and no system of ethics can do that. Emerson is as helpless as a baby; so is Thoreau, and Carpenter, and Ruskin, and all the rest of them. We need a new life, a Divine life. The preachers are right, old man, even although they fail to live out their teaching. Change men’s lives, and then all the world’s gifts become consecrated to a nobler use. The system of exchange, of barter, is not wrong; it is men and women who are wrong!”

For a long time the two men talked earnestly, David pouring forth the doubts which had been surging in his mind, Langford combating them from the standpoint of the anarchist.

They were now in the month of February, and David recollected that he had been on the colony nearly a year. When he had first come, the Settlement was less than two years old, and already the members were beginning to reap the harvest of the seed they had been sowing. They had sown the seeds of anarchy, and the harvest of anarchy was in their midst. They were men and women with hopes, and cravings, and passions, and because they were fallible men and women, their boasted liberty degenerated into licence.

“ I can’t bear it much longer,” cried the young man when he was alone; “ the truth is, in coming away from

the world's sins, struggles, and wrongs, these people have not come away from themselves. While they lived in the world there were restraining laws; here, great ideals are being debased in the name of liberty."

The next day he went up to Muswell Hall, and asked to see Squire Muswell.

The old gentleman met him coolly.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"I came to ask for permission to see Grace."

"Why, have you fulfilled the conditions we agreed upon?"

"No, not yet."

"Have you done anything?"

"No, nothing."

"You are still at the Colony, I hear?"

"Yes."

"May I ask whether you sympathise with their—their modes of life?"

"No," said David, "I do not."

"Ah, but have you done anything—that is——"

"No, I have done nothing yet, but I wanted, if possible, to see Grace for a few minutes. I wished to ask her——"

"No, young man, no. She is not in Cornwall, and if she were I would not consent for you to see her. And remember, you have only six months more to fulfil the conditions to which I was foolish enough to agree. I depend on you to be true to your promise to give up all thought of her."

"But will you give me her address that I may write to her? I wish to ask her advice on an important matter."

"No, I'll not give you her address. Look, young man, can't you see you are acting an unworthy part?"

"No," said David, "I cannot."

"But, you—you, on your own showing, are a pauper!"

"No, I have never begged, and I have never received charity."

"Anyhow, I will never allow my niece to be dragged down—disgraced," said the old man angrily.

"I will never drag her down, never disgrace her," cried David.

"Then be a man, and give up all thoughts of taking advantage of a young girl's foolishness."

When David left the Hall, he could not help rejoicing, even although he had failed to see Grace. "She loves me!" he said to himself; "loves me although I am poor—loves me for myself. I can never doubt that, never. And she was tempted by gold, and position, too. Thank God, she is above it all."

The next morning he received a letter from Cyril Penrith.

"I am afraid those later articles of yours won't do," the young man wrote. "The first six, on your experiences at the colony, were all right; but the others are what journalists call 'piffle.' I am afraid nature never intended you to be a newspaper man. You might write a novel; but yours is not the stuff for a daily paper.

"You will be glad to hear Sir John's venture is turning out well. It is raising a great row, naturally. You see he refuses to be nobbled by brewers, financiers, party politicians and the like, and as a consequence they are all down on him, but it is being eagerly read by hosts of people. I should not be surprised if it does not create a new era in journalism.

"When are you leaving that Brotherhood business? It is surely time you became sane. Very possibly I could help you to get some work in London, work that even your conscience would not forbid you to do."

David threw down the letter in dismay. "But what can I do?" he cried; "I am fit for nothing—nothing. These last two years have completely unfitted me for ordinary work. But I'll stay here no longer. My eyes are opened now. Yes, I'll go to London, and I *will* get on; yes, and when I do I'll use my money rightly. I'll make it a blessing to men;— what a fool I've been! Mr. Jay was right. He tried to save me from madness, and I would not be saved. If I had that wealth now, I could, yes, and I *would* do untold good with it. But I have only three pounds in the world! Still—yes, I——"

For hours he tried to formulate plans, and presently

a look of determination settled on his face. When he was able to snatch a few minutes of solitude he wrote a letter to Mr. Jay.

By return of post he received the following reply :—

“DEAR MR. BARING,—I was very glad to get your letter. I have been waiting for it a long while. Please come here immediately, I think I can do something for you. Wire time I may expect you here.

“Yours faithfully.

“JOHN JAY.”

This missive arrived while they were sitting at breakfast, and as several others had received letters that morning, there was a certain amount of quietness.

“I am going to bid you goodbye to-day,” said David.

“Goodbye! What do you mean? Do you mean to say you are leaving for good?”

“Yes,” said David.

“And you give up your liberty, your ideals?” said Eva Rivers.

“I am leaving the Settlement.”

“Why?”

“Well, our sympathies are not in common.”

“Have you really made up your mind, David?” said Langford.

“Yes. I can stay no longer!”

“But why?” said Eva Rivers. In spite of David’s rebuff she still held to her determination to win him for her husband.

“Well, because the life here is not in accordance with my ideas.”

“You mean that we have broken down conventional barriers?”

“Yes, if you choose to put it that way—that and other things.”

“Then you are going back to the world, with its false ideals, its materialism, its sordid aims?”

“I am going to London.”

“To make money?”

“If I can, yes.”

“ And what will you do with it ? ”

“ I shall try and do good with it if I can.”

“ Bah ! ” said Eva Rivers, “ do you know what I think you are, Wardlaw ? You are a traitor—a traitor to your principles and to your conscience. You are a coward, too. You have put your hand to the plough, and now you turn back.”

Several applauded this, but many remained silent.

“ No,” said David, “ I hope to go forward.”

Half an hour later he had left the Brotherhood Settlement for ever.



BOOK III

*DAVID BARINGS SANITY*

## CHAPTER ONE

### MR. JOHN JAY'S DIPLOMACY

MR. JOHN JAY, solicitor, sat alone in his office in Chancery Lane. All his clerks had left, for it was far past the time when the office was usually closed. Indeed, Mr. Jay was breaking a long-established rule—never to attend to business after six o'clock in the evening. It was now nearly eight, and still the old lawyer sat at his desk. For some time he endeavoured to attend to various documents that were placed before him, but presently he gave up trying.

"It's no use," he said to himself; "and these things can stand over."

He looked at his watch frequently.

"If his train is not late he should be here in a few minutes," he said, at length; "in fact, he ought to have been here before this. He was due at Paddington at seven, and now it only wants a few minutes to eight. Still, it's half an hour's cab drive. Perhaps, though, he's too poor to take a cab!" and the old man laughed pleasantly.

Presently he touched a bell, and a man entered.

"You've made all arrangements about dinner?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; directly you are ready it shall be brought into the room, sir. Everything is ready there, sir."

"Thank you; you may go."

A curious smile rested on the lawyer's lips, otherwise his face wore its usual expression. Those who knew him best, however, would have told you that this smile

meant something. Many people said that Mr. John Jay's smile meant more than an hour's talk of some men.

"I wonder how he'll take it?" he mused at length. "After all, I might have asked him to meet me at my house; but no, it will be better here, and eight o'clock is my usual dinner hour. Ah, that's he."

David Baring entered the lawyer's office with a questioning look in his eyes, but he learnt nothing from his eager glance at Mr. Jay's face. The smile had gone.

"Ah, Mr. Baring," he said quietly, "you are rather late."

"The train was late," said David.

"I thought so. Where is your luggage?"

"It is in the passage."

"That's all right. Where do you intend staying to-night?"

"I have not thought about it; in fact, I have not been able to—to—you see, I am anxious about my future. It is just like this. Owing to——"

"Excuse me, Mr. Baring, eight o'clock is my dinner hour, and I never talk business during that time."

He touched the bell, and the man who had answered his summons a few minutes before again appeared.

"Is dinner ready?" asked Mr. Jay.

"Yes, sir."

"That's right. Come this way, Mr. Baring," and he led the way into another room.

"You have been here before, I think?" he continued.

"Yes, nearly a year ago, when—when——"

"Just before you left for Cornwall?"

"Yes, that's it."

"Just so—will you take this seat? 'For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful,'" and Mr. Jay sat down before his plate of soup.

During dinner David made several attempts to speak of the thoughts uppermost in his mind, but the lawyer did not allow him. The moment David introduced any subject which approached business the lawyer had some remark to offer.

"Ah, salmon. Yes, salmon's a fine fish. It's rather early in the season yet—still it's not bad."

"It's splendid, all the time I've been in Cornwall, I never tasted it; you see we were too poor, besides——"

"Ah, John, you are giving us a sensible dinner. French cookery is all the craze now, but give me the plain old English food."

And so on. Presently, however, when dinner was over, and coffee was placed before them, the old lawyer produced a box of cigars.

"I like things old," he said; "these cigars are twenty years old, and I don't think they have lost their flavour. There's some substance in them, too. One of these lasts me an hour. Will you take one? Ah, that's right. Take that armchair, and draw it close to the fire. It's very cold yet. Now then, Mr. Baring, I shall be glad if you will give me a full account of what you have been doing."

David needed no second bidding. He related his experiences at length, omitting nothing of importance, save the fact of his love for Grace Muswell.

Presently David stopped, but the lawyer spoke no word.

"That's all," said David, at length. "I hardly know what led me to write you, but I suppose it must have been your past kindness."

"Go on," said Mr. Jay.

"I think that is all," said David. "I must try and get work of some sort, and you——"

"Please finish your story first," said the lawyer.

"I have finished it."

"But the woman has not come in yet," said Mr. Jay.

"Who told you there was one?"

"There always is."

David looked at the old man questioningly.

"When you went to Cornwall," said Mr. Jay, "I asked a man in Falmouth to give me some details about this Settlement. When I received his letter I was sure of the way in which your freak would turn out. But there must be a woman somewhere."

"But—but have you heard anything?"

"No; I have made no inquiries since that first letter. Only I have been practising as a lawyer between forty and fifty years. At the end of fifty years I mean to retire. Even a lawyer learns enough in that time."

"Yes, there—there is—that is, you are right," said David; "but I did not think it was necessary to tell you about her."

"Just as you please, Mr. Baring," said the lawyer, with a grim smile, "but I think I shall know better how to act if you tell me about her." Perhaps, although he was a bachelor, there was a green place in the arid desert of his heart.

"I will tell you," said David, and forthwith he told his story of his love.

"And the name of the fair lady?" asked the old lawyer.

"Grace Muswell."

"Muswell!" and John Jay looked up sharply. "Any relation to the owner of Muswell Hall?"

"Yes, a niece."

"Also of John Winfield, of Winfield Hall, in Hertfordshire?"

"Yes."

The lawyer looked straight into David's face for nearly a minute. He opened his lips as if to speak, and then lay back in his chair with closed eyes, without saying a word.

"Do you know her?" asked David, but the lawyer did not answer.

"Well," he said, presently, "you see I was right."

"Yes, I suppose so. And yet I didn't know what to do with my money—then. If I had remained a rich man I should very possibly have made a fool of myself in another way."

"Perhaps so," said Mr. Jay slowly. Then presently, "And what have you in your mind, Mr. Baring?"

"I have come to you in the hope that you might be able to advise me. Years ago I hoped to be a barrister, perhaps even now you can help me to something of that sort."

"No," said Mr. Jay.

David was silent.

"No," repeated the lawyer, "you haven't brains for the law. You were cast in the wrong mould. Besides, there is no need."

"No need, what do you mean?"

"I mean this," said Mr. Jay, rising to his feet, "when, nearly a year ago you signed a paper authorising me to dispense your fortune to charities I told you you were mad. I told you, too, that I desired to save you from yourself, you, on the other hand, insisted that you were sick of money, and would have nothing more to do with it. You gave me *carte blanche*, if you remember, to deal with everything as I thought best. Nobody but a madman would have done such a thing. But I have not been a lawyer for more than forty years for nothing, and I have learnt some little about human nature. Well——"

"Well," said David, "what?"

"Only that I was not mad," and Mr. Jay laughed quietly.

"What did you do?" asked David.

"I did nothing," said the lawyer.

"Nothing?"

"Nothing, save that I administered your estates as before. I have visited Malpas Towers once a week to see that all was going well there, and I am afraid I have perjured my soul by setting a rumour afloat that you had gone abroad in search of adventures."

"But—but——"

"Your fortune is still your own," said Mr. Jay, slowly.

David felt his head whirl, and he thought he was going to faint. Presently he recovered himself.

"Thank God!" he said.

"Thank me, rather," said the lawyer, grimly.

"So that—that——"

"Here is the paper you signed," said Mr. Jay, grimly passing him a document. "I haven't had time to deal with it. If I were you I should burn it."

David read it slowly, and then threw it on the fire. A few seconds later it was reduced to ashes.

"Ah," said Mr. Jay, "you've come to your senses at

last. Did you think," he went on presently, "that I had done as you asked?"

"Yes," said David.

"And yet you thought yourself fit for a lawyer. Why, if you knew anything, you would have known that had I done as you asked it would have been the talk of the country. Every newspaper in England would have been full of it."

"I should not have seen it if they had," said David. "I purposely refrained from reading newspapers. I desired to know nothing about it."

"Well, you are still a rich man," said Mr. Jay. "What will you do with all your possessions?"

"I hardly know," said David. "I'm too bewildered; but I'll try and do good with it."

"Yes," said the lawyer, grimly.

"At any rate, my madness has taught me the use of money," said David. "It has taught me that it should be a great power for good. It has made me feel that I am a steward of the Almighty, and that I must be true to my stewardship."

Not a muscle of the old man's face moved, but he listened attentively to the young man's every word.

"Do you think you'll make a fool of yourself again?" he asked presently.

"I don't know. As some regard it, I may. I shall not keep a pack of hounds nor patronise the turf. But I think I can make men's lives a little brighter with it."

"We shall see," said Mr. Jay, quietly, "besides——"

"Besides what?"

"I was thinking of the woman."

"Ah!" said David. "Yes, but that will be all right."

"Will it?" said the lawyer, "well, we shall see."

"Yes," said David, "she has chosen me believing that I was penniless, believing, too, that it was against my principles to make money. She trusted me entirely. That very fact has convinced me that even the marriage market of the world need not destroy life altogether. It made me realise that I was wrong when I believed that the spirit of the world could subdue purity and goodness."

That other woman—well, let her be, but I can never doubt Grace.”

“Do you know who she is?”

“I think so.”

“You know to whom Malpas Towers belonged?”

“Yes, it was Grace's old home.”

“As romantic as one of Dumas' novels, isn't it?”

David was silent.

“The girl is at Winfield Hall just now.”

“Are you sure?”

“Perfectly.”

They sat for a long time, talking. David excited, bewildered, yet happy beyond measure. The lawyer grim, often caustic, yet evidently regarding his young client with real affection.

Presently David rose as if to go. “I shall have to ask you to lend me a twenty-pound note,” he said with a laugh, “the banks are closed.”

The lawyer smiled as he handed him the money.

“Money is a very necessary thing after all,” he said.

“I will try and make it useful.”

“That's right,” said the lawyer; “and now, Mr. Baring, forgive an old lawyer for preaching a short sermon. Sermonising is not in my line, but I'll try and make it to the point. You seem to be cast in a religious mould, and I respect you as one who wishes to do right. But in future, instead of reading the works of these fantastic philosophers, just read the sayings of the Founder of our religion. He didn't talk about getting away from the world, but about bringing the Kingdom of Heaven into the world. He did not regard wealth as an evil, but He condemned the love of it. He looked upon every man as a steward of God. He lived in the world, ate and drank, and joined in the world's pleasures, and He purified everything. Wealth is a great responsibility, Mr. Baring. If it becomes master of us, it is the devil, but it can be made a wonderfully good servant. Read His parable of the talents instead of so much other stuff; aye, and remember that He came not to take away life, but to give it, not to stultify life, but to inspire it. The man



who uses money for himself only, is a thief, and loses his soul; the man who runs away from it is a coward, the true man is he who uses it in the spirit of the Perfect Man. But there——”

The lawyer became his grim, saturnine self again.

“I must be getting old,” he said, “I am talking platitudes.”

The next morning David started for Malpas Towers. It was a year since he had left it, and he never expected to see it again. All life seemed new to him as the train swept through Streatham Common and Thornton Heath. A white fog rested upon London, but once outside the city the blue sky appeared. The air was sharp and exhilarating, and although the trees were bare he felt that the winter was nearly over.

“What will Grace say?” he thought; “oh, what good we can do! Every cottager’s life on the estate shall be made bright. Every house shall be made comfortable. Healthy amusements shall be given to them summer and winter. The grounds shall be thrown open for all sorts of festivities. As for Whitechapel, yes, half my income shall be spent in making it better. I’ll go down there again, but I shall go with new eyes. It shall be my purpose, not so much to think of the evils, as to devise means for their removal. They said at the Brotherhood Settlement that they were an object-lesson to the world, because they showed how men could live without money; I’ll try and show what can be done with money. I’ll encourage everything that’s healthy; I’ll try to——” and then before the young man’s enthusiastic mental gaze there appeared a picture of what he hoped to accomplish.

No one knew of his coming at Malpas Towers, so he had to walk from the station to the house. For this he was glad. It was joy to him to note the cottages that he would pull down and replace by better, and an infinite pleasure to walk beneath the broad avenue of trees towards the house. Presently he reached an eminence from which he could see the square towers, the broad expanse of park, the great trees, and the fine, undulating country. “It’s all mine,” he cried, “mine and Grace’s to do good with.”

When he came to the door of the house all was silent ; he saw that everything had been well cared for during his absence. Mr. Jay had been a faithful steward. He stood on the doorstep and looked around him, and tears came into his eyes—tears of joy and gratitude.

When the servant opened the door and saw who it was, he started back like a man frightened.

“ Well, Bassett, I'm back again,” said David.

“ Good lor', sir ! ”

“ You are surprised to see me, eh ? ”

“ I dunno, sir. Mr. Jay said you might be back any day or you might not return for years. Excuse me, sir, I'm 'artily glad to see you, sir.”

“ Thank you,” said David.

“ Excuse me, sir, but are you returned for good ? ”

“ Yes, for good, Bassett.”

“ Thank God, sir ; ” and John Bassett started for the kitchen.

David did not know what to do ; for the moment he felt he was an intruder in the house, but only for a moment. He took off his overcoat and hung it up, for John Bassett had been too excited to attend to his duties. He had hardly done this, however, when he heard the sound of footsteps and of excited voices. A minute later a troop of servants appeared before him.

“ We couldn't 'elp it, sir,” said Mrs. Jobson, the cook ; “ no sooner 'ad Bassett told us you had come back, than I just felt I must come and tell you how glad I am.”

“ And I too, and I too,” said the others.

David shook hands with them all round, and his eyes were filled with tears.

“ Thank you ; it is very good of you,” he said, when he was able to control his voice ; “ I am glad to see you all again.”

“ Thank you, sir ; and you'll please excuse us, sir, we couldn't help it. The house has been *very* lonely since you've been gone, sir ; and we are glad you've come back.”

“ Of course I'll excuse you, Mrs. Jobson ; and I'm very glad to see you all.”

“ And you are 'ome for good, sir ? ”

“ Yes, for good ; I shall only go away for a day or two occasionally.”

“ Thank God, sir ; ” and Mrs. Jobson wiped her eyes vigorously.

“ And you'll want some lunch, sir, won't you, sir ? ” said Mrs. Jobson, true to her calling.

“ I'm as hungry as a hunter, Mrs. Jobson ; and is there a fire in the library ? ”

“ I expect so, sir ! Mr. Jay told Mrs. Hayes to be sure and have everything in readiness. But we'd almost given up hope.”

“ I thank you,” said David ; “ and will you tell Mrs. Hayes that I shall be glad to see her ? ”

“ Yes, sir, thank you, sir ; Glod bless you, sir.”

“ It seems they did care something for me after all,” he said to himself, as with a fast-beating heart, he found his way into the library.

“ Oh, it's beautiful, beautiful,” he continued, as he sat in a great armchair, and put his feet on the fender.

“ Ah—here is Mrs. Hayes.”

The woman had evidently aged greatly since he saw her last, but she was still hale and hearty.

“ I was afraid I should not live to see you again,” she said with a sob.

“ Oh, but you'll live many years yet,” said David ; “ summer will soon be here, and you'll have to dance with me at my wedding.”

“ Are you going to be married, sir ? ”

“ I hope so, Mrs. Hayes ; but, never fear, you shall be housekeeper here as long as you live ! ”

That was one of the happiest days of David's life. After doing ample justice to the lunch which Mrs. Jobson had provided, he wandered around the park, and listened while the birds chirped, and watched the young lambs sport in the sunshine.

“ Ah, yes,” he cried, “ it will be the first of March tomorrow, and the days are growing longer, and the sky is bright, and—and—— Thank God ! Thank God ! ”

And he went back to the house again, and wandered

among the old rooms, and thought of what Grace would say when she saw them, and pictured the joy that would be hers when he should tell her that it should be her home.

Oh, the joy of it all, the great, glad, surging joy! Oh, yes, he would surprise her. He would surprise Mr. Winfield, and Mr. Muswell, and George. Then after that, with Grace by his side, he would use his great wealth to make life sweeter, truer, purer.

The next morning he started for Winfield Hall.

"Will you be away long, sir?" asked Mrs. Hayes.

"No, I may be back to-night—in any case, to-morrow."

"Thank you, sir."

## CHAPTER TWO

### DAVID BARING'S PLAN

ON the following morning David Baring found his way to Winfield Hall. He had no definite idea of what he would do, but he could not help visiting Mr. John Winfield. Besides, he longed to see Grace. It was now six months since he had either seen or heard from her, and he wanted to feast his eyes on her face. Sometimes he felt as though it could not be true that she cared for him. How could she? They had only met a few times, and he was sure that she must regard him as a fanatic and a madman. He felt so utterly unworthy of her too, that he feared for the future. Still, he called to mind the time when, for his sake, she braved her uncles' anger, and rejoiced at the thought that she had promised to trust him, when to do so seemed the height of folly.

As he walked from the station he stopped at the place where he had first seen her, and recalled the memory of the time when, on that bright June morning, he had sat on the bank and watched her as she drove up by her uncle's side. It seemed many years ago, although scarcely two years had elapsed. He had had strange experiences since then, and, somehow, life was different. In some respects

it was poorer, more sordid and base, but in others it was sweeter, purer. Grace had, for him, made the world holier, her love had made him realise that many of his fancies and fears were groundless. She had shown him that womanhood was greater than circumstances, and that all life's gifts could be sanctified. Through Nora Brentwood he had seen that a poor, sordid love was a marketable article, and that a soulless woman could be bought and sold; but through Grace he had realised that a pure love existed in scorn of circumstance, and for ever remained the greatest gift of God.

He longed to see her that morning, although he feared that he would be unable to do so.

When he arrived at Winfield Hall, he was immediately shown into the room where Mr. John Winfield sat.

"What can I do for you?" said that gentleman, coldly.

"I came to speak to you on an important matter," replied David. "I desired also to see Grace."

"I will hear what you have to say, Mr. Wardlaw," said the Squire; "but I utterly forbid you to see my niece—that is, until you can satisfy me that you have fulfilled the conditions. And that, I take it, is impossible," he added, after hesitating a second.

David did not speak, and Mr. Winfield was not slow in interpreting his silence.

"On the whole I am glad to see you," he went on, "for I would like to appeal to your better nature. You profess to love Grace and yet you would drag her away from a good home; you would destroy her chance of future happiness."

"You have nothing against me, personally?"

"There is everything against you," said Mr. Winfield. "I do not know who you are, I know neither your father nor mother. You admit that by conviction you are a faddist and a fanatic. You have, in an unworthy way, won my niece's affection. Had I not loved her so, I should have been tempted to have—have—well, let her suffer for her undutifulness and madness."

"Then you do not believe in love?"

"Love!" cried Mr. Winfield scornfully. "Yes, I believe in it; but such as you have no right to speak of it.

If you truly loved Grace you would never dream of ruining her life."

"But I would not ruin it. I will spend my life in making her happy."

"Pshaw!" said Mr. Winfield scornfully. "Excuse me, Mr. Wardlaw," continued the Squire, presently, "but I find it hard to be civil. How can you call such a feeling as yours love, when—but think. You can see, you can understand how Grace has been reared, and yet you would drag her into poverty."

"Excuse me," said David, "but you have given me no opportunity of showing you that I will not drag her into poverty. Our arrangement was that I should have a year, and that if it that time I could not give her a home, I would relinquish all claim on her. Well, only six months have passed, and I am come to say that I am in a position to offer her a home."

"Yes, but what kind of a home, and how have you come by it? A few months ago you professed not to believe in personal property, and you spoke to my niece under—but we will not speak of that again. How, then, can you give her a home now? You do not seem to realise, young man, who my niece is, or what our expectations for her are."

"Yes, I think I can," said David quietly.

Mr. Winfield looked at the young man steadily. He could not understand him. He had sought to dismiss him without giving him an interview, and afterwards had tried to treat him as one with whom he could not argue, and yet he had given him the interview, and, against his will, had talked with him.

"Well, let us come to some definite settlement then," said Mr. Winfield. "You say you can offer my niece a home. But have you considered that it must be a home befitting her station? I will not have her an outcast. Can you give her a position in society equal to that which she occupies at present?"

David was silent.

"Nothing less than this will satisfy me, young man, and on no other condition will I give my consent."

“And you would blight her life if I cannot do this?”

Mr. Winfield laughed somewhat bitterly. “I am not a believer in your notions, Mr. Wardlaw,” he said. “Love is all very well, but—but there, it’s no use talking. You understand my terms, and they are those of Mr. Muswell as well.”

He seemed to think the matter was settled when he said this, and rose as if to indicate that the interview was at an end.

“Then you do not regard an income of four hundred pounds a year sufficient?” said David.

“Do you possess that?” asked Mr. Winfield.

“Yes, I possess that.”

“What proof have I of that?”

“I can refer you to my solicitor.”

“And what position could my niece occupy with four hundred pounds a year?” said Mr. Winfield, presently.

“No, no, it will not do.” But he spoke more kindly.

“At any rate, I think I have fulfilled the condition,” said David quietly.

“But that does not satisfy me,” said Mr. Winfield, “neither will it satisfy Mr. Muswell.”

“Then I must regard this as a refusal?”

“Certainly, and if within the year you have nothing better to offer—well, I must trust to your honour to—relinquish your claim on my niece.”

In spite of his gladness of heart, David could not help a feeling of anger.

“There is no wonder men are bitter,” he thought. “Marriage is a market where the highest bidder has the best chance of obtaining the thing he wants. Still, I know Grace loves me, thank God for that.”

“Perhaps I ought to say that I have a house in addition to four hundred a year,” said David, “a house and a few acres of ground.”

“A farm, I suppose,” said Mr. Winfield, “a mere farm. That would do, Mr. Wardlaw, if my niece were the daughter of a tradesman, struggling lawyer, or an obscure clergyman, but she has had an offer from one who——”

“Is a man she could never love,” rejoined David.

"He is a gentleman," said Mr. Winfield, "he is a member of a county family," and he looked as if no more need be said.

"Then I suppose I must go," said David. "I suppose I must regard this as an utter refusal of my offer?"

Mr. Winfield was silent.

"I can at least see Grace before I go," he continued.

"No, Mr. Wardlaw, not with my consent; besides, you promised in Cornwall not to seek her again until you could offer her a home worthy her station."

David found it hard to keep from telling the whole truth, for he longed to see Grace again. But he refrained, for at that moment a plan was born in his mind.

"You shall hear from me again before the year is out," he said as he prepared to leave.

Mr. Winfield did not speak, but when David had left he thought over what had been said with great dissatisfaction.

"I suppose this is all owing to modern topsy-turvy ideas," he said, at length. "Fancy the presumption of the fellow. Upon my word, I am afraid for the future—I am indeed. Where shall we get if such things are allowed?"

A few days later both Mr. Winfield and Mr. Muswell received a letter which set them wondering greatly. It purported to come from Mr. John Jay, solicitor, asking them to meet Mr. D. W. Baring, the owner of Malpas Towers, as that gentleman had an interesting communication to make on the subject of the property. As the matter was of considerable importance to Miss Grace Muswell, the only surviving child of the late owner of Malpas Towers, the letter urged the necessity of her accompanying Mr. Winfield. A date was mentioned which would be convenient to Mr. Baring, and the favour of a reply was requested.

Shortly after the receipt of the letter Mr. Muswell was on his way to Winfield Hall. He had not been so excited for a long time, and a thousand wild fancies flashed through his brain.

"I don't like seeing this fellow," he thought, "he's the nephew of old Barton, the fellow who got poor Roger in his



clutches ; but he owns the place, and this letter must mean something."

He found Mr. Winfield as excited as himself.

"We must go, of course," said that gentleman. "I have never met this Baring. Have you?"

"No ; I heard that he was seen a good deal during the first few months after he came into his property, but about a year ago I saw that he had gone abroad for an extended visit. I suppose he has lately come back."

"Yes, doubtless that's it ; but for the life of me I can't think what it means. The property is gone right enough ; why, as you know, when Roger died and everything was sold, there was not enough to——"

"Yes, I know ; still, the letter must mean something. You know, too, that Grace is particularly mentioned. I wonder if, by any chance, young Baring can have seen Grace and fallen in love with her."

"I don't think that's possible, Muswell ; besides, if he had, he would not have taken such steps as these to try and see her. Still—well, let's hope for the best. I told you about Wardlaw, didn't I?"

"Yes ; I think you acted wisely. Oh, I hope we shall be rid of him all right."

"I hope so. Of course, we must stamp that nonsense out of Grace's head. For the life of me I cannot understand why we conceded so much. The whole affair is so absurd."

"Yes ; I cannot understand it myself. Still, the fellow had the appearance of an honest man, and under some circumstances a few hundreds a year must not be trifled with."

"Do you know, I've often wished I had inquired more fully into the matter. He offered to refer me to his solicitor, but I was so utterly opposed to him that I refused to take any notice of what he said."

"That's a pity ; still, I am afraid we shall hear from him again. He's not the sort of fellow who gives up easily."

"No. Do you know, Muswell, I can't help liking him."

"Nor I ; but then, as a husband for Grace, he is, of course, impossible."

"Of course, quite. Well, we had better accept Mr. Jay's invitation for March 28th. I am quite curious to know how things will turn out."

On the 28th of March David Baring rose early. Never, in the whole of his life, had he been so excited; never had he felt so happy.

"Thank God, it's a bright morning," he said, as he looked from his bedroom window. He looked at his watch; it was only six o'clock. "Six hours," he cried, "in six hours Grace will be here."

Never did the hours drag as heavily as they dragged that day. The young man wandered around the house and around the grounds like one demented. He asked Mrs. Hayes hosts of questions, and gave John Bassett impossible orders. He tried to read, he played at billiards, he got a pack of cards and tried to play a game of Patience, all to kill time, yet it seemed as if the clock would not go round.

"Ah, but she is coming, coming to-day!" he would cry joyously. "Just an hour or two more, and she will be here! I wonder what she will say, I wonder how those old fellows will take it! Oh, but we shall be happy, we shall be happy."

At eleven o'clock Mr. Jay came, grim and taciturn as ever.

"If I were a doctor I should give you a sedative, and send you to bed," he said sourly.

"All the sedatives in the world would not keep me quiet," said David.

"No, I suppose young men will be mad."

"Oh, I am sane enough now."

"Are you? Well, there is some little business I wish to discuss with you."

"Oh, hang business."

"By all means, but it'd have resurrection. It's about that girl Emily Baker."

"Oh, yes, what of her?"

"Well, for one thing her mother is dead—that is the woman she has called mother."

"Dead, eh! Well, it is a good thing for the poor girl."

"The other is that there is some truth in what that man Crowle told you. Her parents were respectable people."

"I am very glad."

"I have had a talk with her myself. I really believe you saved her from ruin : but she's a good girl."

"I'm sure she is."

"What are you going to do for her ?"

"I'm in doubt. What would you suggest ?"

"This. I would send her to school ; that is, if you are determined to continue to play the Good Samaritan. I would also tell her about her parentage. The fact would act as an incentive in her case. By this means you could help her to become a teacher, or something of that sort."

"Yes, yes, by all means ! By Jove, there's another carriage coming, and it's only just half-past eleven. It must be they."

"No," said the lawyer, "it can't be they, for there's no train ; and it's not a carriage at all, but a dog-cart."

"Oh, it's the doctor's dog-cart," said David, with a woe-begone face ; "one of the servants is poorly. Oh, but the time does drag slowly."

"At my age it goes too fast," said the lawyer.

A little later, however, David was not mistaken ; the conveyance he had sent to the station was returning, and he felt that Grace was near.

His heart beat fast as he saw her alight from the carriage, and he had difficulty in restraining himself from rushing towards her. Perhaps if he had known the thoughts in Grace's mind he would have found it still harder. For, as may be imagined, this visit to Malpas Towers was to her a sore ordeal. When she had left it, years before, she was little more than a child, but she loved her old home beyond words. She knew every tree in the park, she had traversed every pathway through the woods, she loved every room in the old house. Her mother had died there, died of a broken heart ; her only brother had been her companion there, and although she was not proud of him, she had sincerely mourned his death a few months before. Her father, too, had been her companion there ; and

although people had said he had led a disreputable life, he was always kind to her, and she loved him dearly. And now she was all alone, and dependent on her uncle's charity. She was a proud girl, and the fact was bitterness to her. Many times she had determined to go into the world to earn her own living; but she had been kept from doing so by the commands of those whom she was bound to respect, and who declared that a Muswell should never receive a hireling's wages.

When Mr. Winfield had communicated the contents of Mr. Jay's letter to her, she had begged to be spared the pain of seeing the home that was no longer hers, but her uncles had persuaded her. Now as she once again stood in the room that she knew so well, it seemed as though her heart was torn in twain. For she remembered everything—the pictures, the ornaments, the chairs, all were just as she knew them years before, and tears came rushing into her eyes as she called to mind the incidents of her childhood.

"Try and get your business, whatever it is, done quickly," she said. "I cannot bear to stay here."

"Nonsense, Grace," said Mr. Winfield, "it may be that this business will be for—that is, I've heard young Baring is a fine fellow."

"I hate him," cried the girl, "I hate him!"

"Hate him! You said you had never seen him."

"No, but I hate him for all that. What does he care; what *can* he care for our old home? Oh, it's horrible!"

Mr. Muswell and Mr. Winfield, on the other hand, were very complacent, yet very expectant. They surmised that their visit must have a very serious import, otherwise Mr. Jay would not have written them. They noted with pleasure that everything was well cared for, and expressed great satisfaction that none of the timber had been cut down.

"I cannot understand it at all," said Mr. Muswell again and again, "the Muswells have no claim on the place. I was in the business, and I know that old Barton bought everything, and that everything when sold did not meet Roger's liabilities by a——"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Winfield, "but there may have been some clause in the old rascal's will, or some other reason which has led young Baring to deal honourably with Grace. Ah! here is some one coming!"

Mr. Jay entered the room, and spoke in his grim, taciturn way, but they could gather nothing from the old lawyer's face. It was as unreadable as that of the Sphinx.

"You see we have obeyed your summons," said Mr. Winfield. "Of course we have naturally been exercised as to the meaning of it all. What is it, eh?"

"When Mr. Baring comes it will all be made plain," said the lawyer.

"When he comes! Is he not in the house?"

"Oh, yes; that is, I believe so."

A minute passed in absolute silence. The lawyer was evidently seriously considering some documents he had brought with him, while Mr. Winfield and Mr. Muswell looked uneasily around the room. Grace stood at one of the windows overlooking the park, and was recalling memories of the time when she had played among the trees and skated over the frozen lake. It was home to her, she reflected, and no other place in the world could be like it. Why was it that it had been taken away from her? Ah, if she only possessed it still and could give it to David!

Presently the door opened, and the men looked towards it, but Grace steadily gazed out of the window.

"Mr. Wardlaw!"

Mr. Muswell and Mr. Winfield uttered the name simultaneously as the young man entered and looked awkwardly around him.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Mr. Winfield, almost angrily. "What does this fellow mean by being here?"

But Mr. Jay did not answer a word; rather, he watched Grace start towards them, and then stop suddenly like one afraid. No sooner did David see her than the plans which Mr. Jay had made for this meeting were all forgotten. He rushed towards her and seized her hands. "Grace!" he cried.

"Is—is this a fool's trick?" said Mr. Muswell almost beside himself. "Who are you, young man?"

"I am David Baring."

### CHAPTER THREE

#### BACK TO THE OLD HOME

"DAVID BARING!"

"Yes, that is my name."

"But, but—is this true?" and the two men turned to Mr. Jay.

"Personally, I have not the slightest doubt about it," said the lawyer quietly; "besides, he is of age, and ought to know his own name."

They stood aghast, these two. They were angry because they had been deceived, but neither of them was slow to know what it all meant.

"Will—will you explain yourself?" said Mr. Muswell presently, turning to David.

"Yes," said David. "A few months ago I had the honour of asking for the hand of Grace," and he looked at the young girl, whose eyes were filled with great wonder; "at that time I was not in a position to satisfy you as to my—well, call it suitability. I am afraid I am a poor business man, so may I suggest that I leave you with Mr. Jay to prove to you that—well, your scruples may be overcome. Meanwhile, may I ask your permission to take Grace into the library—there is something I would like to—"

"But, but, are you—that is, are you old—that is, Mr. Barton's heir?"

"Yes, I am David Barton's heir!" and then David led Grace out of the room, while the two men looked at him in utter astonishment.

"David," cried the girl, when they were alone, "what does it mean? You told me you were David Wardlaw; what does it mean?"

"It means that I love you more than ever," cried David,

"it means—but Grace, are you sorry, are you—that is, have you ceased to care for me?"

"Ceased to care? Why, why, David?"

They were in the library together, the room which David loved the most. The girl looked around and saw many of the things which she remembered as a child. Everything was strange, and yet all seemed familiar.

"I didn't tell you my name in full down in Cornwall, because—because—but I can tell you all about that by-and-by. But you are crying, Grace! are you angry with me? Don't you love me any longer?"

She looked up into his face with tear-dimmed eyes, but she did not speak.

"Are you angry, Grace? Have you changed towards me? Oh, don't say that. Everything will be worthless if you are changed. Name, home, everything will be nothing if—if— Oh, Grace, won't you speak? Won't you come to me?"

As she dashed away her tears, she saw the look of tender yearning in his eyes, and her heart seemed to be too big for her bosom.

He held out his arms. "Won't you come to me, Grace?" he cried again, and still she stood immovable; she seemed powerless to utter a word.

"Have you changed towards me?" he said again. "Do you wish me to go away?"

"Go away, no!" She came to him, and to the young man all life was changed. So great is the power of a woman's love.

"Let me tell you all about it," said the young man presently, "let me—"

"No, no, David, not yet. I—I don't think I could understand; I am too happy."

I cannot describe the scene further, I would not if I could. It would need, and it will ever need, the pen of a magician to tell of the infinite bliss of lovers, and even he would find language too poor. For love is the great mystery of God.

David Baring had dreamed many dreams during the last few days. He had seen squalor swept away, poverty

ameliorated, lives brightened. He had seen himself righting wrongs, fighting against injustice; his heart had thrilled at the thought of devoting all his powers, all his possession to making life sweeter and purer, but all this even seemed as nothing compared with the great joy he felt, as Grace sobbed out her love for him. She had chosen him as one homeless and penniless; for him she had borne many bitter words, and had braved angry threats, and now, as her head lay pillowed on his breast, and as he heard her telling him that which was sweeter than all else on earth, the reality of infinite love possessed him.

“May God make me worthy!” he said.

“You have everything, and I have nothing,” she said; “I am homeless, I am——”

“You are everything to me, my queen,” he cried.

The minutes sped swiftly by, but they heeded not time; in the room near by, the men of the world spoke of settlements, and lands, but these things were nothing to them. What can these things be to the youth and the maid who taste the joys of Paradise?

Why will those of sordid mind degrade God’s greatest gift? Why will those who are evil sell it for lust, for possession? It is God’s great means for ennobling life, for keeping the world ever young and green and tender. It is the breath of life which comes from the fields of Eden, and none but those who keep their hearts pure can ever realise its infinite bliss.

David was able to make all his explanations presently. He told his story amidst many interruptions. This was natural; and I need not explain why. Those who know what it is to be young, and I write for no others, will understand the stammering questions, and the answers they required.

It is good to be young, for youth is life’s heaven. Happy are they who for ever retain it.

And still the men of business disturbed them not; thus it was that the lovers had time to wander around the old house, and Grace was able to visit again the rooms she knew and loved years before.



“David,” said Grace, “I could be happy with you anywhere; you know I could, but nowhere so happy as here.”

Then the young man told of his plans for the future, of the good he meant to do with his riches; and the maid listened with glad ears and a fast-beating heart.

I shall not attempt to repeat the conversation which took place during lunch, simply because the mere words would not convey anything like an adequate idea of the truth. According to report, Mr. Fox once said that “no man was ever as wise as Lord Thurlow looked;” and it was the looks of Grace’s two guardians which made commonplace words important. It was by looks they tried to make David feel that he was the man they had chosen for their niece, even when appearances were against him; it was by their looks that they tried to make him understand their approval of his freak of leaving Malpas Towers and going to the Brotherhood Settlement. It was surprising with what ease they forgot their former statements, and manifested broad-minded toleration for his contempt for the money standards of the world. Their opinions, too, in relation to Mr. Brewer as a suitable husband for Grace were full of sound wisdom. He had never been the man they would have chosen for her, and they both held strongly to the opinion that true marriages were made in heaven. There should never be, so they said, a marriage which was not the result of love, and Providence was all-wise in bringing lovers together.

Of course, not a word was said about settlements; these had been left to Mr. Joy, and arranged according to their satisfaction. Indeed, so much were they pleased that these two gentlemen came very near to a friendly quarrel as to the house from which Grace should be married, and as to who should have the honour of giving her away. And when at length Grace gave her vote in favour of Muswell Hall for the wedding, and said she would like Mr. Winfield to give her away, both these gentlemen were much affected at her thoughtfulness. It was a division of honour, they declared, and was just as they would have liked it.

Of course, David was not blind to the meaning of all this; but he was too supremely happy to care much. He knew that Grace was not imbued with their ideas, and so could afford to laugh at their wise sayings, and forget what had been said long months before.

The wedding was arranged to take place on the first of June, and so David had only two months to wait. It seemed an interminable time, but he had much to do, and many plans to make. Besides, as Mr. Muswell declared, the matter could not be arranged in less time.

But they were delighted, these two guardians, as to the way matters had turned out.

"A real love affair," said Muswell to Mr. Brewer, a few days later, "and as a consequence, it has my entire approval. Yes, Baring is an eccentric fellow, and has all sorts of queer notions about the right use of wealth; but it is all right, my dear Brewer. And really, the young fellow has the logical end of the stick. We English people do not realise our responsibility as we ought, and money is too often regarded as the test of men's worth. And this ought not to be. Of course, he carries the thing too far. He takes the religious attitude, and argues that we are only the stewards of God, and therefore should use our wealth for the good of others; but he'll get over that. He's a thorough gentleman, and they'll be as happy as two turtle doves. I am not the man who cares too much about money standards, as you know; but for all that—well, the fellow is simply a millionaire. I shouldn't be surprised if he ends by having a seat in the House of Lords. Anyhow, with his—his influence there'll be at least a baronetcy. 'Sir David Baring'—it will sound well, won't it?"

And to Mr. Muswell's credit, it must be admitted that he sought to make the wedding one of the grandest the county had ever known.

"They deserve it, you know," he would say; "she is a good girl, and as for him, why, he is restoring the estates to the Muswell family. Too much of a Lord Shaftesbury in his ideas, perhaps, but a thorough gentleman. As for his freak in living on the Brotherhood Settlement—

well, I like a fellow to have independent ideas, and to have enough pluck to test them."

Not many days after Grace's guardians' scruples were removed, as David was sitting alone, he was told that a young woman wished to see him, and on her being admitted, he saw that it was Emily Baker.

David held out his hand to her, and spoke kindly.

"Please forgive me for coming," said the girl, hurriedly, "but I couldn't 'elp it, I couldn't really. I'm afraid as 'ow I was rude to you, but I didn't know what a swell you really was."

"Oh, that's all right," said David kindly, "and I hope you like the prospect of going to school?"

"No, sir, I don't, and that's straight. Not as I don't want to learn, but I feel as 'ow I can't be a lady now, no matter how I try."

"Oh, yes you can; besides, I wish it."

"Do you really, sir?"

"Of course I do."

"But if I go to school, sir, will you let me come back and be a servant here, sir? That's what I should like best in the world. I don't want to be a governess nor nothink of that sort, for though Mr. Jay says that she as I thought was my mother wasn't my mother at all, I don't want to be nothink better than your servant. It was you as kep' me from goin' wrong, sir, and I should like to serve you, sir, and the beautiful lady you are going to marry."

At this the girl sobbed outright, but recovering herself presently, she went on, "Oh, I'll learn, sir. I'll learn, and I'll serve you till I die, if you'll let me."

It was in vain that David argued with her, in vain he told her that she was clever enough to prepare herself for a far better position, and she only consented to go to school on condition that when she had stayed there two years, she should come to Malpas Towers and be his servant.

"She will have different ideas after two years at a good school," thought the young man as she walked away; but Emily thought differently.

“He don’t know how I love him,” sobbed the girl, as she found her way to the station. “He don’t know as ’ow I would die for him, and that but for my love for ’im I couldn’t ’ave kep’ straight. It’ll be awful ’ard for me to see him married to that beautiful lady; but it don’t matter, I shall be near him, and I’ll serve him till I die.”

Whether Emily will be true to her resolve, I do not know, for she is still at school, and is one of the most stylish girls in a fashionable academy; but the stately lady who presides over it, speaks of her as one of the most intelligent, and at the same time, one of the most lovable girls it has been her fortune to have under her roof.

Of course David’s return to Malpas Towers was a subject for great comment in the district. Colonel Storm paid him a visit, and told him that the whole neighbourhood had felt his loss while he had been away, with many other complimentary speeches. Nora Brentwood, when meeting him one day, entirely by accident, of course, was all smiles and blushes. But David had learnt his lesson, and knew the value of their words. Besides, his heart was hungering all the while for the one who was the only woman in the world to him, and who had given him her heart while she believed him penniless and homeless.

At length the last day of May came, and David found his way to Cornwall. The vicar of the parish had invited him to spend the night at the vicarage, but David had decided to go to a hotel in Falmouth. This he did, because he had arranged to meet Langford there, and wanted to have a long talk with him.

Langford was still the same unworldly fellow; and although he had attired himself with some respect for society conventions, the waiter could not help staring as he showed the young giant into David’s room. One thing, however, David could not help noticing. Langford seemed much subdued and very thoughtful. Moreover, he did not seem so certain of himself and of his opinions as in other days.

“I had an idea you would never hold out, Baring,”

he said, as they sat by the window in the hotel, facing the mouth of the river.

"No," said David, "why?"

"Oh, I—I well, could not feel that—that the opinions of the colony had ever really gripped you."

"No," said David, and then both were silent for a few minutes, as they watched a boat race, and became deeply interested in the sturdy Cornish boatmen who struggled for victory.

"Competition," remarked David presently, looking towards the rowers.

"Competition? Yes; it seems ingrained in our very life."

"True. It is human nature which demands competition, and, rightly understood, it was one of the great aids to progress. The thing is not wrong, it is only its abuse."

Langford was silent, but he understood what David meant.

"You are what the world calls a rich man," he said at length.

"I suppose so."

"And are marrying a woman of the world?"

"I am marrying to-morrow, yes, thank God; but to a woman of the world, no, not as you understand it."

"And are you settling down as a country gentleman?"

"I suppose so, yes."

"And you will do the correct thing, I suppose? I take it that you will have hunters, a pack of hounds, and all the rest of it? You will patronise the turf, run a theatre, give balls, and spend hundreds a year on expensive wines, eh?"

"No, old man, no. Whatever else the Settlement has done for me it has taught me the use of money. It has taught me that it may be, should be, one of God's greatest gifts."

"Whew?"

"No, Langford, I have learnt that money is not mine. If I regarded it as mine it would be a curse to me, and to all with whom I came into contact. Money is not evil, old man, that's where you Settlement people are mistaken, it's

selfishness that is wrong. You were for ever and ever crying out against the evil systems of the world, it isn't the systems that are wrong, it's base life which perverts systems. It's character, not circumstances, that needs altering, primarily. I tell you, you look at matters wrongly. You seek to deal with the circumference of things, whereas it is the centre that needs altering. Money has been made a curse because men are evil, whereas if men were good it is one of God's great gifts."

"And what are you going to do with your money?"

David told him, told him of the schemes which had been born in his mind; of the club which he was organising for his parish, of the amusements, the schools, and other institutions which were to be at the disposal of the people. He related, too, the plans he had made for helping the dwellers in the East End, where his money had been made.

"My uncle made most of his fortune in Whitechapel," said the young man, "and most of it shall be used there;" and he broke forth into an enthusiastic description of what he hoped to do.

"Sticking plasters?" said Langford.

"Even sticking plasters may be good," replied David, "but I believe my work will mean more than that. My money shall be spent in trying to teach men how to live, and also in making it possible for them to live clean and decent lives. If I had ten times my income, I would do ten times more good. Money is given to me to help others, and that is what I am going to do. I believe that healthy meeting-houses, healthy amusements of all sorts, comfortable houses, and an endeavour to create a healthy atmosphere, will do more for the benefit of men and women than all the Socialist harangues concerning the evil of capitalists."

"Yes, and all you will do will be but a drop in the bucket."

"But it will be a drop, and if every man who could would contribute his drop, then there would be enough for all."

Langford was silent.

"You see," went on David, "you at the Settlement

said you were an object-lesson to the world ; you maintained that you showed how men can live without those things which the world longs for. Then you came away from those scenes where the millions struggle, and settled down in a place where you could hear nothing of what men were doing and thinking. You said you would live the ideal life by leaving the world. That was the foundation of the old monastic idea, and the monastic idea is a failure. I wish rather to try and show how the best life can be lived in the very centre of the world's struggles. Your idea seems to me to be negative, but mine is positive. And Christianity is positive, not negative. Jesus Christ lived in the world, and showed how every force of life could be sanctified. And what are you doing at the Settlement ? ” asked David presently.

“ There is no Settlement. ”

“ No Settlement ! ”

“ No, it is smashed to pieces. The beginning of the end had taken place when you left us. Liberty had become license, and the craving to carry everything to its logical issue ended—well, ended in free love, quarrelling, hatred—and—and Heaven knows what besides. Some would not work, and lived upon those who would ; this led to—well, you can guess. There was recrimination, threats, and—in fact, there was the old Harry to pay. Then the glorified notion about true marriage, and the sin of living with the man you had married after you had ceased to love him—and—well, you can guess. Treloar got tired of it all, and kicked them out. He has determined to work his farm on ordinary lines.

“ And Bertha Gray, and Eva Rivers, and the rest of them, what have they done ? Where are they now ? ”

“ Oh ! they are gone to a new colony, where the ideas are more advanced ! Many of the others are gone back to the world. ”

“ More advanced ! Good Heavens ! And you, Langford, what are you going to do ? ”

“ Oh ! I—well, I hold to the same opinions as before—only—well, I am afraid the rank and file of humanity can't live up to them. I'm taking a practice in a country

town. It seems that the efforts of the best of us were only a bubble on life's wave, and we shall be laughed at as another set of mistaken fools; still, we may grow wiser by mistakes. We were unworthy our ideals, but I am glad we had them. In spite of all, Baring, we did you good, we led you to—to get the right thing.”

David thought of what had been said, long after Langford had left him, but presently he forgot these things, because of the great joy that filled his heart.

The next morning broke bright and beautiful, and David was early at the old parish church. The villagers said that such a wedding had never been seen in the district before. All the countryside had congregated together, and hill and dale were echoing with the clanging of the church bells. When David saw Grace enter, leaning on the arm of Mr. Winfield, it seemed as though he was in dreamland, but all became real presently, when he walked out of the old edifice to the strain of the wedding march, with Grace's hand on his arm.

The wedding took place early in the morning because Grace desired that the honeymoon should be spent in her own home at Malpas Towers. No other place was so dear to her, she said; and nowhere else could she be so happy. So it came about that at eleven o'clock in the morning they drove away from Muswell Hall in order to catch the midday express to London.

“I never dreamed that it was possible to be so happy,” said David, as the train swept on through one of the most beautiful counties in England.

“Nor I,” said the blushing girl.

It was late that night when they arrived at Malpas Towers, but it was almost as light as day. The moon sailed in a cloudless sky, and the fragrance of flowers was everywhere. Within the house everything had been done to give them a glad welcome, and servants vied with each other in rendering them service.

Presently David went out alone on the smooth-shaved lawn. He felt that he must be alone to rejoice in his great happiness; he wanted to thank God for all His mercies.



In the light of the clear June night he saw the shining river and the sheen of the lake; away in the distance he could see the undulating country, which rose and fell like a great sea. "And it's all ours," he cried, "it is all for Grace and me to use for others, to make life better and holier."

He thought of his first visit here, remembered how, two years before, he had come out to this very place and he saw everything as he saw it then. And yet all was different. He recalled the first few months of his stay there, he remembered his visit to the East End, and thought of his resolution to give up all and go down to the Cornish Settlement.

"Yes, I was mad," he said, as he recalled his experiences among the people who called themselves Christian Anarchists, "there can be no doubt about it; I should never have taken such a step if I had not been; but—but I thank God that I was mad."

"David!"

"Yes, Grace."

She came up and put her hand on his arm.

"It is beautiful to be at home again," she whispered.

He bent his head towards her, and they kissed each other.

"Yes, thank God, I was mad," he repeated, as they went towards the open door of their home.

THE END