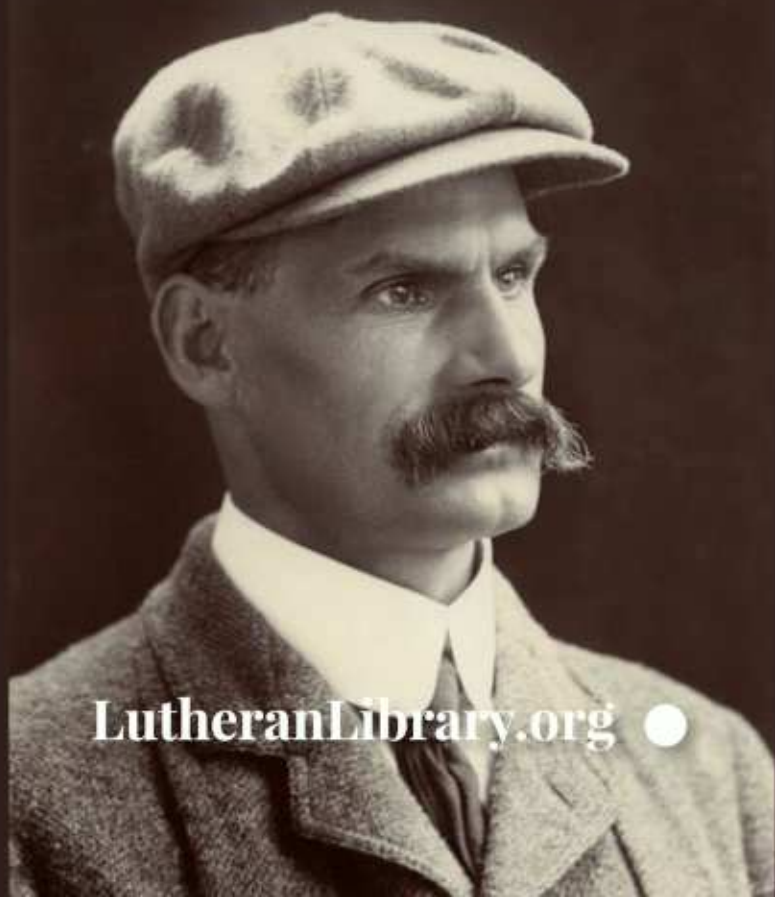


Joseph Hocking

O'er Moor and Fen A Tale of Methodist Life in Lancashire



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BERNARD HAWTHORNE,

Frontispiece.

[See page 212.

O'ER MOOR AND FEN

A TALE OF METHODIST
LIFE IN LANCASHIRE

BY JOSEPH HOCKING

AUTHOR OF "ALL MEN ARE LIARS," "THE
MADNESS OF DAVID BARING," ETC.



LONDON: HODDER AND
STOUGHTON * 27
PATERNOSTER ROW 1901

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DEDICATION

*As an expression of my appreciation of an editor
who has shown me much kindness,*

*As a tribute to the scholarship and genius of
one, who, as critic, editor, and author, has done
so much for literature,*

*And as an acknowledgment of the fact, that,
although he is in no way responsible for
the treatment of the central idea of this
story, it was he who suggested that idea to
me,*

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

TO

DR. ROBERTSON NICOLL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE MADNESS OF DAVID BARING
ALL MEN ARE LIARS
THE PURPLE ROBE
THE SCARLET WOMAN
FIELDS OF FAIR RENOWN
ISHMAEL PENGELLY
THE STORY OF ANDREW FAIRFAX
JABEZ EASTERBROOK
THE MONK OF MARSABA
ZILLAH: A ROMANCE
MISTRESS NANCY MOLESWORTH
THE BIRTHRIGHT
AND SHALL TRELAWNEY DIE?
LEST WE FORGET

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NOTE

DURING the appearance of this story as a serial in the pages of the *British Weekly*, it was much criticised by a certain section of the community. It was urged, that not only were my descriptions of Methodist usage utterly incorrect, but that I had given a picture of Methodist life which was not only untrue, but unkind. It may be well, therefore, in issuing the story in volume form, that I should insert this explanatory note.

Methodism, as is well known, is divided into five main branches, or perhaps it might be more correct to say that it consists of the mother Methodist Church and four offshoots of that great Body. While there are certain usages which are common to all the Methodist denominations, each has a form of government peculiar to itself.

In "O'er Moor and Fen" my purpose has been to give a picture of Methodist life as a whole, and to describe what is common to each of the leading

Methodist Bodies. Here, however, a difficulty appeared. While it was comparatively easy to give a picture of general Methodist life, I discovered, in giving minute descriptions of certain usages, that while those descriptions correctly represented one Body, they were not equally correct when applied to others. Under these circumstances, while adhering to my original resolution of giving a picture of General Methodism, I decided, when it was necessary to speak of particular customs, to confine myself to the usage of one of the smaller Methodist Bodies. Concerning the choice of that particular Church, I need not here speak, but I think I can truthfully say that, with the exception of one or two technical terms, my descriptions perfectly correspond with facts.

With regard to the charge that my picture of Methodist life is unkind, I may say that nothing is further from my desires. The story is a study of Methodist life under two aspects. It purports, on the one hand, to show what it is when, as is sometimes the case, it becomes formal, official, and lifeless. On the other hand, however, it gives a true idea of what Methodism is when baptised by that Spirit of Faith and Love, and Zeal, which has made it, not only the largest Protestant Church in the world, but a Power,

the influence of which is beyond the range of words to describe.

In each case I have written as I have seen, and if I have portrayed the littleness, the poverty, and the formalism of Methodism when it has lost that living fire which has made it such a power, I have spared no pains to give a picture of that Nobler Methodism which has been, and in many cases still is, one of the greatest forces for good the world has ever known. Moreover, I claim to have written with knowledge of my subject, and with nothing but kindness in my heart.

As the title indicates, the setting of the story is peculiar to Lancashire. Having spent five years in that county, and having come into intimate relationships with the various types of character to be found there, I can claim to have had special opportunities for studying its life. As far as I know, my descriptions are correct, and although I have not attempted to sketch any *living* person, the characters of this story may be found in almost any great town within thirty miles of the Metropolis of the North.

One other word only is necessary. Let it not be thought that because "O'er Moor and Fen" is a story of Methodist Life in Lancashire, it is in any way

a treatise. It is not. It is mainly a love story—
a love story which is, I trust, so pure and wholesome
that it will be welcomed, not only in Lancashire, but
everywhere where it is still believed that

“There is nothing half so sweet in life
As love’s young dream.”

JOSEPH HOCKING.

TREVANION,
WOODFORD GREEN,
September 1901.

CHAPTER I

THE QUESTION BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

THE question which the Executive Committee had to answer was, "What shall be done with Bernard Hawthorne?"

There were several charges preferred against him, all of which, considering his position, were serious, and all of which had been carefully discussed throughout the day. In the eyes of the law of England he had done nothing that need make him fear; but in view of Methodist usage and Methodist ideas concerning the behaviour of one of its ministers he had been guilty of grave offences. Taken separately, his actions would perhaps bring him only severe censure; taken as a whole, and mentioned one after the other by our President, they presented a bad case against him.

I, Caleb Sutcliffe, had attended as senior steward of the Lynford circuit to give evidence against Bernard Hawthorne, and although I obeyed the summons, feeling he had been guilty of disgracing the Body which is as dear to me as life itself, I could not suppress a certain amount of admiration for him. I knew I ought not to have admired him, I knew I should have entertained only a feeling of righteous anger towards him, still I could not help admiring him.

The scene was one of the most impressive I had ever seen, and the occasion was, to me, weighty with interest. To those who know nothing of the Methodist Church it may appear poor and commonplace, to me it was important beyond words. When I tell you that the question to be decided was whether he should be expelled from the ranks of the Methodist ministry or not, you will see that to the man who, like myself, regards the position of a Methodist minister as the highest in the world, it was one of tragic importance.

I almost hated myself for having taken any part in the matter, and I knew that sleep would be robbed from me for many nights to come. Still, a man in my position ought to be jealous for the honour of his Church and of its ministry. Therefore, although I had been much derided for my action in the affair, I stood by my resolution to give evidence concerning the Rev. Bernard Hawthorne's conduct before the Executive Committee of the denomination.

"The question, brethren," said the President, "is what shall we do with this young man? Shall we recommend to the Conference that he be expelled from our ranks, or that he be given another chance?"

Had Bernard Hawthorne been humble, had he shown any sign of repentance, I do not think the feeling of the Committee would have been so hard towards him; but he was not humble, and he showed no sign of repentance. Neither, in my opinion, did he manifest that respect which is due from a young man to his elders; indeed, he refused to answer certain questions which the President asked him, and declared that he failed to see anything wrong in the charges proved against him.

Let me state the case more fully, otherwise those

who read this will not be able to properly comprehend the condition of things.

The Reverend Bernard Hawthorne had come to Lynford some time before the scene of which I have spoken, as minister of Wesley Chapel, and during his stay in the town had so conducted himself that I (with others) had felt it to be a duty to bring his case before the Connexional authorities. The meeting of these authorities was held in the vestry of St. George's Chapel, Bradburn, and lasted two days.

These were the charges preferred against him :

First, that he had repeatedly acted in opposition to the advice and even the commands of the superintendent minister, the circuit stewards, and other officials. He had conducted services contrary to the usages of Methodism, and had thereby caused considerable disturbance.

Second, he had given expression to opinions concerning certain books of the Bible, together with many of the doctrines thereof, utterly out of accord with the theology of Methodism.

Third, he had made the acquaintance of certain people in the town who, to say the least of them, were utterly unfit companions for the minister of Wesley Chapel.

Fourth, he had paid particular attention to a young woman of pronounced heretical, if not atheistical views. This young woman, Mary Clitheroe by name, was the daughter of Hugh Clitheroe, of Rough Leigh ; a pronounced unbeliever, and a man who, in his so-called scientific research, had dabbled in all sorts of strange experiments. He was an enemy to religion, and never missed an opportunity of bringing contumely upon the churches. His daughter, although she had sometimes

attended Wesley Chapel during Mr. Hawthorne's ministry, was a member of no church, and was believed to be antagonistic to the accepted doctrines of the denomination. She aided her father in his ungodly experiments, and was regarded by those who knew her best as one who shared her father's atheistic beliefs. To this young woman Bernard Hawthorne had paid marked attention; they had been seen together on several occasions, and it was commonly reported that they were engaged.

Fifth, in spite of the fact of his attention to Miss Mary Clitheroe, he had been writing letters to a lady in London, which, to say the least of them, were of a very suspicious nature.

The knowledge of these letters was revealed in the following way: Mr. Jory, the superintendent minister, received a letter one morning addressed to himself. Seeing that it was signed by Bernard Hawthorne, he thought it referred to some circuit matter. He did not read more than a few lines, for he soon saw that it was a fervent love epistle. Evidently it was placed in an envelope addressed to himself by mistake, and was really intended for some young woman in London, for, although her name was not mentioned, London was referred to as her home.

He therefore went straight to Bernard Hawthorne's lodgings and told him what had happened, whereupon the young minister became much agitated and confused. Mr. Jory asked him to explain, but this he refused to do.

Upon this, Mr. Jory, as superintendent minister, began to take matters seriously. The young man was, to a large extent, under his control, and as a consequence was expected to give an account of himself.

"I wish to ask you a few questions, Mr. Hawthorne," said Mr. Jory.

"Very well," replied the young man.

"Will you tell me if you are engaged to Miss Mary Clitheroe?"

"No, I do not feel disposed to tell you," he replied.

"Will you tell me the name of this young lady to whom you have been writing, and whose letter has fallen into my hands?"

A look half of pain and half of amusement came on the young minister's face.

"No, I cannot tell you that either," he answered.

"I am afraid you do not regard this matter with sufficient seriousness," said Mr. Jory.

"I think I do," was his answer.

"But you refuse to make any explanation?"

"Absolutely."

"Then I am afraid I shall be obliged to consider my duties as superintendent."

"By all means consider them."

After this Mr. Jory came to me as senior circuit steward, and as a member of the Executive Committee. He told me what had taken place, and asked my advice. The end of the whole business was that we felt it our duty to bring this, as well as the other matters I have mentioned, before the Executive Committee, so that questions of such grave importance might be properly considered.

As I have said, the Committee met in the vestry, or, as it is often called, the church parlour of St. George's Chapel, Bradburn, and the seats and tables were placed in semicircular fashion, so that both the chairman and Mr. Hawthorne could be seen by each member without difficulty. The Rev. Robert Richardson was

President that year, and, as everyone knows, he is one of the wittiest, one of the ablest, as well as one of the most far-seeing men Methodism has ever produced.

After certain preliminaries had been discussed, Mr. Hawthorne was called in. I watched the President's face as he entered, and noticed the twinkle in his eyes as he scrutinised him. I could not help seeing that the President was favourably impressed, and although at that time I had no leanings towards the young man, I could not deny that he had a striking appearance.

I am not much of a tailor's man myself, but I noticed that he was well dressed, and carried himself with perfect ease. There were no marks of the cleric upon him, but he looked every inch a gentleman.

"Mr. Hawthorne," said the President, "you of course know that several charges have been preferred against you, and that you have been asked to come here to-day to make whatever explanation you may feel disposed to offer. I am sure I have no need to remind you that this is a perfectly friendly gathering, and I moreover may assure you that I personally hope you have not *consciously* done anything which you feel to be wrong. Still, charges have been brought against you which must be examined, both for your own sake and for the sake of our churches. There is only one other thing I wish to say just now, and it is this: We meet *in camera*. Nothing that is said here will be known to the world except with your own consent; consequently, I hope you will speak freely."

Mr. Hawthorne, who had remained standing all the time the President was speaking, gave that peculiar shrug of the shoulders which I knew manifested

impatience. To judge from his face, any one might think that he was the aggrieved party, and that he resented what he regarded as an unwarrantable liberty with his private affairs. I saw that his eyes flashed, while his lips contracted as though he were determined to make no single concession.

"I am obliged for your kindness, Mr. President," he said quietly.

"Will you sit down?"

"Thank you."

"I presume you have had a copy of the complaints which have been made against you?"

"Yes, Mr. President."

"Do you admit their truth?"

"It is difficult to say 'yes' or 'no,' Mr. President, in answer to your query, for in either case the reply would convey more than the absolute truth."

"Then we had better take them *seriatim*?"

"Thank you."

I must confess that I was angered at the cool way in which he regarded us all. He did not seem to realise that he was brought before the leading officials of a most important religious body. He was as cool as the proverbial soldier on parade, and he seemed to look on many of us as mere nobodies. I had often been annoyed at the way in which he had treated me, his senior circuit steward, for, as this history will show, I am not a man to be treated lightly; but I could forgive this more easily than his *sang froid*, as I believe the French call it, before the President.

To be perfectly candid, I think the President treated the first three charges too lightly. I expected him to maintain with more rigour the authority of the superintendent minister and the circuit steward. I

thought he would have been more jealous for the orthodoxy of our ministry. Still, I could say nothing; after all the President is President.

"The first charge against you is that you have conducted services in an unusual manner, in spite of the advice, and even the commands, of those who are in authority over you."

"Yes, Mr. President."

"Is the charge true?"

"Perfectly true."

"Well, what have you to say in extenuation of your conduct?"

"Nothing, save this: the church had been empty, while hundreds of the young men who had been associated with our Sunday School had been going to the dogs. I wished to bring them back to the church. The old methods had failed, and so——"

"You thought yourself wiser than your elders?"

"Exactly."

"And what has been the result of your wisdom?"

"I will leave others to reply."

On being asked to give the necessary information, I urged that while a number of young men had been attracted, there had been great discontent among our best people. That wrong methods could never in the long run have good results, and that not only had Mr. Hawthorne defied his superintendent and his senior steward, but he had defied the usages of Methodism.

I put my case well—I know I did. For not only am I the circuit steward, but I am a local preacher of many years' standing, and therefore know how to arrange my thoughts. My outlines of sermons have been regarded as models of perfection in our homiletical

class, and I am a ready speaker. I say this boldly, let who will say otherwise. But the President paid very little heed, for after a long discussion and many explanations, he said, with a smile,—

“I think we may pass on, brethren.”

Next came the theological question, and here again he was very lax. I repeat it, even although he was President. It is true Mr. Hawthorne showed a little repentance under this head. He said he had been labouring under a wrong impression, that he had been doubtless unwise in introducing questions of Biblical criticism in the pulpit before having thoroughly mastered them himself. That he had accepted as settled what the best scholars regarded as *sub judice*.

“In short, you believe in the authority of the Bible and the fundamentals of Christianity?” said the President.

“Profoundly,” he replied.

Some wanted to interpose here, and to ask what he meant by the “authority of the Bible” and the “fundamentals of Christianity,” but the President did not encourage them. Indeed, did I not know him to be absolutely sound in the faith, I should have been tempted to doubt his orthodoxy. Still, truth is truth, and again I say he seemed inclined to smooth over these matters too lightly.

“The young man has simply been having spiritual and theological measles,” he said, with a merry twinkle in his eyes. “We all have them in our time, and I think he’s getting through them very well.”

We did not say much in reply to this; but I knew that many of the Committee did not share the President’s views.

Presently we came on to the third question. Mr.

Hawthorne had made friends with freethinkers and atheists. He had invited them to his lodgings, he had gone with them to their clubs, he had smoked with them, and he had been seen in company, more than once, with those of known bad character. This had caused much scandal in the town; it had made our oldest members hold up their hands in pious horror.

"What have you to say to this, Mr. Hawthorne? Is the charge true?"

"Perfectly true."

"What have you to say in self-defence?"

"I believe in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, sir."

Doubtless he scored a point, that is from the standpoint of the superficial observer; but his answer did not help his case. I asked to be allowed to put a few questions to him, and I am sorry to say the President refused my request. I do not deny that no one believed Mr. Hawthorne to be guilty of favouring atheism or bad living. I admit, moreover, that he was said to have had a good influence upon these people; but what, I asked, was to become of the Body, if our ministers were allowed to consort with such characters without protest? Still, I remembered that the whole case would have to be thrashed out after the examination was over, so I, with the others, had to be content to wait. Besides, if the truth must be told, I believe we were all willing to hurry through these matters so that we might get to the two last charges. After all, it was here that the great interest lay; and I noticed that even the President, who, I could not help thinking, favoured the young man, grew grave when the question of the women came forward.

"What do you say in relation to charge number four, Mr. Hawthorne?" he said presently,

"Nothing, sir."

"You admit its truth?"

"I admit nothing, sir."

"Do you deny it, then?"

"I deny nothing, sir."

I could see that the young man's high-handedness was having its effect upon him.

"Come, Mr. Hawthorne," he said gravely: "I have been trying to see all I can of your side of the case. I recognise that you are a young man, and that with the impetuosity of youth you have been led to act in opposition to the usages of our churches. But this is a grave matter, and I advise you to speak freely."

Mr. Hawthorne remained silent.

"Come now, Mr. Hawthorne, the fourth and fifth charges must be taken together; because if you are engaged to Miss Clitheroe, there is grave culpability in the act of writing love-letters to another lady. *Are you engaged to Miss Clitheroe?*"

"You must excuse me if I decline to answer."

"You know what your silence will imply?"

"I cannot help that, sir. I have no right, neither do I think the Committee has the right, to discuss Miss Clitheroe. It is nothing to you that she is said to be an atheist; it is nothing to you that she is supposed to share the ungodly views attributed to her father. If I seek a wife, I seek her for myself."

"That is true in a sense, and only in a sense," replied the President. "With your choice as an individual we have nothing to do: with your choice as one of our ministers we have a great deal to do. Concerning the young lady's birth, position, mental attainments, and all such matters, we say nothing, but—and I am assuming for the moment that you are

engaged to her—if she is a pronounced unbeliever, if she aids her father in bringing contumely upon the churches, then we have a *right* to interfere. When we reach this point, the position of our Church is touched. You are, of course, aware that we have a regulation in relation to our probationers' matrimonial engagements. We claim the right of knowing that the minister's *fiancée* shall be morally fitted."

"And who dares say a word against Miss Clitheroe's moral character?" asked Bernard Hawthorne, with flashing eyes.

For a moment the young man's anger silenced us. After all, I had never heard a word breathed against Miss Mary Clitheroe's moral character. She stood high in the social world at Lynford—almost as high as the Nevilles. Hugh Clitheroe was a wealthy man, while Rough Leigh was a fine old mansion. Much as we disliked their antagonism to the churches and to religion, no one had ever breathed a word about their uprightness and purity of life.

"No one," replied the President. "I was only making a general statement. But, after all, that is not now the whole question. Whether you are engaged to her or not, it is said that you have acted towards her as if such were the case. Is that a fact?"

"I cannot answer gossip."

"But for the good name of our Church I must persist. Have you given the people reason to believe you are engaged to her?"

But Bernard Hawthorne did not answer a word.

"Very well," continued the President, "we must draw our inferences in the light of your silence. Now we come to the other matter. You, while paying marked

attention to Miss Clitheroe, have been writing love-letters to a young lady in London. You admit this?"

Still he was silent.

"You have written more than one letter?"

"Yes."

"Of a similar nature?"

"Yes."

"Who is this lady?"

"You must excuse me if I decline to make any explanations."

"Does Miss Clitheroe know of this correspondence?"

"I decline to answer."

"This person, whose name we do not know, has written to you several times?"

"Yes."

"In the letter we know of, you urged her to meet you. Of course you have met her?"

Silence.

"We are waiting for an answer."

"I would rather not answer."

"Excuse me if I seem inquisitorial. You are one of our ministers, and the good name of our Church is at stake. Do you intend to marry Miss Clitheroe?"

A far-away look came into the young minister's eyes, as though he were questioning himself.

"Sometimes," he said presently; and then, as if detecting himself in a grave error, he said hurriedly, almost angrily, "that is—I decline to answer: it—it is my affair, not yours."

"In short, you admit the charges, and decline to make any explanations?"

"Exactly."

"Do you think you have been acting as a man of honour?"

"I have done nothing that I regard as dishonourable."

"Your conscience does not upbraid you?"

"Not a whit."

"Could you explain these matters if you would—I mean in a way that would satisfy the Committee?"

He drew himself up proudly, and looked around.

"I might satisfy *you*, Mr. President," he said, with meaning emphasis.

"Why me, and not the Committee?"

"I would rather not attempt a reply."

"Let me put another question. You still desire to remain in our ministry?"

"Very much."

"But you refuse to make any explanation of the charges which, without explanation—well—will put the Committee in a difficult situation?"

"I am not able to give the explanations you wish. You must excuse me, Mr. President, but no man with self-respect would drag a lady's name before—that is, I decline to say more."

A good many other questions were asked, but in point of fact the examination practically ended here. Mr. Hawthorne was asked to retire, and the Committee was left to discuss the grave question which faced it, viz., what should be done with the young minister?

Now it was my intention to have recorded the findings of the Committee, and to have narrated the events which subsequently took place in Lynford. I find, however, that such a method of writing this history would be unsatisfactory. Since the meeting I have described, many startling events have been revealed to me, events so strange that for some time I could scarcely believe them. Nevertheless, it is in the light of these events that the story of Bernard

Hawthorne ought to be told. I have, therefore, determined to tell of his coming to Lynford, and of those things which happened prior to his appearing before the Committee.

In order to do this I shall have to describe many of the inner workings of Methodist life. I shall, it may be, have to hold even myself up to ridicule, and to chronicle certain things only interesting to Methodist readers. Nevertheless, I will tell this story faithfully, even although I demonstrate the fact that truth is stranger than fiction.

CHAPTER II

HOW WE INVITED A MINISTER

THE leaders at Wesley Chapel had for a long time agitated for a minister of their own. You see, although Wesley Chapel is in name the head of the circuit, it had for a long time been looked upon as a forlorn hope. It is situated in the heart of Lynford, and although it flourished grandly when I was a boy, it had of late years become emptier and emptier owing to the fact that the people had gone farther and farther out of the town to live. The heart of Lynford is now given over to warehouses, shops, offices, and slums, and as a consequence chapel-going people find it wearisome to come so far on Sundays. Of course, on great occasions we made a big show, but ordinarily we were in a bad way. The old families still paid for their pews, but occupied them only seldom, so that the most faithful of us looked very sorrowful.

Not that Methodism was neglectful of the people who moved away. On the contrary, we built large, handsome chapels, where very respectable congregations gathered, and to which the superintendent minister gave his energies; but all this weakened rather than strengthened Wesley.

At length we determined to invite a young man

who should give the main portion of his time to Wesley, and Wesley alone. It was true he was to be under the supervision of Mr. Jory; all the same he was to be regarded as the Wesley minister, and as a consequence would be largely guided by the Wesley Leaders' Meeting.

Being a circuit, however, and true to the best traditions of Methodism, this young man was to be invited by the circuit, and not by Wesley Church. I am making this plain, in order that the few people who may not know the usages of our denomination may not be under a wrong impression. Perhaps, indeed, I had better go farther still, and explain that a "circuit" is a number of Methodist churches in a given district. All these churches are under the control of the Quarterly Meeting, and the Quarterly Meeting is a meeting held four times a year, to which are sent the leading people belonging to the circuit.

I hope I may be pardoned for giving this information, because it seems to me just as useless as to say that London is the capital of England. Still, there are ignorant people in the world, and one has a duty to perform in lightening their darkness.

Of course I need not enlarge on the fact that Methodist preachers are far ahead of any others. That goes without saying. I am anything but a narrow man, and will admit that there may be good preachers among the Independents and Baptists, or even in the Established Church, although they would all be wise if they gave up their fads and came over in a body to our denomination. But as for comparing the preachers of these sects with our preachers,—well, it would be like comparing skim milk with good cream. Why, the other day I went to hear the Bishop of the Diocese,

and I could not help feeling sorry for the congregation. Such poor, watery stuff you never heard. As I said to one of our local preachers, what a pity it was we couldn't get the Bishop to one of our local preachers' homiletical classes: it would have done him a world of good. But there, the man was more to be pitied than blamed.

But to return to the Quarterly Meeting, whose chief business it was to invite a young preacher for Wesley Chapel, for it is here that this history really commences. There were, including local preachers—who, as everyone knows, have a seat in the Quarterly Meeting—fifty-eight of us present, and Mr. Jory, the superintendent minister, had brought with him the names of half a dozen men who, he thought, might suit us. The ordinary business was gone through very quickly, for every one of us wanted to get to the *real* business at once. For that reason Smallcoats society got off remarkably easy. Their subscription to the Quarterly Board is £2 17s. 6d., and as the representative brought only £2 15s., they were 2s. 6d. in arrears. Under ordinary circumstances that matter would have taken an hour to settle, and Richard Best would have spoken at least twenty minutes on the duty of churches. But, as I say, we were so anxious to get to the question of the invitation of the minister, that not a word was said about it, although I can assure you plenty was said at the next meeting.

“The ordinary agenda is gone through, brethren,” said Mr. Jory: “is there any matter arising therefrom which you wish to discuss?”

Silence reigned.

Mr. Jory turned and looked at me, who, as circuit steward, had a seat at his right hand.

"Any matter you wish to bring forward, Brother Sutcliffe?"

I shook my head, for I had pity on the brethren who wished to get to *the* question of the evening.

"Well, then," went on Mr. Jory, "we come to the matter of inviting a young man as minister for Wesley Chapel. I know it is practically settled that we do invite one, but we must do things in order. It is necessary that this meeting confirm the findings of previous meetings—viz., that a young man be invited."

In less than three-quarters of a minute it was proposed, seconded, and carried that a young man be invited. I never knew anything done so quickly before, for usually, although a thing may have been discussed for twelve months, and fully decided, we always make a point of airing our views at the Quarterly Meeting. Indeed, so quickly was this resolution carried, that, as a matter of habit, I felt like getting up, and protesting against anything being done hurriedly.

However, the spirit of the meeting got hold of me, and I voted with the rest.

"The question now is," said Mr. Jory, "who are we to invite? I would suggest that we have a probationer, and then leave the matter in the hands of the Conference, and let them send who they like."

Instantly there was almost universal dissent. Such a course of procedure would take away the cream of the business. We might as well belong to the Established Church, and have any man that the Bishop felt disposed to send.

"No, no," said John William Baxter, a retired weaver. "No, Mr. Chairman, that'll noan do for Wesley. We mun ha' the man we choose for wursen."

"But if you invite a man, you will have to pay him

a full Connexion minister's salary," urged the superintendent.

This was weighty ; still, we were prepared to pay a few more pounds a year for the man of our choice.

"Then again," urged the minister, "the Conference may not allow you a man in full connexion."

"That'll noan do," remarked John William Baxter ; "we've been promised that if possible we shall have a man after next Conference, and the President told me hisself that we should stand a far better chance if we could manage to invite some one in full connexion."

After this there were a great many Connexional rules discussed, and, if I may say so, the manifestation of a certain amount of religious warmth. The meeting was practically unanimous, however, that the man we had should be chosen by ourselves, and not one sent by the Conference. Of course it is customary, when obtaining an additional minister, to have a young man on probation, sent by Conference ; but then we at Wesley are nothing if not original.

I saw, however, that the meeting was getting at six-and-thirties, and so to put the matter in order I said a few words.

"Brethren," I said, "there are two ways of inviting a man. One is to invite a full connexion minister by writing to the man himself, the other is to give our superintendent instructions, so that when he goes to Conference he can get the man we want. That being so, it is we who do the inviting.

"The next thing to consider is the kind of man we want, and after carefully deciding upon the qualities we require in a minister, we can proceed to discuss what men possess those qualities."

"Thank you, Brother Sutcliffe," said Mr. Jory, "you

have put the matter in a nutshell!" whereupon I felt gratified, for Mr. Jory is not a strong man, and I felt glad he had some one at his side who could help him out of his difficulties.

I had now set the ball rolling, and during the next half-hour many speeches were made as to the kind of man we wanted. For be it known that while Methodist ministers are *all* good, some are better than others.

The first speech was made by a weaver, a man about forty years of age, who was also a local preacher.

"Personally," he said, "I doan't see what ye want o' anuther parson. You've got the best local praichers i' Lynford, and local praichers are better nor th' itinerants ony day. Still, seein' as 'ow you've settled to pay for anuther parson, I'll give my opinion as to the man we mun geet.

"First, he mun be a good praicher; second, he mun be a good organiser; third, he mun be a good visitor; fourth, he mun be a good social man; fifth, he mun be a good public man; sixth, he mun be a learned man, for I be deead agin ignorant men goin' into th' pulpits; seventh, he mun be able to hold 'is oan agin all th' freethinkers, and——"

"Mr. Cheerman," said George Bottle, who is a man none of us can understand, "I beg pardon, but if we want someone with oaf (half) the qualities what Brother Bone wants, I propose as 'ow we write and invite the Archangel Gabriel right away."

A general laugh followed this remark, which the chairman silenced with solemn words.

"We are here on solemn business, brethren," he said, "and we must deal with it in the right spirit."

"Hear, hear," said Cornelius Tinklin, a young local preacher who had just been admitted to full plan, and

who, in order to pass his examination, had been reading a book entitled "Theology Made Easy," which he had bought new for ninepence. "Mr. Chairman, I quite agree with Brother Bone: we must have all the qualifications he says, and we must have more. We want a theologian. When have we had a sermon on the Eternal Sonship, or the Connection between St. John's Visions and the Church of Rome?"

"Yi," said a pork butcher, "we mun have a larned man. The lads and lasses know so mich about figgerin', and thet sort of thing, that we mun have a larned parson."

"May I ask how much you are prepared to pay for all these qualifications?" asked a young manufacturer named Herbert Stanley.

I may say here that Herbert Stanley is one of the best educated men in the church. He was sent to the Cambridge University when he was nineteen years of age, and he took a good degree. He also belongs to one of the best families in the town, and is greatly respected. All the same, I never liked him. You can never tell whether he is in earnest, and he has for years been a thorn in the side of the older men. It was for this reason that I took upon myself to reply to him.

"As we are inviting a man to work in a decaying church," I said, "we cannot afford a large salary. We must, therefore, pay the minimum. Ninety pounds a year for a probationer, and one hundred and thirty for a full connexion man. Of course," I went on, "if we invite a full connexion man we must be careful that he is unmarried, otherwise we shall be required to furnish a house for him."

"I am much moved by this generosity," said Herbert Stanley. "Just fancy! ninety pounds a year is what a six-loom weaver can earn; and for this you want

a man who knows Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. You also require a minister who is a good preacher, organiser, visitor, public man, social man, and a few other things besides. I can assure you that you'll get hundreds of applications."

"May I remind Brother Stanley that preachers don't preach for money, but to save souls?" I said severely.

"Certainly, and the reminder is necessary," said the young man, in a tone I could not understand.

"For my own part," said John Ribstone, the cow-keeper, "aw don't see as 'ow we want a man wi' larnin'. We've got too mich larnin'. What we want is th' owd Gospel, what a wayfarin' man, though a fool, need not err therein."

There were several remarks after this order, but we presently settled that we must secure a man having the qualifications which Brother Bone had mentioned, and after this we came to the question which was the marrow of the whole matter—viz., who was he, and where was he to be found?

"I have here," said Mr. Jory, "the names of several men. I have made inquiries about them, and I have no doubt that when I go to Conference I can, by speaking to the chairman of the Stationing Committee, get any one of them."

"Are they probationers?" I asked.

"Yes," replied the superintendent.

"Have you the names of any others who are in full connexion, and who are not fixed for next year?" I queried.

"Yes," he replied, "I have; and two of them are unmarried."

"Tell us what you know about them, if you please," I said.

Thereupon Mr. Jory gave us a history of several men, telling us of their college career, how they had been received, where they had gone preaching, their age, their appearance, and many other matters.

When he had finished there was a silence for several seconds, which was broken by Herbert Stanley.

"It seems to me, Mr. Chairman," he said, "that all these men are of about equal value. One man has what the other hasn't, and if you tot up their merits and demerits one is as good as the other. I suggest that we invite the whole batch of them to preach. Let each of them show his samples, and then we shall be able to judge between them."

The man irritated me, and I felt that I must put him down.

"Mr. Chairman," I said in my severest tones, "will it not be well for Brother Stanley to remember that we are dealing with a very important matter? Again, I would remind him that we are Methodists, and not Independents nor Baptists. It *may* be necessary for their men to come and preach trial sermons, for they are not of the same calibre as ours. Let us remember that every Methodist preacher has to go, as it were, through a very fine sieve. He has to be a local preacher for a lengthy term, he has to pass through a very severe ordeal at college, he has to pass many examinations, and has to thoroughly satisfy his examiners and the Conference before he is admitted into the ministry. Because of this I would never consent for a Methodist preacher to come and preach a trial sermon like one of them."

But even this did not silence him.

"I suppose we enter into an obligation to continue taking a preacher when we get one appointed?" he asked.

“Certainly,” said Mr. Jory.

“Then why not get some Congregational minister who is without a charge?” he asked. “We should then be under no obligation to the denomination.”

This was too much for me.

“What!” I cried, “have a minister who isn’t a Methodist ministering at Wesley Chapel! The thing is outrageous! Better sell the place than be a traitor to the denomination. Besides, the Conference would never allow it. Study Connexional rules, Brother Stanley! It is a pity that the son of a loyal Methodist should betray such ignorance, and show such a lack of loyalty.”

“Besides,” said Brother Bone, “I don’t want a man as we’ve ’eerd praich. A lot o’ th’ interest in havin’ a new passon is because we’ve never set eyes on ’im.”

Upon this old Jonathan Giles got up. Jonathan has been town missionary in Lynford for nearly fifty years, and everybody loves him.

“Mr. Chairman,” he said, “I agree with a lot as has been said. Like Brother Sutcliffe, I am of the opinion that Methodist preachers needn’t stand behind anybody, church or chapel; all th’ same, some are better than others. I don’t believe in trial sermons, simply because no one can judge of a man by them, neither do I believe in buying a pig in a poke. Now, if yo’ll just listen a minute, I think I can ’elp a bit. Three week coom Sunday I wer’ down to Hempden Cross, where my Sarah Maria, who was married to William Blake’s lad, lives. So I went to th’ Methody Chapel, and I heerd a felly what’s been mentioned to-nect.”

“Ay, ay,” cried at least a dozen; “who wur it, Jonathan?”

"It wur 'im as is called the Reverend Josiah Williamson."

"That's a name as'll look middlin' on th' notice board," said Brother Bone; "but can 'ee praich, Jonathan?"

"Ay, he can," replied Jonathan: "ever so middlin'."

"Ay, and what wur his text?"

"It wur 'Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah?'" said Jonathan.

"Ay, and how did he deal with it?"

"First he dealed with Edom," said Jonathan; "second, he dealed with the person as comed from Edom; third he dealed with the garments, as were dyed; and fourth, the purpose and power of the person, mighty to save."

"And he brought out things 'new and old,' did he?" asked Brother Bone.

"And was he sound in his doctrine?" asked Cornelius Tinklin, who was strong on this point.

"Ay, he preached salvation from sin," remarked Jonathan.

"But did he explain the atonement? Did he show how it depended on the Eternal Sonship?"

"How old art 'a, Brother Tinklin?" asked Jonathan.

"Twenty next birthday," replied the young local preacher.

"Ay, well, the Reverend Josiah Williamson is twenty-eight."

"Well, and what has that to do with it?"

"Why, he's old enough not to tackle a subject which he can't understand," replied Jonathan.

"What do you mean?" asked Brother Tinklin.

"Nothing, except I 'cerd thee try to praich on that subject laast Sunday neet," replied Jonathan, lapsing into Lancashire.

I was not sorry to hear this from Jonathan, for that young Cornelius Tinklin gets unbearable at times. No doubt local preachers are the life and soul of Methodism. Being a local preacher myself (in addition to holding other high offices), I ought to know; all the same, young local preachers between eighteen and twenty-five take a great deal on them. Cornelius, being barely twenty, and having only just passed for "full plan," thought he could set the world right. Of this I am sure: if the Apostle Paul could come back to earth again, Cornelius would feel it his duty to set him right on matters of theology.

Of course there was a bit of a laugh at old Jonathan's sally; but Brother Bone, who coached Cornelius for his examination, rose to his feet and launched forth into a speech.

"It may be that our young brother took a big subject," he remarked; "all the same, he axed a question wot's to the point. For my part, I doan't think mich on the outline what Brother Giles hev related. I've 'eerd mony better in our local preachers' homiletical class. It wants grip, Mr. Cheerman, and it wants insight into th' marrow of th' subject."

"Well, and how would you deal with it, Brother Bone?" asked Mr. Jory.

"Weel, I canna say on th' spur o' th' moment, but it lacks grip, thet's wot I think on it. And aw'd like to ax a question. How mony conversions wur theer?"

"Aw doan't know," said Jonathan—"aw didn' stay to th' prayer-mectin'; but he gave a powerful appeal, and the people wur fair suited."

"Is he in full connexion?" asked a man who went by the name of "Kneepads." His real name is Henry Scott, but he has been known as Kneepads for thirty

years. He is in the furnishing and house-painting line, and when he is asked to come and measure a room for a new carpet, he comes and looks at it for about an hour, and after making many calculations, and muttering to himself very fiercely, he invariably says: "I can't tell yo' exactly how much stuff it'll tak' to cover yon floor. A man needs kneepads to measure sich a room; aw'll geet my knec-pads, and then I'll let yo' know." Kneepads was said to be the slowest man in Lynford, until another, who was in the same business, came from Grayburn, of whom I shall have to speak presently.

"Yes, he's in full connexion," said Mr. Jory; "but he's not married, neither is he likely to be, so he'll not need a house."

"He's in full connexion, but not married?" queried Kneepads, slowly.

"Yes, that is so," replied Mr. Jory.

"Then I mak' nowt on him," remarked Kneepads solemnly. "Nowt, Mester Cheerman: a chap wot con geet wed, and doan't geet wed, 'll be no good i' Wesley."

As I expected, this drew forth a speech from Kneepads' rival, who had come from Grayburn. This brother's name was Ebenezer Astick, but he was never known by this name. As I said just now, Kneepads was said for many years to be the slowest man in Lynford, but when Brother Astick came he no longer had this distinction. Ebenezer Astick was slower, and so he was called "Moreso." Both were honest, conscientious men, and both did their work well, but if England is searched all over, two slower men cannot be found. Both stoop a great deal, and both are flat-footed, but they did not get their names from this

cause. They do most of the house decorating in the town, and when anyone is having his house painted, we naturally ask the question :

“Who art a havin’, then, th’ owd Kneepads or th’ owd Moreso?”

In spite of this, however, both of them pride themselves on their quickness in doing their work, and each looks on the other with contempt.

“Mester Cheerman,” said Moreso, “Aw propoase that we invite this Reverend Josiah—what do yo’ call ’im, Jonathan?”

“Williamson.”

“Yi, Williamson. Aw propoase that we invite him right off. Aw think ’ce’ll just suit us. A man as congeet married an’ doan’t is a man of character. Not but what ony man can geet a woman if ’e wants, whether he’s got brass eno’ or whether ’e ain’t; but when a praicher is entitled to a praicher’s house, and doan’t geet wed, ’e’s got summat in ’im. Aw’m a bachelor mysen, an’ aw knaw.”

Whether we regarded Moreso’s arguments as convincing or not, I know not, or whether it was because Mr. Williamson was in full connexion, and still did not want a house, I know not, but after an hour’s discussion his name stood first on the list, much to Kneepads’ disgust.

The meeting broke up with the understanding that the Reverend Josiah Williamson should be invited, and that if he did not feel disposed to come, Mr. Jory should secure at the Conference one of the other men whose names and qualifications we had discussed. We had no doubt, however, but that Mr. Williamson would come, for who would think of refusing to come to Wesley Church, Lynford?

"The place 'll 'ave to be sold," said Kneepads. "I tell yo', I mak' nothin' on 'im ; a chap as is entitled to geet married and doan't is nowt but a ninny."

"Aw've 'opes o' Wesley now," said Moreso ; "yon chap 'll geet th' place full, and a power o' good 'll be done. A chap as can resist the women, can resist the devil hissself, and must have a strength o' will aboon middlin'. Aw'm a bachelor mysen, an' aw know."

Naturally, we took sides with Moreso, although we did not fall in with his reasoning ; and I am told that during the next few months far more Methodists went to Moreso with their work than to Kneepads.

But, as events proved, all our plans in relation to Mr. Williamson came to naught, neither did we get any of the men we discussed. When Conference was held, Mr. Jory found that they were all engaged elsewhere, and we presently heard that a young man called Bernard Hawthorne, of whom we knew nothing, and whose name we had never even heard before, was appointed to Wesley.

"I'm glad on it," said Kneepads, slowly and solemnly. "I've 'opes o' Wesley yet. It's true he's not married, but that's noan his fault. He's not i' full connexion."

"Aw'll noan despair," said Moreso, "he's noan wed yet, and if he can resist th' lasses he'll do good to Wesley."

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE NEW MINISTER

I THINK I ought to say here that the *personnel* of the Quarterly Meeting does not represent Methodism in the Lynford Circuit. I mention this because it may be thought that we are an ignorant, uneducated people. The truth is that what is sometimes called the "better end" of our people seldom come to official meetings. They say they have no time to waste in discussing rules, nor do they find any profit in hearing colliers and weavers discussing theology. Personally, I have no sympathy with these views. Nevertheless, the fact remains that while the operatives and such-like attend regularly, the manufacturers, lawyers, and doctors prefer playing golf and other worldly games. What I am bound to say now is that the business of the circuit was conducted, with a few exceptions, by the working people, and not their employers.

Of course Herbert Stanley came, but, as I have said, he was a hindrance rather than a help, and caused no end of trouble by his remarks. It is a good thing that I was never absent from the meetings, or I don't know how he could have been managed at all. Even as it was, he had a great deal of influence. He belonged to one of the best families in the town, and his college

training helped him to put his notions in such a pleasant light that even I had great difficulty at times in showing up his fallacies.

I need scarcely remark that during the interval between Conference and the coming of Mr. Hawthorne to the circuit, we took no end of trouble to find out all we could about him. All the women-folk wanted to know if he had any matrimonial engagements. Some, indeed, went so far as to write to people who lived near his home, and asked them to make inquiries. In this, however, they were entirely unsuccessful. Some reports came telling us that he was engaged to be married, although no one knew the name of the young lady; while on the other hand we heard that not only was he not engaged, but that he was a sort of woman hater.

These conflicting statements, as may be imagined, roused our curiosity to the highest pitch, and I know on good authority that no less than seventeen young women got new dresses in view of his first Sunday at Wesley.

This, however, we did discover. He was the only son of a gentleman farmer, who set great store on him. We found out that Mr. Hawthorne, senior, was greatly incensed at his son becoming a Methodist minister, even although he was a member of society himself; but his mother encouraged her son in the idea, and persuaded her husband to pay for his college career. We found out from several sources that old Mr. Hawthorne farmed a thousand acres of his own land, and was quite a squire in the parish.

Now this pleased us all very much, and the news was especially welcome to the young men who belonged to the good families. If he was from that

class, they said, he would be able to play golf and tennis, and would not object to a hand at whist sometimes of an evening.

Although we tried our best, however, we never found out anything really definite about him, except that he was supposed to be very clever, and took the first place in the College. Personally I was very glad of this, but men like Brother Bone made light of it.

"Ony fool can pass examinations," he remarked. "Why, aw've knawed curates and Independent parsons as 'av' ed B.A.'s and M.A.'s by the score, an' they've noan bin able to praich a bit. Why, just think of Jonathan Giles: he couldn't read till he wur twenty-three, and yet see what conversions he can geet."

At last the day came when he was appointed to preach at Wesley for the first time, and according to the custom of the circuit I arranged as circuit steward for him to come to my house for dinner. Of course I did not write and tell him this, as I thought he would know what would be expected of him.

"See that you get a good dinner," I said to my wife as I went out of the house at five minutes past ten.

"Yi, I'll see to that," said my wife, who worked in a mill when she was a girl, and has never lost her Lancashire dialect. "I oap he's got a good appetite, for I hate a chap as is finickin' with his mait."

"He'll be able to eat what you cook," I said; for although I am not the one who ought to say it, there is no better cook in Lynford than my wife.

"I should a liked to 'ave gone," she said: "I always like to sample a chap's first sermon, but I can noan trust to Mary to geet 'im anything fit t' ait."

"I don't expect much," I said, "and I don't think he's acted as a young probationer ought to act."

"Ay, weel, I think noan the worse o' th' lad for bein' independent," said my wife, who, I am sorry to say, liked to disagree with me.

The matters I had in my mind were these: first, he had refused to go into the lodgings I had secured for him, declaring as his reason that he preferred to choose his own; and, second, he had not written to tell me the time of his arrival. He had communicated with the secretary, saying he had arranged to stay with Mr. Jory, and that he would send him a wire later on, telling him the time of his arrival.

I say I did not like this, for I think he should have gone to the lodgings I had got for him, and even if he did not, he should have arranged to stay with me, instead of the superintendent minister. The truth is, I had a sort of premonition that this Mr. Bernard Hawthorne would give us trouble, and as I walked down to Wesley I made up my mind as to my methods of dealing with him.

"To say the least about the matter, it is strange that even the circuit steward should never have seen the new minister," I said to myself, "and I shall let him know that this kind of thing must not go on."

I do not think Mr. Jory acted kindly, for I fully expected to be invited to his house on the Saturday night to meet Mr. Hawthorne. But although I gave him two or three broad hints, no invitation came, and as I did not know the train by which he was to travel, I could not meet him at the station. I was told afterwards that he did not get to Lynford until late, and that he hired a cab and drove straight to Mr. Jory's house.

I saw the cabman afterwards, who told me that he had given him sixpence more than his fare.

I was so displeased with his behaviour that I did not go straight in to the vestry as usual, but took my seat in the chapel as though I were an ordinary member. I saw that a very good congregation had gathered, and that every eye was turned towards the vestry door by which he would presently enter the pulpit. The young women I have mentioned were all there in their new dresses, and looked as nice as any lasses you can find in Lancashire. In saying that, I have boxed the compass, for if you go from one end of England to another you can find no lasses like ours.

"I wonder how he'll feel at not seeing the senior circuit steward in the vestry to meet him!" I said to myself, and then I heard the town-hall clock chiming for half-past ten. It had barely finished when the chapel-keeper went up the pulpit steps with the Bible and hymn-book, and then, when he came down again, the new minister walked into the pulpit. Six or seven hundred pairs of eyes were full upon him; I heard a sort of suppressed breathing go over the chapel, and then a kind of little gasp.

"Yon's only a lad!" I heard whispered, and then we waited while he bent over his Bible in prayer.

Presently he lifted his head and looked around the chapel, enabling us at the same time to get a good look at him.

The people had spoken the truth—he *was* only a lad; and yet he showed no fear. He did not seem to realise that the quality of Lynford was there to hear him: the fact that not only the leading families of the Wesley Circuit were there, but people from Tudor, and Elim, and Bethany, and the other leading chapels in the town, did not appear to trouble him. No, he looked quietly around, as though he thought nothing of us.

As I have said, I had not been favourably impressed by his conduct, and yet I could not help feeling interested in him. True, he looked only a lad in some ways, and yet many things suggested that he was more than a lad. He was tall and well-grown, and to my surprise he was dressed just like an ordinary layman. He did not even wear the orthodox white necktie. All the same, he looked a gentleman—indeed, he impressed me as a young man of quality. Before I knew what I was about, I found myself comparing him with young Sir John Somerset, who came to Lynford some years ago to contest the seat in the Conservative interest. There was, as I may say, the same stamp of good breeding on him, and that something which I think the French people call *distingué*.

He seemed very young, younger indeed than he really was, for his age was twenty-six. Perhaps the fact that he wore no beard made him appear younger than he otherwise would have looked. At any rate, from the pulpit his clean-shaven face impressed us very much with his youthfulness.

“What a beautiful head of hair he has!” I heard a lass whisper close to me; and although I am not given to such trifles, I could not help admiring the mass of wavy dark brown hair that covered a well-shaped head.

But that which struck me most in his appearance was the quality of his eyes. He seemed not only to be looking at us, but through us. Even from where I sat, I could see their brilliancy, and, if I may so put it, their speaking power.

“That young man will cause a lot of trouble among the circuit officials,” I said to myself. “He will not be amenable to authority, he'll want to take his own line of

action, and be constantly discarding the traditions of Methodism."

He opened the hymnbook very composedly, and gave out the number of the hymn as calmly as if he had been a superintendent minister for forty years.

I am afraid that during the first part of the service there was but little thought of worship. Even through prayer-time many of us were thinking more of the young minister's voice than of the sacred act in which he was engaged. Not that he was not earnest himself. He was. There was a ring of sincerity in every word he uttered. His voice, too, was clear and resonant. And although I foresaw that we should have trouble with him, I could not help agreeing with those who spoke of him as "such a healthy, manly young fellow."

To put the matter briefly, he conducted the early part of the service very well. It was true he did not put as much feeling into his voice as I would have liked; and he read the Bible just as if he were reading Shakespeare, or any other worldly writer. All the same, I did not feel like finding fault. I remembered that he was a Methodist preacher, and that therefore he was a converted man, and had, moreover, satisfied the Examining Committee of the denomination. Besides, I was looking forward to the sermon, for that to me was the great test. When he gave out his text, therefore, I settled myself comfortably in my pew, and determined to weigh well every word he had to utter.

I rather fancied that he noticed me, for I am not a man to be passed over in a crowd, and I thought I saw him get a little nervous.

"Yes, young man," I thought, "be careful of what

you say. You've got the cream of the town here ; there are twelve local preachers in your congregation, and all of us know what good preaching means. No skim-milk, young man, and no watery broth. We want no milk for babes, but meat for strong men."

His text was a good one : "He saved others, Himself He cannot save."

"Plenty of room for you, young man," I thought—"plenty of room. Now then, let's have a taste of your quality."

I did not like his sermon. I say it plainly ; from end to end he missed the meaning of the text. I had preached from it myself all through the circuit, as well as in the town chapel at Grayburn, and had had many a good time with it. Indeed, if I must tell the truth, my crack sermon was built upon this passage, and therefore I do not speak as one not in a position to judge. I had read Barnes' notes, Matthew Henry's comments, as well as Dr. Clarke's remarks on it ; so, as I say, if I didn't know what it meant, who should ? If there are any who doubt this, I am prepared to submit my outline, so that they may judge for themselves.

Practically, all he said was that the text, although uttered as a condemnation, contained a great truth,—the greatest truth in life. That it lay at the heart of all salvation, and that no man could save others and save himself at the same time. That here lay the heart truth of Christ's atonement ; and that no man believed in the atonement in deed and in truth unless it could be said of him, "He saved others, himself he *would* not save."

Not that the sermon was not interesting. Far from it. You might have heard a pin drop all the time

he was preaching. He made us all feel mighty uncomfortable, too, and I found myself asking myself a lot of awkward questions; but then, it wasn't Methodist preaching, at least according to the ideas I had then.

"Never mind," I thought; "you will be going home to dinner with me presently, and I'll put you right, through the afternoon."

For, as I have said before, it is well known to everybody that it is a custom in our circuit for the new preacher to take his first Sunday's dinner at the circuit steward's house. Had it not been for this, I should very likely have called at Mr. Jory's the previous evening, even without an invitation.

When the service was over he came straight from the pulpit and walked through the chapel into the vestibule and began shaking hands with the people. I nodded to him as he passed me, but either he did not see me, or else he noticed that he had not suited me with his sermon, and therefore was afraid to speak.

"There are several corners as 'll have to be smoothed down," I reflected, as I found my way into the vestry. "With the superintendent-minister everything is different, but with a young probationer this is rather too much."

I said nothing to Jonas Bray or Isaac Holt, who were counting the collection, but waited quietly until he came in. When I stood close to him I felt less certain that I should be able to deal with him. There was a look in his eyes and a movement of his jaws which suggested a strength which I had not at first realised.

"Good morning, Mr. Hawthorne," I said.

"Good morning," he said, with a smile.

"I am Mr. Sutcliffe."

"Mr. Sutcliffe?" he repeated, as if he were trying to remember something.

"Yes, Caleb Sutcliffe, the senior circuit steward. As you know, I have written you."

"Oh yes, I remember now," he replied. "I thought I had come across your name somewhere. How are you?"

"I am very well," I said, noticing that by this time several others had come into the vestry.

"Nothing like beginning early," I thought, "and the young man had better know how things stand right away." Besides, I wanted the brethren who had gathered in the vestry to see how I expected to be treated.

"I didn't come into the vestry to meet you before the service," I said.

"Didn't you?" he asked blandly.

"No, I didn't; no doubt you noticed it?"

"No, I did not," he replied quite simply. "I should have been very pleased to see you,—but there, perhaps you were late?"

I saw the smile that passed over the faces of the brethren, and I knew they were hugely enjoying the situation.

"I am never late, Mr. Hawthorne," I said, "and I am the senior circuit steward."

"Yes, you told me so just now," he replied, "and now I remember. I saw your name on the 'plan.' What a glorious day it is, isn't it?"

It was no use, he would not see what I meant; and in spite of everything I could not help feeling that every one in the vestry was laughing at me.

"You go with me to dinner," I said, thinking of how I should have to talk very seriously to him when I had him alone.

"I beg your pardon?" he said in a questioning tone.

"You will go with me to dinner," I repeated, for I did not feel like standing any nonsense. "The new preacher always goes with the senior circuit steward to dinner on his first Sunday."

"What a pity you did not write *inviting* me a week or two ago!" he said quietly.

"Inviting you, Mr. Hawthorne!" I replied; "it is a rule of the circuit."

"A rule, Mr. Sutcliffe?"

"An unwritten one, Mr. Hawthorne," I said. "It is always well for the minister to get to know his circuit steward at once. A great deal of his comfort in a circuit depends on how he gets on with his steward."

"Oh," he said, "I did not come here for comfort. But it is a pity you did not write me, for about a fortnight ago I accepted an invitation to spend the afternoon with a friend of mine, Duncan Rutland, of Tudor Chapel."

"What!" I said, "accept an invitation to go with an Independent minister on your first Sunday?"

"Yes," he replied. "I have known Mr. Rutland for years."

"You do not mean this?"

"Why not? Mr. Rutland is not ill, is he? Ah, here he is, according to promise. Good morning, old man. I *am* glad to see you. Good morning, gentlemen," he said, turning to the brethren. "I am so much obliged for your kind welcome. Good morning, Mr. Sutcliffe: some other time I shall be delighted to accept an invitation to your house," and with a genial laugh he

caught Mr. Rutland's arm, and the two walked away together.

I didn't speak a word ; I couldn't. Such a thing had never happened in the circuit before ; besides, although I cannot think he meant it, he had snubbed me before a vestry full of the brethren.

"He's a young fellow of character," said Richard Best, who looked at me with a laugh. Richard, as I ought to have mentioned before, was my competitor for the post of circuit steward.

"Ay, he is and all. Ther's nowt namby-pamby about him," said Jonathan Giles.

"I like him," said Richard Best. "I like him ; and he's given us a rare sermon, too. He's a man with convictions—a man with courage. I fancy he'll make a change in Wesley."

To my surprise there was general assent to this, and for the life of me I could not speak.

"What do you think of him, Mr. Sutcliffe?" asked Jonathan Giles, turning to me.

"I think he's a new broom!" I answered.

"Ay, but he's a well-made one. I thought he swept rare and clean this morning."

"He'll give us trouble in the circuit," I said.

"A good job too," said Richard Best. "He'll shake us up a bit. We want a man with a mind of his own."

"He doesn't know how to treat his seniors with respect," I said.

"I thought he was very respectful," said Richard Best. "And as for his promising to go with Mr. Rutland to dinner, why shouldn't he? We've got into such a habit of just telling a preacher where he shall go for dinner, without consulting him, that we never think he might like to choose for himself."

I saw the man was against me, so I said nothing to him.

"The trial of the pudding will be in the eating, and not in the sauce," I said to Jonathan Giles as I walked away.

When I got into the street I saw several groups standing around, and all were, I knew, discussing the new minister.

Seeing Brother Bone and Cornelius Tinklin in one group I went towards it.

"We mun invite him to our homiletical class," said Brother Bone.

"Why?" asked Moreso, who was standing near him.

"Why? Where wur his divisions? Nobody con dail with a subject like yon, wi'out breakin' it i' bits. Besides, he wur noan sound i' his doctrine."

"I know nowt about that," said Moreso, "an' it wur th' first time for mony a Sunda' when I've noan 'ad a nap. It seemed to me that he'd no sooner commenced than he'd finished. It wur the shortest oaf 'our I've 'ad for mony a day."

"But he's no grip of doctrine," said Cornelius Tinklin.

"But he gripped us," said Moreso.

"Yi, he did an' all," cried others.

"He'll be the makkin' o' Wesley if he'll only kip clear o' th' lasses," continued Moreso.

"And we'll be the makkin' o' him," said Brother Bone. "I believe he's got grit in him, and if he gits among th' local praichers a bit, and gits tittivated up, he'll praich ever so middlin'. He only wants lickin' into shape."

"And he'll get it here," said Cornelius Tinklin; "there's never been a minister in the circuit but we've improved him."

"Ay, and he'll do with improvement," said Brother Bone. "A man should never dail with a text like he dailed with you. Still, Aw'm glad he took it. He's give me an idea for a sermon on th' same text."

"Ay, did he? and how will you deal with it?" asked Cornelius Tinklin.

"Aw'm noan goan to tell thee nor onybody else," was the reply, "but it'll be noan a mak'shift. I'll do the soobjec' justice, I will an' all."

A little way farther up I saw a group of women, who beckoned me to them.

"I canna mak' out if I like 'im, or if I doan't," said one to me as I came up.

"But I con; he's a rare 'un, a champion," said another.

"He may be; but it's noan the soart we've been used to."

"Weel, and what for that? He's opened my een in a way as they've noan bin opened for years. When Caleb here praiched from that text, I could make nowt on it, and aw went to slaip afore he was oaf through. No doubt Caleb wur deep. I' fact, 'ee wur too deep for me."

I saw it was no use talking further to her, so I walked on.

A little later I came upon another group, and again I was beckoned.

"What's the mainin' o' this, Caleb?" asked Mrs. Beswick. Mrs. Beswick, I may say, is the wife of one of the wealthiest manufacturers in the town. Like many others, both she and her husband were weavers in their young days, but by good luck and hard work they got on wonderfully.

"The meaning of what?" I asked.

"Why, we 'ecrd as 'ow he wouldn't go to dinner with thee," she answered.

"It's quite true," I answered. "My missis stayed at home from chapel this morning so as to see to the dinner, and yet, without consulting me, he's gone off with Mr. Rutland."

"Tha never ses!" remarked Mrs. Beswick.

"But did he know you expected him?" asked Mrs. Stanley, Herbert's mother.

"Expected him!" I cried. "It's a custom of Methodism, Mrs. Stanley, and he's a Methodist."

"I think you misinterpret Methodism," replied Mrs. Stanley. "The truth is, I suppose he's been accustomed to be treated as a gentleman."

"Ay, yon lad 'll gi' us trouble," said the wife of Kneepads. "I con see it in his cen."

"No, no, Mrs. Scott," I said quietly. "He'll soon see that he must settle down to our ways."

I don't think I was in a good temper when I got home, and if I was a bit raspy it was no wonder. Besides, I wondered what Mary Ellen would say. She had stayed at home on purpose to see about the dinner, and I felt sure that when I told her the truth about Hawthorne refusing to come, she would be sore put out.

I went into the front room very quietly, and sat down in the arm-chair.

"Hem!" I said presently, and then the kitchen door opened, and I saw my missis come, smoothing her apron as she came.

"All thee preparation is for nowt, lass," I said, lapsing into Lancashire.

"Where is th' praicher?" she asked cagerly, but in a whisper.

"He's noan comin'," I answered; "he's gone wi' Rutland."

"Wi' Rutland?"

"Yi."

"Then he'll be noan here to dinner."

"Noa. I tell thee, Mary Ellen, us'll 'ave trouble with yon lad. It'll tak' me oal my time to keep him in his place. There were never a circuit steward treated so since the days of Wesley."

"But he's noan comin' to dinner?"

"No."

At first I didn't know whether she was vexed or pleased; but presently I saw her heave a sigh as if of relief.

"I'm right glad," she said.

"Glad! Why?"

"The Yorkshire puddin' is noan light. It's as sad as a waiver's clog, and I wouldn' like for him to think as ow Aw couldn' mak' a Yorkshire puddin' right."

I didn't speak: I thought it best to be quiet.

"Ay, but I'd a geen it to 'im if the dinner'd been all right," she said presently.

And that's how Bernard Hawthorne came to Lynford, and that's how he behaved on the first Sunday.

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGINNING OF THE TROUBLE

FOR a few weeks Bernard Hawthorne was criticised, abused, praised, and blamed, and then the interest in him began to die away. At first the congregations at Wesley were large and influential; but as winter came on, and the dark, wet evenings became common, the great building became emptier and emptier, until it looked very nearly as bad as in those days before the young minister came. That was of an evening; for he still attracted what we call the "better sort of the people" in the morning. In fact, the other chapels suffered because of his evident popularity, and those who had not been in the habit of attending a place of worship continued to flock to hear him. The evening attendances, however, were terribly disappointing. The young men and women who thronged our main streets of a Sunday night seldom turned aside to hear what he had to say; and thus, while we rejoiced because of the Sunday morning attendances, we grieved concerning the scant audiences at night. In fact, we devoted a special leaders' meeting to a discussion of the condition of matters generally, with the result that Mr. Hawthorne said he would take special steps to secure the attention of the intelligent young men and women who went nowhere,

Perhaps the remarks of Brother Bone and myself led him to take this course.

"It's this 'ere way," said Brother Bone. "The infidels be dyin' off; all the same ther's a lot of the young foak as be readers of all th' new books. They stay away from chapel because what you might call their intellectual difficulties is noan dealt wi'. They noan understand the stories what they 'car 'bout th' 'igher criticism, and th' Atonement, and th' Fall, and sich-like."

"It's not only that," I rejoined: "several of the young men and women belonging to our best families are going after the High Church parsons. These men are saying that we don't belong to the true church at all, and that's why they don't come to Wesley of a night."

For several Sundays after this Mr. Hawthorne gave us what you may call learned discourses. He dealt with the history of the Church, the history of the Bible, and kindred subjects; and while I must say they did not attract many people, and while I did not agree with him, I was proud that we had a young man of such scholarship, and one who was able to hold his own against any one.

Bernard Hawthorne was sitting in his study one Wednesday morning, several weeks after his scholarly discourses had begun, when among his letters he noticed one that bore a London postmark. It was in a woman's handwriting, and was evidently penned by a person of education. On breaking the envelope he saw that it was headed "The Strand, London, W.C."

"Who can be writing me from London?" he said to himself, and then turned towards the letter again.

"DEAR SIR" (it ran),—"Why I am writing you I can scarcely tell. And yet perchance I can, although I am afraid

to disclose my reasons. But why should I? You will never know who I am, never know my real name. You have never seen me; you never will see me. And yet, even although I have not decided to send you what I am writing, I am afraid to put in words what my heart is aching to say. I am all alone. I have scarcely a friend in the world; I have longings unutterable, which I dare tell to no one. Religious subjects attract me, and yet whether I really understand religion I know not. Of the world of men and women I know nothing—nothing.”

“Good heavens! who is writing this?” cried the young man. “It must surely be some mad woman, or else some poor lost creature in London. But why should she write to me?”

Still he read on, for there was something in the letter, he knew not what, which attracted him.

“I have been staying near Lynford (do not try to discover where, for you will utterly fail), and I have heard you preach. Why do you waste your time in such a way? There were people in your congregation hungering for comfort, for hope, for inspiration, and, what is more, hungering for God. What was your message? Only that in all probability Moses wrote a great part of the Pentateuch. Men asked for bread, and you gave them a stone. Suppose, when you have finished your course of lectures, or whatever you may call them, you prove to a demonstration that all your contentions are true—what then? Are tears wiped away? Are aching hearts cased?

“And yet you are a true man, or why should I write this? You have sympathies, longings, hopes, or I should never have thought of you a second time. For that reason I shall travel to Lynford to hear you again; but you will never know, and you will not see me. And yet I would like to speak with you more than words can say. Why? The answer to that question you will never know, because you

will never see me more clearly than you see me now, and never know why I have written.—Yours,

“PAULINA MILANO.”

Hawthorne read the letter through again and again. Who was Paulina Milano? The name suggested Italy, and yet there was nothing Italian in the construction of the sentences. Still, it might have been the almost incoherent effusion of a passionate Italian girl who had been educated in England. But for the criticisms on his sermons he would have thought her mad, else why should she write in such a strain? Part of the epistle might be suggestive of love-making—love-making which was absurd; but there was both intensity and reality in her statement that he was wasting his opportunities. He had felt it himself. Even when he had prided himself upon giving expression to unanswerable arguments there had been a feeling of dissatisfaction in his heart.

He looked at the heading of the letter again: “Strand, London, W.C.” There was nothing mysterious about that. Even the number of the house was given. If he cared, he could go to London and discover for himself who lived there. If it were worth his while he would do this; but no, it would be absurd. Why should he trouble about a letter, somewhat hysterically written, from an utter stranger, and signed Paulina Milano?

But Bernard Hawthorne could not study that morning. Paulina Milano came between him and every book he tried to read; it distracted his attention from the sermon he tried to write.

The morning was wasted. When one o'clock came he realised that he had done nothing, save to commit

to memory the strange epistle, which troubled him more than he could say.

"I'll drive the thing from my mind," he said, as his landlady came in to place the cloth for his noonday meal. "As she says, I shall never see her, and never know who she is. Possibly she is some half-mad Italian girl, who is scarcely responsible for her actions."

After his lunch he went out into the town, and there I happened to meet him.

"Well, Mr. Hawthorne," I said, "the Sunday night congregations are not much improved."

"No," he replied; and he looked so sad that I was almost sorry I spoke. All the same, I felt it my duty to take down his pride a bit.

"And what are you thinking of doing this afternoon?" I asked.

"I intend visiting some people," he replied.

"I'll go with you, if you like," I said.

"Thank you," he answered, coldly I thought, as though he did not realise the privilege of having his circuit steward keeping him company.

"And how are you liking Lynford?" I asked presently. "You've been here six months, and have been able to sample us pretty well by this time."

"The more important question is, How is Lynford liking me?" he replied; and he laughed, I thought, flippantly.

"Oh, middling," I replied, "middling. But you'll have to be careful."

"Of what?"

"Of what you say. Your Sunday night's sermon, now——"

"Well, what of that?"

"It was not sound," I said.

"Not sound?"

"No. You said there was no clear proof that Moses wrote all the Pentateuch, and that very probably certain parts were written by other hands."

"Well, and what of that? There is no scholar to-day who——"

"I've nothing to do with scholars," I replied. "If you'll turn to your Bible, you'll see that each of the books which make up the Pentateuch is called the Book of Moses."

He laughed so that I was put upon my mettle.

"Oh! I've studied the question as well as you," I replied. "I've read 'Field's Handbook'; and I passed my local preacher's examination before you were born." And forthwith I there and then proved to him that every word in the Pentateuch was written by Moses.

"I suppose all that refers to the part where he describes his own death and burial?" he laughed.

"Mr. Hawthorne," I said, "you are young yet, and can't be expected to understand that God had ways of writing unknown to us."

I could see that I had mastered him, for he did not speak another word about the matter, although I enlarged on my argument.

As we went down the street we met old Abel Bowyer. As yet, he was not drunk, for it was early in the afternoon; but I knew that he would be before he went to bed, as he had been almost every night, except Sundays, for nearly half a century. How his constitution had stood it was a mystery; but the fact remained that he was one of the strongest men in Lynford.

"Weel," said Abel, turning to the young minister, "ha' yo' got a young woman yet?"

"Not yet, Mr. Bowyer."

"Ay, but tha wilt."

"Why do you think so?"

"By the' een, lad. Weel, I hear as aa tha'rt makkin' the' mark in Lynford."

"Indeed? How is that?"

"Why, I hear as 'ow tha willn't be tied to Caleb Sutcliffe's coat-tails. I'm reight glad, lad. Gi' Caleb as good as he gives thee, for he'll boss thee if he con."

"Come, now, Mr. Bowyer," I said.

"Aw'm noan 'maister,' Caleb, no more nor tha art. We've boath worked i' th' factory i' wur time, and we've boath made a bit o' brass. But we're noan maister 'cause o' that; so doant try an' mak Mester Hawthorne 'ere believe thou wert brought up a gentleman. But there, I needn't bother about that, need I, mester?"

"I scarcely know," said Hawthorne, like one musing. "Why?"

"'Cause thou'rt noan a fool, and thou can see for the'sen."

"Were you at chapel on Sunday?" I asked, because I saw the conversation was not very improving.

"Yi; Aw never miss," replied Abel. "Aw slaipeed all through the evenin' sermon, but I thowt the mornin' wur middlin'."

"You never miss chapel, Abel," I said, "and yet you get drunk every night. When are you going to give up the drink?"

"When tha gives up tryin' to boss the passons and makkin' a foil o' the'sen," he replied; and then he went away laughing.

I did not speak, for I was anything but pleased that he should have spoken to me in this way.

"One has curious material to work on," said Mr. Hawthorne.

"Nothing 'll ever be done with old Abel," I replied.

"No?" he said, as though he queried my words. "Then we must be in a bad way, Mr. Sutcliffe. I shall be thinking you are not sound in the faith soon."

"I not sound?"

"Yes, you."

"I not sound in my theology, young man?" I said, indignantly. "You are the first who ever dared to say that. What is your reason for such a statement?"

"In your prayer last Sunday night you quoted those lines of Wesley :

"His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood avails for me."

And now you say that nothing can be done for old Abel Bowyer," he replied quietly; but I could see his eyes flashing.

"Mr. Hawthorne," I said, "figures of speech are—are——" And then I stopped, for I scarcely knew what to say.

"Who's that?" he said in a whisper.

"Who do you mean?"

"That young lady standing by Goldsmid's jeweller's shop."

I looked and saw who he meant. Perhaps I ought to say something about her, because she must of necessity appear often in these pages.

She was about twenty-two years of age, and was called the "Queen of the Lynford Valley." Some years ago I heard a scholar from Oxford give a lecture

on one of those poet-men. I have forgotten which it was; but I remember the lecturer dwelt long on one of his poems, wherein was described what he called "a nut-brown maid." Well, the young woman who attracted Bernard Hawthorne's attention made me think of her. She was dressed in brown, too. The brown fur cap which she wore, moreover, did not hide the great wavy masses of dark chestnut hair, and as her face was not hidden by a veil, it was easy to see her great dark flashing eyes. I am not, and never have been, a woman's man; but I tell you she made me feel twenty years younger as I looked at her. I don't pretend to describe her features, but if I were one of those picture-painting fellows I should never rest until I had painted her. She was tall, and magnificently formed, too, and stood as straight as a soldier on parade.

We both stood watching for a few seconds, and then waited silently while she went leisurely up the street. It was easy to see why she was called the Queen of Lynford. She was so very handsome, and so very proud. Every step she took made you feel her pride and her independence; and so, beautiful as she was, I pitied the man who might be foolish enough to marry her.

"Who is she?" asked Mr. Hawthorne a second time.

"She's an infidel, and a blasphemer," I said.

"Yes, but who is she?—what is her name?" he cried eagerly, and without taking the slightest notice of what I had told him.

"That is Miss Mary Clitheroe, the only daughter of Hugh Clitheroe, of Rough Leigh."

"Where is Rough Leigh?"

"It's an old mansion three miles from here. Hugh Clitheroe has given his life to unholy pursuits. Some say he has sold his soul to the devil, while others maintain that he's trying to discover some elixir of life."

"How interesting!"

"Interesting!" I repeated. "That may be; but both father and daughter are infidels."

He stood watching her like a man bewitched, and on his face was a strange look.

"Come, Mr. Hawthorne," I said; "there are several people I should like you to see, and as it's not likely we shall get such a beautiful afternoon again for some time, we had better make the most of it."

"In which direction does Rough Leigh lie?" he asked.

"Towards Grayburn," I said. "But don't expect ever to get anything out of Hugh Clitheroe. He hates all religion and all churches. So if you were to go to him for a subscription you'd only get the dogs set on to you. As for yonder lass, she laughs at all the parsons, and makes a mock of their religion."

"She looks a girl with character," he said.

"Character! I replied. "I never spoke to her but once, and then——"

"Have you spoken to her? What did she say to you?"

"I went to Rough Leigh to ask for a young fir, that we might use as a Christmas-tree. The old man refused to see me, but he sent Miss Mary to me, who began to ask me a lot of questions."

"Yes. What did she ask?"

"Oh! she asked about Wesley Chapel, and presently, when it leaked out that I was a local preacher, she began to talk with me about religion."

"Well?"

"Oh! at first I thought she was interested, and, it might be, seeking for the truth, and so I expounded our doctrines to her."

"Well?"

"Oh! I soon saw that she was laughing at me. She put her questions in such a way that in a few minutes I couldn't help seeming to contradict myself. But she gave me the tree. I've heard since, however, that she repeated what I had said to a lot of her friends, and made me out to be very nearly a fool. A very dangerous and ungodly young woman, Mr. Hawthorne."

He was silent for a minute; then he said: "She has a remarkable face."

"I hear that she has been to hear you at Wesley," I said.

"When?" he asked eagerly.

"Oh! two or three weeks ago. I am not sure, for I did not see her myself. Still, I shouldn't be surprised. It would be just like her. But she's not your sort, Mr. Hawthorne. She would think it beneath her to know you; and even if that were not so, it would do you harm among our best people if you were ever to get friendly with her."

"Does she go into society?" he asked.

"No, I hear not. Hugh Clitheroe has a few friends, but besides them, I suppose, no one goes near Rough Leigh."

We had been walking up the street only a few yards behind Miss Mary Clitheroe, when presently we saw her stop. A carriage, drawn by a handsome pair of horses, came to her side.

"Jenkins," we heard her say to the coachman, "I shall walk home, so you need not wait. You can tell my

father that I am taking advantage of this sunshine, and shall return through the fields."

The coachman touched his hat and drove away, while she entered a shop. After that I accompanied Mr. Hawthorne in his visits to several houses.

By five o'clock it was quite dark, for we were in the month of January, and, brilliant as the early afternoon had been, the sky had become clouded.

"Will you come home for a cup of tea, Mr. Hawthorne?" I said.

"I thank you, not to-day, Mr. Sutcliffe," he replied. "I was unable to work this morning, and I must get my Sunday's sermons ready. I shall go straight to my lodgings."

But he did not go straight to his lodgings. He started in that direction, it is true; but presently coming to a footpath which led to the moors, he jumped over the stile, and followed its course until he reached a lane. This footpath had, and still has, a bad name. Lynford, like all large manufacturing towns, has its bad characters, and the fields through which this path winds are often beset with evil, unprincipled men. Indeed, such a menace had they become that no respectable lass, knowing the town, would think of taking it after dark. Mr. Hawthorne passed several rough, disreputable-looking fellows on his way, and, while they said nothing to him, he recalled to mind various stories he had heard.

He had barely reached the lane when he heard the sound of footsteps, and, looking, he saw no other than Miss Mary Clitheroe.

She passed him without a word, and hurriedly turned towards the footpath which, while not leading through the fields he had traversed, led through others just as dangerous to a young girl after nightfall.



SHE LOOKED AT HIM ANGRILY. "HOW DARE YOU!" SHE CRIED.

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"Excuse me," he said, "but may I suggest that the footpath is not safe?"

"Not safe?" she said, turning somewhat haughtily.

"No; anything but safe."

"Why?"

"The fields through which they go have a bad name. There are loafing, evil-minded tramps in them, and—well—I have been told again and again that they are very unsafe for ladies after dark."

"But who would dare to interfere with me?"

"No one, I hope. Still, I trust you will not go that way to-night."

She gave him a haughty look, but vouchsafed no other reply.

"I sincerely hope you will not," he continued; "but, if you persist, let me accompany you."

"No, thank you; there is no need."

"But there is need."

"Excuse me, I have lived here all my life, and know the countryside well. It is perfectly safe, and there is no need for you to accompany me."

"I cannot force myself upon you, but if you will persist in crossing those fields I shall walk behind."

She looked at him angrily. "How dare you!" she cried.

Bernard Hawthorne did not say a word, but he stood watching her, while the girl stood hesitating, as if undecided what to do.

CHAPTER V

THEIR FIRST WALK TOGETHER

“WHO are you?” she demanded presently.

“My name is Bernard Hawthorne.”

“And what right have you to interfere with me?”

“The right which any man has when he sees a young lady placing herself in the way of danger.”

“But the road home is long, and I do not like being out late alone.”

“The roadway will be safer than the fields. Excuse me for speaking so plainly, but I cannot do otherwise. I am sure your father would thank me for my interference.”

“My father! Do you know who I am?”

“I saw you in the town this afternoon for the first time.”

“And some one told you my name?”

“Yes.”

“Who?”

“Mr. Caleb Sutcliffe.”

The girl laughed.

“Of course, you are the new minister at Wesley Chapel?” she said presently.

“That is true.”

She still stood like one hesitating. Her meeting with the young man had doubtless excited her; besides,

she probably knew, without being told, that the foot-path had a bad name. At the same time, it was well known that her pride and her independence forbade even the appearance of yielding to fear.

"I cannot believe that the fields are unsafe," she said weakly, after hesitating some time, "still——"

"It will be better for you to go home by way of the road. This lane leads into the high road; if you will allow me, I shall be glad to accompany you so far. I am going that way."

"No," she said, after another pause; "I shall go through the fields."

Bernard Hawthorne did not speak another word, but followed her quietly. She walked very rapidly,—so rapidly that he had a difficulty in keeping her in view. They had traversed perhaps half the distance when the young man heard the sound of voices. His worst fears were confirmed; he felt sure she was molested.

He started to run.

"Come now, lass," he heard some one say, "oaf a crown 'll noan hurt yo."

"How dare you?" he heard her say.

"Ay, but I main nowt wrong. I be quiet and paiceable, I be. If Billy Scott wer' to coom up now——"

Bernard caught the man by the coat, and with no gentle hand threw him back. His presence had a better effect than he hoped, for the fellow, seeing some one bigger than himself, and perhaps fearing other friends might be near, took to his heels.

"I was just in time," he said: "let us hurry now." And then side by side they sped on, till they reached the main road.

"Thank you," said the girl presently. "There was really no need for you to have come out of your way. My father is a magistrate, and had I told the man my name, he would have——"

"I am thankful you have reached the road in safety," interrupted Bernard. "No doubt your name is well known; still, I am glad I followed you."

"But I am sorry to have troubled you. You must have much to do."

"There is nothing I can do to-night," he urged, "so if you will let me walk towards Rough Leigh with you I shall be very glad. Besides, I have promised to make a call not far from your house. I am afraid I am very unceremonious, but—but—well, I suppose ministers get into the habit of dispensing with some conventionalities."

"Do they?" she said, her voice still trembling with excitement, although she did her best to appear undisturbed. "But then I do not belong to your church."

"That scarcely matters, does it?" he replied. And then he commenced to walk towards Rough Leigh as though she had accepted him as an escort.

Afterwards, I daresay, Miss Mary Clitheroe wondered why she consented to this; but Bernard Hawthorne had a peculiar way of making people do as he wished. It is true, he had not persuaded her to desist from crossing the fields, but she made no further protest as he accompanied her along the road. I imagine, however, that she was vexed with herself for having yielded so weakly. And this Mr. Hawthorne discovered before they proceeded far.

"You have not been long in Lynford, I suppose?" she said presently.

"No; only six months. This is my first charge."

"Then, naturally, you know but little about your work?"

"Very little, I am afraid."

"You are what the weavers call a 'budding parson.'"

"What's that?"

"Well, one who is not properly——"

"I've been through College," he said quickly; for Mr. Hawthorne, like all young ministers, and even young local preachers for that matter, was keenly alive to any word which might imply a poor opinion of his efforts.

"What did you say?"

"I said that I had a training for the ministry at College, even although I have only had charge of a church for six months," he said, a trifle proudly.

"Have you?" she replied. "How interesting!"

The young minister felt that the girl had intended a sneer, and he was a little angered.

"I suppose—that is, I have heard that you have been to Wesley," he stammered.

He was vexed afterwards that he had said this, because he felt that the young woman was out of sympathy both with himself and his work.

"Have you really?" she asked.

"Yes, I heard so. At least some people saw a lady whom they took for you."

He felt he was doing wrong in saying this, but he could not help himself.

"I did drop in once," she said; and then she laughed, as though she remembered some ludicrous incident.

"You seem amused," he said, angered by the laugh. "Did you hear anything calculated to make you merry?"

"Is it wrong to laugh?" she asked demurely.

"Was I preaching?" he said, without heeding her question.

"You were in that place which, I think, is called a pulpit," she replied.

His temper was getting the better of him, and he could scarcely guard his tongue.

"I think you were the only one who heard anything to laugh at," he said.

"Do you think so?" she replied. "How strange!"

"Why strange?" he demanded.

"Oh, nothing,—only we look at things differently, don't we?"

He remembered what I had told him, and soothed his ruffled vanity by thinking that she was referring rather to the faith he held than to himself.

"You are an atheist, I suppose?" he said.

"A what?"

"An atheist."

"An atheist? I think not. An atheist is one who does not believe—at least, so I have been told. I, on the other hand, believe a great deal."

"I am very glad."

"How kind of you!"

"But I am."

"Thank you. It is so considerate for one who has been to College and is so thoroughly trained for the ministry to be interested in me."

He was sure she was laughing at him now, and his anger rose again. He determined he would show her that he was not the kind of man she took him to be. Her ridicule was all the harder to bear, moreover, because he had only a few minutes before acted as a much-needed friend.

"It would be very interesting to know what you found amusing in the service at Wesley?" he said, disregarding for the moment her later remarks.

At this she laughed again.

"Have you read Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village'?" he asked, almost angrily, thinking he might somehow draw her attention to the passage about those people who went to church to scoff, but remained to pray.

"Many times. I am very fond of Goldsmith," she added, sweetly, "and I think his picture of the old village pastor simply charming. Those atheists of whom you spoke just now would be very much rarer if all pastors were like him. Don't you think so?"

"I do not quite follow you," he stammered, although he understood her perfectly. "Do you mean to say that ministers are not earnest in these days?"

"I would never think of hinting at such a thing," she replied. "I think they are very earnest—very. Only Goldsmith describes an old man."

"An old man?"

"Yes. I am afraid I do not know very many ministers; they seldom come to Rough Leigh. A young curate came up once, fresh from the Bishop's hands, for the purpose of converting my father. Oh, it was funny! Have you read 'David Copperfield,' Mr. Hawthorne?"

"Oh, yes! But what of that?"

"Do you remember Mr. Littimer?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember how, when David Copperfield spoke to him concerning matters which he did not like, he would turn to him and say, 'Indeed, sir, but you're *very* young'?"

"Yes, I remember."

"That curate, and others, make me think of Mr. Littimer's words."

Why did she speak in this way to him? For her meaning was very apparent. Instead of being grateful to him for having rendered her a service, she was evidently desirous of wounding him. He tried to think of something to say that would wound her, even as she was trying to wound him; but he remembered that she was a lady, and, besides, he could not help desiring her good opinion.

"But I *will* let her know I am not one to be laughed at," he said to himself. "I am sure she'll come to Wesley again, and I'll show her that I am not so young, after all."

"Perhaps," she went on, "that is why so many intelligent men stay away from church."

"There may be other reasons," he suggested.

"Oh, doubtless there are," she replied. "Yes, there must be other reasons."

It was at this moment that there came into Bernard Hawthorne's heart a great desire to convert Miss Mary Clitheroe. Ah, if he only could! Here was an acknowledged unbeliever, an open scoffer of ministers and of churches. What might be the result if he succeeded? Why, her father might be led to faith, and through him a host of others!

"Are we not come to the house which you said you intended visiting?" she said presently.

"Not yet," he replied. "The man I wish to see lives opposite some lodge gates, nearly a mile farther on. It is an old grey stone house, standing back a little from the road."

"Who lives there?"

"Mr. Jonas Carew."

"Oh, I know: it is just opposite our lodge gates. Then I am not taking you out of your way?"

"Oh, no; besides, it is a great pleasure to talk with you."

"Is it really?" she rejoined sweetly.

"I suppose you are a great reader?" he said presently.

"Oh, no; I read very little. I am a very ignorant person. I've not been to college—nor anything. Really, Mr. Hawthorne, it is a shame for you to waste your time by walking with me."

"Perhaps my society is disagreeable?" he suggested.

"How *could* you think so?"

At this moment a man passed by them.

"Good-night," he said.

"Good-night," replied Mr. Hawthorne.

"Is that you, Mester Hawthorne?"

"Yes; I'm on my way to call on Mr. Carew."

"Ay, and yo'll enjoy the walk an' all." And the man passed on.

"Who is that?" asked Miss Mary Clitheroe.

"The people call him 'Moreso,'" replied Hawthorne.

"He's one of your flock, isn't he?"

"He comes to Wesley."

"What an important man a minister must feel!"

"Not sufficiently important to imagine that his company is agreeable to you, Miss Clitheroe," he replied coldly. "I will not trouble you further. I hope you will get home safely. Good-night."

"Good-night. It is good of you to have come so far with me."

The young minister turned and walked homeward. He was in no enviable mood. He was angry with himself, angry with Miss Clitheroe, angry with everyone. He called to mind every word that had been spoken

during their walk, and he saw that she had taken pains to be rude.

"She is just a flippant, superficial, unwomanly woman," he said to himself. "To say the least of my behaviour, I tried to act towards her as a gentleman should, while she went out of her way to show her contempt for me."

He walked on some distance, and then his anger cooled somewhat.

"Perhaps I had no business to press my company upon her," he continued presently. "Possibly she regarded my behaviour as a piece of impertinence, and as a consequence I seemed to her an insufferable bore. After all, it served me right."

Still, her words rankled in his memory. True, she had not, in the Lancashire fashion, told him plainly that she despised him; none the less he could not help seeing that she was poking fun at him all the way. She had by implications sneered at his preaching, despised his attempts to be scholarly, told him in so many words that his thoughts were very immature, and that she thought him a conceited prig.

"Well, why need I trouble?" he concluded at length. "Probably I shall never see her again. Her world is different from mine. Her associations are different. Methodists are looked upon by some as very ignorant, and she, like the rest of her class, regards Methodist ministers with contempt. Indeed, in her estimation I am not a minister at all, but only a 'budding parson,' one rank below the class she despises." And he laughed bitterly.

"I wish I hadn't followed her through those fields," he went on again. "I wish I had—but no, I don't. After all, I've done nothing to be ashamed of."

When he reached his lodgings, his attention was

drawn to the letter he had received that morning—the letter which he had unwittingly committed to memory. He read it again and again. Somehow it soothed him. After all, here was a woman who thought kindly of him, a woman who had declared her intention of coming to Lynford from London for the purpose of hearing him. He tried to understand the former part of the epistle. What did Paulina Milano mean by telling him that she was lonely and had unutterable yearnings? What was the purport of those strange references to himself? Why did she long to speak to him, and to clasp his hand? The writer was mad.

He was very excited. First this strange letter, from one whose name was unknown to him, and then his walk with Miss Mary Clitheroe. In some way the two personalities acted against each other. When he thought of Paulina Milano he was soothed, and tender thoughts and hopes arose in his mind. When he remembered the daughter of Hugh Clitheroe of Rough Leigh, he was disturbed and angered.

Again he turned to the letter he had received, and although every word was familiar to him he read it again.

“I’ll answer it!” he cried.

He had no one to advise him, and no one at that time knew of his action. Besides, he was scarcely himself. He was very lonely, and he was very excited.

Before he went to bed that night he wrote a letter to Paulina Milano. The greater part of the epistle was devoted to answering what she had said, and to a justification of the work he was trying to do at Wesley. But he did not stop at this. He was a young man, full of romance and full of strange yearnings. I think

I understand them now, although there was a time when I should have scoffed at them. But events have led me to alter my opinion. Be that as it may, he yielded to the spirit which possessed him, and spoke of his own longing for sympathy and for friends who might understand the dreams that came to him.

When he had finished the letter he addressed the envelope.

"I don't think I'll send it, after all," he said.

Nevertheless, he went straight away and dropped it into the nearest pillar-box.

It was that letter which led to others, and which was also a forerunner to a series of events which made me and nearly all the principal people in the Lynford Circuit hold up our hands in dismay.

"I wonder if I shall get an answer to it," he said, as he tossed on his bed that night.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEWING MEETING

ON the afternoon of the next day I found my way to Number Six Vestry of Wesley Chapel. It was the sewing-meeting day. A sale of work was announced to be held in March, and as a consequence the "Ladies' Sewing Meeting" was held every week. It was announced to commence at three o'clock; at five o'clock there was a tea, to which men as well as women were invited.

Let me say here that Wesley never lacked for funds. There might be a difficulty in getting the women-folk to the class meetings, but they always turned up in good numbers at the sewing teas. Some said that this was because they liked to meet for gossip; but people will say such things. Besides, we could always raise more money at either a sale of work or charity sermons than any other place in the town, excepting Tudor. Indeed, if you take Wesley all round, even when the chapel was nearly empty, we could beat almost anybody at money-raising.

Mr. Hawthorne once told us that we gauged the success of a church by the amount we could get at our sale of work; and while some took exception to him, I admitted that what he told us was true.

"The best way to test a man's love for religion is to touch his pockets," I said.

Anyhow, the sewing teas were always popular, and about four o'clock I found my way to Number Six Vestry. About twenty-five or thirty women had congregated, and while some were working busily, others were having what they called a "good pie." A good pie, let me explain, is a spicy bit of gossip, over which they "mouth" eagerly.

As usual, the principal subject for conversation was Mr. Hawthorne.

"Hast 'a heard if he's got a lass yet?" asked Mrs. Beswick, who, I think I have said, was the wife of a wealthy manufacturer, but who in her young days had been a four-loom weaver.

"He went to Mrs. Eastham's to tay laast Wednesday but one," said Mrs. Kneepads.

"Ay, but Emma Ellen Eastham 'ud noan do for a minister's wife," remarked Mrs. Beswick.

"Aw doan knaw so mich abaat that," remarked Mrs. Kneepads. "Owd Luke Eastham have got a tidy bit o' brass. He'll cut up weel when he dees. My Henry ses he's a twenty-thaasand-paand man, and thet's noan so bad. Emma Ellen went to Bilney Boarding School, and oo's a rare 'un for the piana and 'oal. Aw've 'cerd as aa oo c'n talk French too."

"But Mester Hawthorne can do wi'out brass," said Mrs. Beswick.

"A bit more'll ne'er coom amiss. When he geets a family, it'll tak him all his time to pay for school bills."

"But he's noan gone on Emma Ellen," remarked Mrs. Bone. "George Lancaster's lass is more i' his way."

"I hear, hear!" remarked several.

"But oo's noan a member," remarked Mrs. Beswick; "and we could noan allow 'im to mak' up to a lass as is not a member of Society. Oo's ne'er been converted, nowther. When Mr. Jory spoke to 'er abaat it, oo ses as 'ow oo'd noan thought abaat it."

"Then that tak's 'er off the list," said Mrs. Kneepads.

"Aw doan know," remarked Mrs. Bone. "Ef Hawthorne mak's up to 'er, oo'l geet converted right eno'."

"Na, na," crid several; "thet's goin' it a bit too strong. Bella Lancaster is a lass wi' opinions of her own, and oo's noan a hypocrite."

"Then what do yo say to Emily Amelia Gregson?" asked Mrs. Giles, old Jonathan's wife. "Oo's good-lookin', oo's eddicated, and oo'l 'ave ten thaasand, if oo gets a penny. Oo's a member of Society, too, and does what a lot of the owder people doan't do. Oo meets i' Mr. Jory's class every Wednesday afternoon."

"Ay, but oo's flighty, for all thet," remarked Mrs. Beswick. "How would Hawthorne feel at the weddin' when the minister as marries 'em reads what's in the marriage service 'baout puttin' on apparel, and platting 'er 'air, and sich like? Why, oo paid three pound sixteen for the new winter's hat she bought at Manchester last October; that aw know, 'cause Mrs. Gregson towld me hersen. Weel, only last week she went to Manchester agean and got another. Aw doan know 'ow mich she paid for this 'un, but aw know it cost a fair lot."

"Mr. Hawthorne went theer to supper Sunda' week," said Mrs. Bone, "and he sat next to her at supper; and after supper oo sung 'The Lost Chord' for him. That I know. And he turned th' music for 'er, an' all."

"Ay, Emily Amelia 'ud noan be so bad. How old is she?" asked Mrs. Giles.

"Twenty-two the thirteenth of last August," replied Mrs. Beswick; "aw know, for our James William wur born th' day after. I remember, too, as 'ow Mester Broomhall, th' superintendent minister, ed his dinner at our 'ouse, and I could noan geet to see him."

"Ay, ce wur a rare 'un, wur Mester Broomhall," remarked Mrs. Giles, "a rare 'un. We 'ad conversions every Sunday nect then."

"Then Emily Amelia 'ud be jist the right age. Oo's noan got a felly, nowther," remarked Mrs. Bone.

"Aw'm noan so sure," said Mrs. Beswick. "At th' last choir trip oo went off a goodish bit weth Albert James Dixon, and Aw've 'ecrd they've been seen together since."

"Ay, but Hawthorne 'ud soon put Albert James's nose out. Don't you think so, Mrs. Stanley?"

"I'm afraid it's scarcely my affair," remarked Mrs. Stanley. "I suppose that if Mr. Hawthorne gets a wife he will get one to suit himself; and it is scarcely kind of us to be gossiping about his affairs."

"Why, we main nowt wrong," said Mrs. Bone; "and Aw think it 'ud be doin' 'im a kindness if we tried to mak' it up between 'im and Emily Amelia."

"You would hardly like your affairs, or those of your children, to be talked about in such a way," remarked Mrs. Dobson, who was a great friend of Mrs. Stanley's.

"Ay, but why not?" said Mrs. Beswick. "When Aw wur coortin', and afore Aw married aar Josiah, Aw just kept Wesley talkin' for near three month. Nobody could mak' out if I wur goin' to 'ave Josiah, or Caleb Sutcliffe here. Aw just kept Caleb danglin' at my heels

for the fun on it, and to see what folks 'ud say. Wasn't thet so, Caleb?"

"It's a long time ago," I remarked; "but I call to mind that you were a flighty lass."

"No worse nor thec," said Mrs. Beswick. "Why, all th' time tha wert makin' up to me thaa kept the' ccn on thy Mary Ellen. Ay, but foak did talk! And I wer' just suited when they couldn't mak' out what I wur bound to do. But doesn't tha think as Emily Amelia Gregson 'ud do grandly for Hawthorne?"

"He's kept away from the lasses pretty much," I suggested.

"Nowt ut soart," cried several. "He's like other lads; and wherever he goes he'll noan find nicer lasses than can be found i' Lynford."

"Anyhow, I propose we cease talking about Mr. Hawthorne's affairs," said Mrs. Stanley.

"Thou'rt just like thy lad Herbert. I've asked him several times to tell me if he knows whether Hawthorne has fixed on anybody, but he'll never tell."

"Ay, but if he chooses one as we likes, we'll have a rare wedding," said Mrs. Beswick; "we will, an' all. Wesley Chapel 'ud be chock full, and wouldn't we gi' him a weddin' present! For he's a rare nice lad."

"But the praichers' houses be furnished by th' Circuits," remarked Mrs. Giles.

"That'll noan keep us from gettin' knick-knacks. We could buy silver services, and gold watches, and bicycles, and all that sort o' thing."

"Yi, we could; but if he doesn't choose a lass as I likes, Aw'll noan gi' a penny."

"Nor I," said several others. "He's a minister, and he ought to plaise the people."

At this moment Moreso came in, looking very solemn.

"What's the matter with thee, Ebenezer?" asked one.

"Aw'm noan complainin', am I?" remarked Moreso.

"Nay, but tha looks as though tha'd seen a boggart."

"Ther's no law tellin' me 'ow I shud look, as Aw knows on."

"Owd Moreso's got out th' wrong side o' th' bed this morn," said some.

"Or he's picked up wi' some lass," others suggested.

"Aw'd rayther be 'anged!" said Moreso.

"Nay, nay; Aw've seen thee castin' sheep's-eyes on ould Jonas Dixon's lass. Mak' up to 'er, Ebenezer; oo's got brass an' all."

"Aw'm noan toatlish" (in my second childhood) "yet," said Moreso savagely. "Ther's eno' like to mak' foils o' theirsen wi'out me."

"Who art 'a thinkin' abaat?"

Moreso remained silent, but looked very solemn.

"We wer' just talking about Mester Hawthorne, and we wer' fixin' up a lass for 'im."

"And who didst 'a fix on?" asked Moreso, somewhat eagerly, I thought.

"Emily Amelia Gregson wer' th' favourite."

"He'll noan ha' 'er!" cried Moreso.

"How dost tha know? He wur at her feyther's to supper th' other neet."

"He'll noan ha' 'er," repeated Moreso.

"How dost tha know?"

"Aw know 'cause Aw do know," said Moreso solemnly.

"Hast 'cerd owt?"

"It's noan 'carin'."

"What then?"

"It's secin'."

"What hast 'a seen?"

"Aw'm noan goin' to tell."

"A boggart?"

"Worse nor a boggart."

"Has it owt to do wi' Mr. Hawthorne?"

Moreso was silent.

"He's done nowt wrong, has he?"

"It's a matter o' opinion."

"What is it? Tell us, Ebenezer."

"Noa." And Moreso almost shouted the word.

"Ay, tha knows nowt."

"Aw allus thought thou wert friendly with Mr. Hawthorne, and tha hast allus took sides wi' 'im when other folks abused him," remarked Mrs. Beswick.

"Ay, and I always have; but I never will agean. He's nowt in my line."

"Well, tell us."

"Aw shall do nowt ut soort."

"Thou'st nowt to tell."

"No; if tha had, thou'd tell it. But never mind, if thou dost know owt we can easy find out what it is."

"Wilt 'a? We'll see."

"Yi, we will. We'll send Kneepads to find out. I expect thou'st seen something that tha doesn't understand. Tha'rt so slow. But Kneepads bein' quicker than thee, he'll find it out."

"Kneepads!" said Moreso scornfully, for Mrs. Beswick had touched him on a tender spot. "He's too slow ever to pick up anything."

"He's quicker nor thee, and he's so sharp that he'll soon know all thou knowest, and he'll be the first to let us know. He's afore thee with everything, tha

knowst. Folks say as how years agone tha wanted his wife, but he wur too quick for thee!"

"He'll *never* find out," cried Moreso; "but I could set all on yo' dithering ef aw wanted."

"Just 'arken to 'im," said Mrs. Beswick. "Why, if he knowd owt, he'd be only too glad to tell us; but he knows nowt."

"Ay, but doan't I? I tell thee if I wur to spaik what I know, you'd—you'd—well, never mind."

"'Bout Mester Hawthorne?"

"Ay."

By this time every woman present was eager for the news. All believed that Moreso really knew something, and, if the truth must be told, I was as excited as the rest.

"If Brother Astick knows anything, is it not his duty to tell us?" I said. "Mr. Hawthorne is our minister, and——"

"Oh, he's done nothing that tha can say owt about, Caleb, and yet—well, I doan know, but I'll tell thee this: he'll never tak' up wi' Gregson lass. There now, I'm noan baan' to say more."

Perhaps there was no one in Lynford who understood Moreso better than Mrs. Beswick, and we were sure that if anyone could make him tell what he knew, it would be she. I saw, too, that she was planning how she could make him tell what was in his mind.

"It's owd news," she said.

"It's nowt ut soart," said Moreso.

"There was nothing before yesterday at five o'clock," I remarked, "for I was out visiting with him, and I heard him tell old Abel Bowyer that he hadn't thought about any young woman."

"It's since then!" cried Moreso.

At this I saw Mrs. Beswick's eyes twinkle, and then I knew she'd hit upon a plan.

"Well," she said, "we needn't bother. Aw'm sure Ebenezer knows nowt worth knowing, and, just to prove it, I'm going to find out where he's been since last night at five o'clock. I think I know where he was last night, and I'm going to mak' sure."

At this there was a great change in Moreso's face. I saw that he looked really frightened.

"That'll tell thee nowt."

"Ay, but it will. And, just as luck will have it, here is Henry Scott."

At this we all turned, and saw Kneepads enter.

"Tha'll ne'er find out," cried Moreso. And I saw that he looked at Kneepads with grave apprehension. "But still, seein' that tha wants to know so much, I'll tell thee."

"Weel, what is it?"

"I saw Hawthorne out walkin' wi' a lass laast neet."

"Tha never ses!" cried Mrs. Beswick. "Who wur it?"

"It wur Mester Hugh Clitheroe's lass, up at Rough Leigh. I heerd what they said, too."

"Tha never did!" And I never saw people look so eagerly at a man before.

"But I did, I tell thee."

"What did they say?"

"He said, 'I'm afraid my company is disagreeable to yo';' and oo ses, 'How *can* yo' say so?'"

"Didst 'a spaik?"

"Ay, I did. I said, 'Is that yo', Mester Hawthorne?' and he said, 'Ay; Aw'm goin' to call on——'" Then Moreso stopped.

“ Who ? ”

“ Aw’m noan goin’ to tell—to-day.”

“ Well, it might be that he only just met with her as he was on his way to make a visit,” said Mrs. Stanley.

“ He told a lee ! ” cried Moreso.

“ How ? ”

“ ’Cause Aw called at th’ ’ouse to-day, and he’s noan been there.”

“ Tha never ses ! But who’s house wur it, Ebenezer ? ”

“ I tell thee Aw’m noan baan’ to tell.”

At that moment Mr. Hawthorne entered the room, for it was just five o’clock ; and no sooner did Moreso see him than he rushed away like a man bereft of his senses.

A few minutes later we all sat down to tea, but no one could guess from our faces who we’d been talking about. Mr. Hawthorne asked how much we thought we were going to raise by the sale of work, and all of us discussed the question eagerly. All the same, I heard Mrs. Beswick say to Kneepads, beside whom she had arranged to sit :

“ I’ll tell thee the house where Moreso has been.”

“ Whose ? ”

“ Jonas Carew’s. I heerd only yesterday that he thought of geetin’ some new carpets. He’s going to have two rooms papered and painted, too. I frightened Moreso into tellin’ us about Hawthorne by threatenin’ that I’d find out where he’d been last night. He was afraid yo’d geet to know. I’ll warrant he’s gone there now to fix the job up. Some people say he’s a quicker man nor thee, Henry.”

For a few seconds Kneepads sat like one in deep thought, and then, regardless of questions, he got up and left the room.

There were at least forty houses in Lynford that night in which Bernard Hawthorne's affairs were discussed; but the young minister knew nothing about it. Neither did he dream that many of his congregation secretly determined to find out whether there was any real significance in Moreso's report. For while doubtless many were shocked that he should think of walking out with an atheist young woman, especially after what I had stated about her, more were delighted at the event. Especially was this true of the women. The whole affair was spiced with romance, and all sorts of conjectures were formed and many rumours started concerning the probable result.

After two or three weeks, however, and it was known that he had never visited Rough Leigh, people began to be very disappointed. After all, there were evidently no grounds for Moreso's conjectures, and as a consequence all their hopes came to nothing. What would have been said had we all known the truth I do not like to say, for, although we Lancashire people are the best in the world, we do love a bit of gossip. Anyhow, about three weeks after the night on which Bernard Hawthorne had met Miss Mary Clitheroe he received the following letter:—

“DEAR SIR,—I have noticed in the local papers that you intend giving a series of Sunday night addresses on Christian Apologetics in the light of recent discoveries. As I have devoted some little attention to the question, and possess some books which may be of service to you, I should be glad if you would give me a call when you have an hour to spare. I may say that I shall be entirely at liberty on Thursday evening next.—Yours truly,

“HUGH CLITHEROE.”

“ I'll not go,” cried Bernard Hawthorne, when he had read the letter. “ Why should he interest himself in me, or my work? I daresay that——” And then the picture of Miss Mary Clitheroe rose before him.

He wrote that same night accepting the invitation.

CHAPTER VII

AN EVENING AT ROUGH LEIGH

IT was Tuesday when Bernard Hawthorne received Mr. Clitheroc's letter, and during the two days which elapsed he made up his mind many times that he would not go to Rough Leigh. The memory of his walk with Mary Clitheroc remained with him, while the fact that she had ridiculed him continued to sting him painfully. When Thursday evening came, however, he went out alone. He started in a direction exactly opposite to Rough Leigh, but he found himself at Mr. Clitheroc's house an hour and a half later nevertheless. Arrived there, he was immediately admitted into Mr. Clitheroc's presence.

He was a tall, strongly built man, rather hard of feature, and of a stern countenance ; but he impressed the young minister by his strength of character.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Hawthorne," he said quietly. And then, as his large black eyes twinkled somewhat, he added, "I was afraid something might have hindered you from coming."

"It is very kind of you to think of inviting me," said the young minister.

"Not at all, not at all. The advantage, I am sure, will be on my side. I read some accounts of the

addresses you have been giving in the *Lynford Observer*, and they interested me."

"It is very good of you to say so."

"By no means; but we shall have to talk of that by-and-bye. At present I hear the summons to dinner."

In walking towards the dining-room they saw Miss Clitheroe, who went quickly towards the young minister with a smile.

"How good of you to accept my father's invitation!" she said pleasantly. "We were both afraid lest some engagement should hinder you from coming."

During dinner they sat together, and Bernard Hawthorne was charmed by her graciousness, even while he marvelled at it.

"Why this change of behaviour?" he asked himself. "When we were together last, she did her best to insult me; now she is evidently bent upon being agreeable."

Not a word was mentioned about their previous meeting, and in nothing could he distinguish even the suggestion of her former manner of speech.

"Surely this must be to atone for what she said then," thought Bernard—"else why the change?"

And yet, had he known the means which she had used to induce her father to invite him to Rough Leigh, his feelings would have been different. When I heard of it, I could scarce believe my ears, badly as I thought of her; but I have become accustomed to hearing strange things, as you will discover for yourself before I finish writing this history. For Miss Mary Clitheroe had to spend more than a week in getting her father to send the invitation.

First she told him of their meeting, and of the way she had spoken to him. At this Mr. Hugh Clitheroe



DURING DINNER THEY SAT TOGETHER.

had laughed, and complimented his daughter on knowing how to deal with "this conceited sprig of a parson."

"But, father," she said, "I feel that I acted badly towards him. After all, he was very kind."

"Then send him a note, and tell him so."

"That would never do."

"Why?"

"Well, if he's the kind of man you think he is, he might interpret it wrongly. He would get the idea that he was converting me, and all that sort of thing."

Hugh Clitheroe laughed merrily.

"A Methodist parson convert you, Mary! Well, that would be a joke."

"But you could drop a line, father; just a courteous note, thanking him."

"Yes, and I'd have him up here the following day begging for the missionaries, the Sunday-school treat, the mothers' meeting, or some such nonsense. No, thank you, Mary."

After this she used other means to get her father interested in Bernard Hawthorne, but without success.

"Why are you troubling about him, Mary?" asked Mr. Clitheroe one day.

"I think we are missing a good deal of fun," she answered.

"Fun?"

"Yes, fun. He has been trying to set unbelievers right, and it would be better than a pantomime to get him up here. What fun it would be to shake him out of his orthodoxy, and send him back to Lynford a sceptic!"

"Nonsense, child! He's not worth troubling about."

"Oh, I don't know. He's not a fool, and he has some scholarship. I think he could be good company,

too. But look at this in the *Lynford Observer*. That's an attack on you."

"It may be; but I cannot take notice of such things."

"Yes, but it would do the fellow good to show him how ignorant he is. You could use his kindness to me as an excuse for inviting him, or you could tell him that you are interested in the subject he is discussing. Then, when you've got him here, you could get no end of pleasure in shaking his beliefs to their——"

"But, Mary, you do not really wish this?"

"I do, really. After all, we need a little recreation."

And so it came about that presently Hugh Clitheroe, partly because, stern man though he was, he seldom refused his daughter anything, and partly because she had inspired him with a kind of curiosity about the young minister, sent him the invitation to which I have referred.

It was a cruel thing to do. For, clever though Bernard Hawthorne was, he was no match for Hugh Clitheroc. I doubt if I myself could have held my own with him in some matters, although I have coached dozens of young men for their local preacher's examination, and know Field's "Handbook of Theology" almost by heart. I don't say that I should not beat him in the end—I believe I should, but I should have all my work cut out.

Bernard Hawthorne grew quite merry before dinner was over. Hugh Clitheroc's cordiality and his daughter's graciousness made him forget they were strangers; and so, feeling at ease, he talked of men and books with freedom, and, as I have been told since, with eloquence.

Both father and daughter seemed delighted, each strove to be agreeable, and the time flew on the wings of the wind. For a long time nothing was said about the series of sermons he had been giving, but by degrees

the conversation drifted in that direction. The young minister did not know that they played with him as a spider plays with a fly, and, of course, never dreamed of the means which Mary Clitheroe had used in order to persuade her father to invite him to his house.

I am an old-fashioned man, and I have been nurtured in Methodism; therefore I have no sympathy with modern ideas about the Bible. Even before his talk with Hugh Clitheroe, Bernard Hawthorne's views were too advanced for me, and so—well, even now I cannot help being impatient as I think of what followed. Naturally, as a young Methodist minister, Hawthorne had been trained on Methodist lines, and he had accepted what Methodist theologians had to say about Holy Writ. This being so, although I thought he had wandered from the path somewhat, I still saw that he held by our old and safe theology. It was mainly on Methodist lines, moreover, that he had dealt with Biblical questions in Wesley pulpit, and for that reason I could not (while I had mildly taken him to task) denounce him entirely.

All this I say in order that matters may be made plain, and in order that the purport of Mr. Hugh Clitheroe's influence over him may be understood.

For directly after dinner, and they had adjourned to the Rough Leigh library, the subject of the young minister's sermons came under discussion. They had not been talking more than a few minutes before Bernard Hawthorne felt himself on strange ground. He saw that all the positions which he had thought impregnable were utterly denied by Hugh Clitheroe. Of course the young minister answered him according to the instruction he had received, but the infidel notions of Hugh Clitheroe silenced him.

I am not going to attempt to describe the conversation at length. My wife tells me I am not clever enough to do so, but this suggestion I treat with the contempt it deserves. Mary Ellen is a good woman, and has been a good wife to me ; but she never appreciated my preaching, nor my power to state an argument. Of course she cannot help this. Women never were intended to understand theology, and while they are very well on their own lines, they are utterly unfitted to deal with men's questions. No, I am not going to describe the conversation, because I get too angry when I think of it ; neither can I help thinking how I might have floored Hugh Clitheroe, had I been there. And yet I must tell in a few words the lines on which Mr. Clitheroe went, not for the sake of dealing with any theological matter, but because his words form a part of Bernard Hawthorne's story.

I know it was cruel. That girl had wheedled her father to invite the young minister just that they might amuse themselves, not realising that they were speaking to a man who was deadly in earnest, and whose life might be utterly wrecked by their words.

"I must say," said Mr. Clitheroe, "that I was surprised at seeing in the report of your sermon that you still held by the antiquated and exploded ideas."

On this Mr. Hawthorne defended his position warmly, as a Methodist minister should. He said that harmful notions about the Bible were being disseminated, and educated young men were giving up their faith because their difficulties were not honestly met. He repeated the arguments which had been instilled into his mind in the Methodist College, and then fancied Mr. Clitheroe would be obliged to yield to him.

Upon this the older man went quietly to his book-

shelves, while Miss Mary Clitheroe watched them with a strange look in her eyes.

"These books," said Mr. Clitheroe quietly, "are by renowned Biblical scholars, and yet their findings destroy your theories entirely. It may shock you, but your statements will not bear examination. Not only did not Moses write the Pentateuch, but he never heard of it. In fact, the Hebrew literature did not begin until the ninth century before Christ, while Moses lived, according to your account, fifteen centuries before that time. Thus what you call the Judaic law was not delivered to Moses on Sinai, amid thunders and lightnings, but to a man, whose name we don't know, hundreds of years later. It is also proved that this same law, instead of being originally written as one book, is a combination of many documents, edited by several people, and was given to the Jews by Ezra some 444 years before the Christian era. It is also clear that David knew very little about the Psalms, because they are really five Temple hymnbooks, most of them dating about the time of Judas Maccabees. It is also admitted by those who know best that Solomon did not write Ecclesiastes, nor the Song, nor the Proverbs; neither did Isaiah write the whole of Isaiah, while Jeremiah knew nothing of what we call the Lamentations. Indeed, only about half the Old Testament was written before the Jewish Exile."

I will not go further with this. It seems like blasphemy to me to be writing such things; neither would I have mentioned it at all but for the reasons I have given. Nevertheless, instead of Bernard Hawthorne silencing Hugh Clitheroe, it was Hugh Clitheroe who silenced Bernard Hawthorne. The young man felt that the foundations of his life were slipping from

under his feet, especially when the older man adduced the discoveries of these great scholars in support of the statements he had made.

It was midnight before the young minister left Rough Leigh, and during the whole evening the one subject they had discussed was the subject on which Bernard Hawthorne had been preaching at Wesley Chapel. Neither was the conversation confined to the two men. Hawthorne quickly discovered that Mary Clitheroe was as conversant with these atheistic books as her father was, and he, minister though he was, could not answer their statements.

"Goodness!" cried the young man at length, as he looked at his watch; "it is twelve o'clock!"

"But you have a latchkey?" said Hugh Clitheroe.

"Oh, yes, I have a latchkey," he laughed. "I shall get to my bed all right; but my landlady won't sleep a wink until I return."

"No? Is she so interested in your welfare as that? She must love you very much."

"Love me! She loves gossip more. She would not fail to know what time I got home for anything; neither will she rest until she knows where I've been to-night—that is, if she does not know already."

"Will you tell her?"

"Oh, there will be no need for that. Most likely she knows already. If she does, most of my congregation will also know before to-morrow night."

Hugh Clitheroe laughed. He had enjoyed the young man's company much. His fresh young mind, and his frank, transparent nature, had captivated him. Indeed, I have heard since that he almost felt sorry afterwards that he had sought to upset the young man's faith; but that may only be gossip.

"Anyhow, I hope you will come up again," he said. "I do not see much company, and I mostly live a quiet life with my books, and—and other things. Can't we fix up another meeting? I am told that Friday is generally a free night with ministers: can't you come up next Friday?"

"Thank you, I will," said Hawthorne, not realising that in promising he was estranging himself from many that wished him well, and taking the first step in a course that led to his appearance before our denominational authorities.

"That is right. We shall expect you next Friday, then. Mary, my dear, I expect the servants are all gone to bed: you will accompany Mr. Hawthorne to the door, won't you?"

The girl went with him into the great entrance-hall, and stood with him at the door as they looked out into the night.

"Isn't it glorious?" said she, as she looked up into the sky, where the moon sailed serenely.

"Yes," said the young man absently.

"There is no smoke to obscure the sky at night," she went on. "Lancashire must have been beautiful in the old days."

"Yes," said Hawthorne again.

"I hope you've had a pleasant evening?"

"Pleasant? No."

"I'm so sorry."

"Are you? But I forgot what I was saying. It has been a wonderful evening—wonderful. Thank you so much!"

"It's such a splendid night that you'll enjoy your walk home."

"I'm sure I shall."

"By the way, I can show you a path whereby you can shorten your journey. The night is so fine that you can see it plainly."

A minute later she was, by his side on the carriage-drive.

"Will you continue your Sunday evening addresses on the Bible?" she said.

"Yes," he replied grimly.

"Next Sunday?"

"I shall not be preaching at Wesley next Sunday, but the Sunday after."

"What line will you take?"

"I shall tell the truth as I find it," he replied. "As you know, your father has lent me these books. I shall read them carefully. I shall get others, too."

"And you will say what you believe? That is, you will——"

"Yes, I shall tell the truth, as far as I can find it," he replied, almost angrily.

"I shouldn't."

"No? Why?"

"I should give up being a minister, if I were you."

"Why?"

"No one can be a minister without committing intellectual suicide. Besides, you seem sincere."

"Miss Clitheroe!"

"There, I've shocked you, haven't I? Look, this is the pathway. You cannot miss it. Follow it until you reach the Lynford Road, and it will make your journey nearly a mile shorter. Good-night. I shall look forward to seeing you next Friday." And she laughed, Bernard Hawthorne thought, without reason.

"Will you answer me a straightforward question?" said the young minister.

"If I can." And she lifted her great dark eyes to his.

"Why were you rude to me when I walked with you the first time we met?"

"Was I rude? I am so sorry. Good-night, Mr. Hawthorne."

He took her outstretched hands, and he felt a shiver pass through his body. For the girl had pressed his hand, and in the light of the moon he saw her great dark eyes flash into his.

"Good-night," she said again, and was gone.

Bernard Hawthorne felt as though a spell were upon him as he walked home. He could not understand his feelings. The Squire's startling statements and Mary Clitheroe's eyes alternately occupied his thoughts, and when at length he arrived at his rooms his journey had seemed like a dream.

When he had turned on the light in his little study he saw a letter lying on his desk. Almost without looking at the writing on the envelope he broke the seal, and a minute later his heart was beating strangely, for the letter was signed Paulina Milano.

CHAPTER VIII

ABEL BOWYER'S CHALLENGE

IN a few minutes Bernard Hawthorne had forgotten Mary Clitheroe ; forgotten, too, the statements of Hugh Clitheroe, which an hour or two earlier had shaken his intellectual life to its very foundations. The spell which the letter had cast upon him was sufficiently strong to destroy all other influences. Coming, as it did, from an unknown correspondent, it was surrounded by mystery, and this fact doubtless enhanced its interest ; but it was not this only which made the young man forgetful of the events of the evening. The letter itself was so strange that Mary Clitheroe and her father might have had no existence as far as his thoughts were concerned. He read it again and again, and at each perusal it revealed new interests. The intellectual and spiritual insight, the yearning for sympathy, the keen analysis, and, moreover, the revelation of classical knowledge, all held him spellbound.

Perhaps, too, the fact that the letter breathed a spirit so utterly dissimilar from that which pervaded Rough Leigh increased its charm. For, in thinking over his experiences later, he could not help remembering that, although Mary Clitheroe had endeavoured to be kind to him, he could never rid himself of the

thought that she was laughing at him. The whole tone of the conversation made him feel the gulf between himself and those with whom he talked. He felt instinctively that both Mary Clitheroe and her father were materialistic to a degree. They had no sympathy with his work, nor with his ideals. The beautiful Lancashire maid had, with a laugh, advised him to cease being a minister; she had declared that to continue in the way he was going meant intellectual suicide; while he felt that her father regarded his position with good-humoured contempt. But the writer of this letter looked at things differently. While the epistle expressed no strong faith, it told of unutterable yearnings, it revealed an intensely religious nature, it evidenced infinite reverence for the Founder of Christianity and for those who had believed in Him through adversity and pain.

But, more than all, she made him feel her admiration for his calling. She spoke of the glory of being able to inspire ideals, of being able to influence men's minds towards the noblest things of life, of being able to feel that one was living in the best thoughts and the noblest impulses of the people.

She said she had listened to his previous Sunday evening's sermon, that she had travelled to Lynford in order to hear it; but that she had left the church heart-sick and weary. She would not deal with his arguments. She thought they were utterly unsound, and that his excursions into the realms of scholarship would be laughed at by competent modern Biblical critics. But it was not of that she was thinking. It was the utter want of a great message. While men and women were starving for want of bread, he had given them nothing but the dry bones of musty scholar-

ship. While thousands of youths and maidens thronged the streets, surrounded by manifold temptations, he had spent his time in trying to prove that which had no real influence on life. "What I and others were longing for," she wrote passionately, "was to hear the voice of a prophet, and to receive a great message from God to help us in our loneliness. And you could be a prophet if you would—not repeating, like a parrot, the findings of others, but telling out to a struggling, tired world that which would make the life-blood of youth pulsate through its veins."

The part of the letter which stirred Bernard Hawthorne's mind and heart more than any other, however, was where she spoke of her loneliness, of her sorrow, of her longing for sympathy, and of her craving for companionship. She told him again that she was writing freely to him because he would never know who penned the lines he read, and because he had moved her heart as no other man ever had or could. She wrote, too, because it eased her heart to tell of a loneliness which no one thought was hers, and of a love which burned within her, but which could never be returned.

"Possibly you will throw this into the waste-paper basket" (she concluded), "regarding it as the effusion of some poor creature bereft of her senses. Or perchance you may wonder who I am, and think of me as one threading her way through the crowded streets of England's capital. You may wonder what I am like, whether I am young or old, rich or poor; but you will never know. For no woman could write what I have written you, and then make herself known. And yet you know me better than many with whom I am brought into daily contact, for I have shown you my heart. I have told you of my longings, and of my dreams. Not this side

of the great unknown will you see me more clearly than in this letter, unless, when walking over the wild Lancashire moors in the night-time, I can be with you, and you can hear my voice as the wind sobs its way through the great spaces, and the stars give you a vision of me as I am.

“Good-night. This is possibly the last letter I shall write to you ; but I shall pray the Great Father to bless you ; I shall be with you in spirit in all your hopes and fears ; and even when you are married to the woman you love, and see your children growing around you, you may know that neither wife nor child loves you so truly and so devotedly as I do.

“Good-night again, beloved. The great city is gone to sleep, and the stars are shining.

“Yours,

“PAULINA MILANO.”

“Who can she be ?” asked the young man again and again, as he re-perused the letter. But no answer came to his question.

He thought of the people who came to Wesley Chapel, he called to mind the faces of many strangers who had come to hear him, but he could think of no face that in any way corresponded with his picture of her who wrote him.

He gave himself up to dreaming. It was now hours past midnight, but the thought of sleep was repellent. Every faculty was awake, every fibre of his being pulsed with strange emotions. He thought much of her who had penned him such an unheard-of epistle. She was no madwoman ; of that he was sure. The letter breathed a great sanity, a wholesome wisdom. In some respects her words were those of a woman old in years, in others they were the outpourings of a fresh young heart.

And she loved him !

Every line told him this. He had never seen her, he knew not who she was, her every word breathed mystery. And yet she loved him.

It was all very wondrous to him, and yet the very wonder had its charms. It inspired the spirit of romance, it caused his heart to beat wildly, it made him feel that in some inexplicable way his destiny was linked to that of Paulina Milano, and that he loved her. He tried to analyse the feeling. He asked himself how he could be so strongly drawn to one upon whom his eyes had never rested, whose voice he had never heard. But he knew that his heart, in a way he could not understand, went out to her.

Presently it seemed as though he saw her. His eyes were closed, and yet she was plainly visible. This night vision was nothing like what he had pictured her in his day dreams. Then he had thought of her as tall and dark, with an Italian cast of features. He had seen her with great black eyes and jet-black hair. The eyes, moreover, had gleamed with passion, and had, at the same time, expressed unutterable longing. Her skin, he thought, was dark, but ruddy with the hue of health. Her form was well developed, and as shapely as the Venus of Milo.

But that night he saw only a timid, shrinking child of eighteen. Her face was sad, her eyes were blue, her hair was golden. She was very fair to look upon, and more beautiful than he had conceived. But her beauty reminded him of the morning rather than of the full-orbed day, of the budding spring rather than of gorgeous summer.

The vision was very real, however ; so real that

he wanted to speak, wanted to clasp her in his arms. But he could not : he seemed powerless to move.

"Paulina, I will find you," he said aloud. "I see you, I love you, and I will find you!"

And then it seemed to him as though she shook her head sadly, and he saw her no more.

Presently he heard the Town Hall clock strike five, and like a man in a dream he rose from his chair and went to his bedroom, where he slept for many long hours.

Now, it may seem strange that I, Caleb Sutcliffe, should know of this, and, knowing it, should write as one full of sympathy. For at that time I knew not Bernard Hawthorne, neither did I love him. But by-and-by I may perchance tell how I learnt what I have written, and why I, who never was accused of knowing the meaning of romance, love to linger on this part of the young minister's life. I am afraid that before I have proceeded much further with this history many who read it may think of me scornfully and with contempt; but let them read to the end before they judge me.

The next day Bernard Hawthorne wrote a long letter to his unknown correspondent; but what he said to her I am unable to relate.

As the days passed by, although he retained in his memory the vision he had seen, the reality of Paulina Milano seemed to pass away. She was little more to him than an idea, a shadowy something which he thought of with wonder, and his love for her became only such as a romantic youth might have for a face he had seen in a picture. Meanwhile the thought of Mary Clithroe grew upon him. He remembered that he had promised to dine at her father's house

the following Friday; while the memory of the conversation he had had with Hugh Clitheroc came back with terrible force.

In truth, as the thought of Paulina Milano became less real, that of his Sunday evening addresses loomed larger. Those statements of Hugh Clitheroc, which at that time appeared to him unanswerable, and which seemed to destroy the authority of the Bible, haunted him like a nightmare, and although he was not announced to preach at Wesley the next Sunday, he knew he should have to deal with them in the near future.

On the Thursday afternoon previous to the day on which he had promised to dine at Rough Leigh for the second time, I saw him in Fore Street. I was talking with old Abel Bowyer at the time, and was giving him some sound advice about getting partly drunk before four o'clock in the afternoon.

"Why," said Abel, "tha wudden ha me geet reight druffen (drunk) afore neet, wud ta?"

"I would not have you get drunk at all, Abel!" I said severely.

"Ay, I thowt as 'ow ye were gectin' at me 'cause Aw weren't more druffen. What dost 'a say, Mester Hawthorne?"

At this the young minister came across the street. "What do I say about what?" he asked.

"Why, Caleb here is fair stalled wi' me 'cause I'm noan reight druffen afore fower o'clock. I telled 'im as 'ow Aw'm as fair gone as I can be this time o' day. But Caleb is noan aisy to please. Ay, but his owd lass must ha' a hard time to live wi' him!"

"Abel," said Mr. Hawthorne, "I'd give a good deal to see you give up the drink altogether."

"Wud ta?" cried Abel. "I'll gi' thee a bit o' advice, lad. Stick to thee praichin' on a Sunda', but doan't begin on a Thursda'. It'll noan do. Besides, what's wrong wi' me? Do I ever miss chapel? Tha knowst Aw never do. I may have to be put to bed o' a Saturda', but Aw'm allus i' my place on Sunda' morn. Isn't that soa?"

"Yes, it is; but——"

"Ay," went on Abel, without heeding the minister. "And I set a good example to a lot o' sich as church members, an' all. Ther's a lot, sich as Caleb 'ere, who doan't turn up o' a Sunda' morn. They've geeten a cowl'd, or summat. But, cowl'd or no cowl'd, I ne'er miss chapel. And I tell tha," continued Abel, raising his voice, "Aw've summat to say to thee, Mester Hawthorne. Thou'st been i' Lynford several month naa, and ther's never been onybody convertad. That'll noan do. Aw've took up for thee agin Caleb here; but we mun ha' convarsions, Mester. I mebbe druffen, but Aw love Wesley, and Aw'll noan stand by a parson as can't geet foak convertad. And Aw'll tell thee summat else. Yer sermons 'bout Solomon and the Proverbs 'll noan do it. It may shaw off thy larnin', but it'll noan convert the foak."

"*You* talk about conversions!" cried the young minister in astonishment.

"Ay, I do, an' all. Aw've bin goin' to Wesley for mony a year. Aw've seed ministers come and ministers goa, and they've all called me druffen owd Abel Bowyer. But what Aw ses is this: we mun ha' convarsions or th' place 'll have to be closed. So see to it, Mester, see to it."

"I hope there will be," said the young minister; and I saw that Abel's words had their effect, even although

the old man was half-intoxicated. "I hope there will be many conversions before long, and I hope that you will be among the rest. Come now, you are an old man, and——"

"Laive me alone, Mester. But noa, Aw'll stand in wi' the rest."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Hawthorne.

"Weel, Aw main this: ef yo'll convart Caleb Sutcliffe here, Aw'll get convarted."

"Convert me!" I cried.

"Ay, thee!" cried Abel. "For dost 'a know what tha art, Caleb? Thou'rt a whitewashed owd Pharisee, that's what thou art. Aw know! thou'rt class laider, and praicher, and Circuit Steward, and all thet; but thou'rt a Pharisee. And it's the likes o' thee as make the likes o' me. But Aw stand by it, Mester Hawthorne. Ef thou'lt convart Caleb 'ere—ef thou'll geet him to th' penitent form, and mak' him cry out, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' Aw'll geet convarted, too; ay, an' Aw'll gi' up th' drink, an' all."

"Really, Abel," I said, "this is insulting."

"Is it?" said Abel, laughing. "Thou'rt fond o' praichin' to me, but tha doesn't like to be praiched to, dost 'a? But Aw stand by it, Mester Hawthorne, Aw stand by it!"

"Abel," I said, "I could bring you up for libel."

"Do it," said Abel; "do it. Dost 'a think Aw'm noan able to prove what Aw say? What abaat poor owd Betty Scott, what lived i' one o' thy cottages better nor fifteen year, an' paid her rent reg'lar, and then when the poor owd lass wur took poorly, and could noan pay her rent, tha kicked 'er aat?"

"In matters of business, Abel——"

"Tha thinks tha can do what tha likes. It'll noan

do. Aw knaw Aw geet drunk, but Aw'd rayther do that than do what tha dost. Why, think o' th' time when tha tried to geet Mester Bennet aat o' th' Circuit. He wur a good un, but tha did'n' like him, and tha tow'd things abaat him in a way as made foak turn agin him. Aw knaw, and Aw stand by it. Mester Hawthorne, tha geet owd Caleb convarted, and Aw'll geet convarted."

"I'll not listen any longer to this," I cried; and I walked away, thinking the young minister would do likewise. Judge of my surprise and anger, then, when, turning around a minute later, I saw him walking with this drunken old man, as though he did not resent the way he had spoken to his Circuit Steward. Moreover, as I remembered the look in his face as he listened to the words Abel Bowyer had spoken about me, I felt angry with him.

"You'll not do for Wesley Chapel, young man, for all your cleverness," I said to myself. "Old Abel was right. You've never had a conversion since you came; and the minister who gets no conversions is not the man we want."

The next day, about eleven o'clock, a terrible snow-storm came on, late in March though it was. But this did not deter Bernard Hawthorne from going to Rough Leigh.

"It will be a terrible business getting back to-night," he said, as he trudged up the drive towards the house. But this did not trouble him. The look which Mary Clitheroe gave him the week before made him brave the weather, even although he tried to deceive himself by saying that he wanted to have another talk with her father.

When he arrived at the house, however, he saw

that something of importance had happened. Hugh Clitheroe, usually so grim and taciturn, looked pale and worried, while the servants whispered anxiously one to another.

“Is anything the matter?” asked the young minister.

“I hope not, but I am afraid there is,” was Mr. Clitheroe's reply. “My daughter went to see one of my old cottage tenants to-day, and promised to be home at three o'clock. I waited till after five, and then sent a man to the house. When he arrived, the old woman told him she had left nearly an hour before. As she has not returned, I feel anxious. I cannot go out myself. My heart is weak, and if I tried to walk in this storm it would kill me in a few minutes.”

Bernard Hawthorne had by this time taken off his overcoat and hat, but without hesitating, he went to the hall and put them on again.

“Could you tell me which way she went?” he said quietly.

CHAPTER IX

THE SNOWSTORM ON THE MOOR

"SURELY you are not going to search for my daughter, Mr. Hawthorne?" said Mr. Clitheroe.

"Certainly," said the young man. "I could not sit in your library while you were anxious about her. Besides, she may need help. It is a very wild night."

"But you are wearing your evening clothes!"

"I have a warm muffler; and you see I have not taken off my thick boots."

Mr. Clitheroe sighed. Doubtless he was very anxious; and his trouble was all the harder to bear because his feeble health enforced inactivity.

Bernard Hawthorne went out into the night alone. The snow was not now falling heavily, but the wind drove clouds of sharp ice crystals against his face and almost blinded him. Still, he was young and strong. He had never known what ill-health meant, and although he was but little acquainted with the country, he feared nothing. He had received full information concerning the route Miss Clitheroe had taken, and as the snow was not yet deep he felt sure he would be more successful than the servants, who had returned without finding her.

The cottage to which she had gone, however, was high up on the moors; indeed, all the land north of

Rough Leigh grounds was uncultivated and exposed to the storm. And it was in this direction that he had to go,—in the teeth of the biting, cutting wind.

He did not feel very anxious. He was sure Miss Clitheroe knew the countryside well, and although the house to which she had gone was far removed from other dwellings, he had often seen lonely farmsteads scattered over the moors. He felt certain that he should pass one of those on his way to Scott's Folly, which was the name of the place Mary Clitheroe had set out to visit.

While in the Rough Leigh grounds, which were sheltered by great trees, he felt no difficulty in walking; but no sooner did he reach the moors than he was almost swept off his feet. It was not very dark. The moon was more than half full, and the snow having covered the wild, open moorlands, he could see (when he turned his back to the wind) a vast panorama of hill and dale.

For several minutes he toiled along the cart-track, the snow falling heavier at each step he took. But he did not heed the storm. In truth, the wild fresh air of the moors, sweetened by storm and frost, acted upon him like some fabled elixir. Once or twice, when met with a specially furious gust of wind, he laughed aloud. Presently, however, his limbs began to grow tired, and his muscles ached because of his unwonted exertion. He discovered that being out in a storm on the Rough Leigh moors was nothing to joke about. Still he continued on his way, until presently he saw, a little off the main track which led to Scott's Folly, a cottage. He was now about a mile and a half from Rough Leigh, and about the same distance from Scott's Folly.

"She may have turned in there," he mused. "Indeed, nothing is more natural. All the people who live around here are Mr. Clitheroc's tenants. At any rate I will inquire."

Accordingly he made his way to the little farmstead, and knocked at the door. A stern-looking, hard-featured woman soon appeared.

"What dost 'a want?" she asked.

"I called to ask if Miss Mary Clitheroc called on you this afternoon or evening."

"Noa."

"Have you been out around the house?"

"Yi, a bit."

"But you've not seen her?"

"I've said so, 'av'n't I?"

"Thank you. It's a rough night, isn't it?"

"Weel, Aw reckon yo've got yer share on't."

"Yes, I have. Good-night."

"Good-neet."

Bernard, who by this time began to feel anxious, turned his face to the wind again, wondering at the woman's rudeness, yet laughing at her retort.

Presently he heard a voice which caused him to stop.

"I say, felly."

"Yes."

"Who might yo' be?"

The truth was, Margaret Ellen Dobson had realised that she might be missing a very interesting bit of news. Both she and her husband, Peter Dobson, were known to be the most taciturn people in the district. Perhaps their lonely life on the moors had confirmed a natural trait in their characters; nevertheless they both, and especially Margaret Ellen, loved to know all the news. Peter Dobson seldom went to a place

of worship, but Margaret Ellen was a member of our Smallcoats Society.

Immediately after Bernard Hawthorne had left the house (she had spoken roughly to him because she thought he might be a prowling tramp up to no good), she said to her husband :

"I wonder who yon chap is? He spoke as if he were summat above the ordinary. He'll noan be a waiver."

"Thou wert a foil not to ax," remarked Peter.

"Yi, I were," agreed Margaret Ellen, and thereupon she opened the door and shouted after him.

But Bernard Hawthorne did not tell her his name. Not only was he anxious about Mary Clitheroc, but he had no desire to become a subject for gossip.

"He'll noan tell," remarked Margaret Ellen.

"Noa."

"He might be young Hawthorne."

"Noa."

"But he might. 'Twas like his voice. Aw've 'cerd as 'ow he come 'ome wi' Miss Clitheroc three or fower weeks agone. It's a rare bad night to be out!"

"Then shut th' door, owd lass, and geet my 'ot milk afore we go to bed."

Meanwhile, Bernard Hawthorne struggled farther and farther up the hillside towards another house he had seen. It was no use going all the way to Scott's Folly, for the Rough Leigh servants had been there and inquired. A great dread had come into his heart; for now that he was really out on the wild moors, he realised how easy it would be for a woman, young and strong though she might be, to perish before help could reach her. Especially did he feel this, when, on visiting the other cottage, he found it deserted.

“This is more serious than I had imagined,” he said as he trudged along again. He did not suffer from the cold, but he was well-nigh exhausted. His clothes were freezing around him, the night grew colder, the snow fell in larger quantities. Indeed, so terrible was the storm which swept across the moors, that he had to take shelter behind a hedge—one of those useless fences built in some far-off time by a generation now forgotten. After waiting there a few minutes he felt a great languor creeping over him. He wanted more than words can say to lie down and rest; but this he dared not do. So he aroused himself, and went out again into the teeth of the wind. His head was dizzy, and his thoughts were far from clear.

“What is the matter with me?” he asked himself again and again.

Presently he realised that it was not of Mary Clitheroe that he thought. His mind turned to Paulina Milano, and to the letter she had written to him. Her words seemed almost like a prophecy.

“Not this side of the great unknown will you see me more clearly than in this letter, unless when walking over the wild Lancashire moors in the night-time I can be with you, and you can hear my voice as the wind sobs its way through the great spaces.”

And she became very real to him as he stood there alone in the storm. The face he had seen in his dreams appeared to him again,—so sweet, and tender, and true. He saw the lovelight in her eyes, he almost fancied that she walked by his side. For a moment the scene had seemed to change, and he fancied he walked with her somewhere in a flowery dell, where the birds sang, and the brooklet rippled over its stony bed. She seemed so very little, so timid, so *spirituelle*, and yet

so loving. He felt that he loved her even as she loved him, and his interest in Mary Clitheroc was only what he might feel in any passing stranger.

He was perfectly happy, and not a fear haunted his heart; then he felt himself floundering in the snow. A great gust of wind had swept him off his feet. The shock brought him back to his senses. He realised again that he was out on a wild Lancashire moor, in a snowstorm, and that no help was near.

He looked around him, and his heart grew cold. He could not tell where he was. Everywhere, everywhere, was whirling, blinding snow, driven hither and thither by the winds. He knew not which way to turn, for he had no idea of locality.

"God help me, or I am lost!" he cried.

Again his fear left him. He felt that somehow God was in the storm. The Spirit of God was in both wind and snow, and he was not alone. The thought was of infinite comfort to him, and his heart seemed to grow warm again. The grandeur of the night made life at once wondrously small, and yet wondrously great. Suppose he died? The thought did not trouble him, for he realised that life was more than mere earthly existence. He felt that this present life was merely a fragment of the great whole,—that great infinite whole, the secret of which lay in the eternal love of God. Criticisms of the Bible—what did they amount to? What was human scholarship? what was the value of the puny opinions of man? God lived!

Then suddenly there was a lull in the storm. The wind ceased to howl, the snow fell no more. A break in the clouds caused the moonlight to flood the moors with splendour.

Looking northward he saw the great white slopes of

Pendle,* which lifted its giant form into the sky. All around was a white world. Hill and dale became more and more plainly visible. The sight was grand; it was more than grand, it was awe-inspiring. He had never seen anything like it before, and, in a way he could not understand, it broadened his vision, it made heaven higher, and life greater.

Then he remembered that he had come out to seek for Mary Clitheroe, and he had not found her. He felt he could find his way back to Rough Leigh now, for the sight of Pendle had revealed to him his whereabouts. But how could he go back while she might be out there all alone on the moors? Then—as he saw the storm-clouds gather again—the hopelessness of his mission appeared to him, and he felt afraid.

“But I must find her,” he said; “it would be cowardly to go back without her.”

“Holloa!”

He tried to answer back, but his voice was lost in the storm, which had arisen again.

Still he walked in the direction from which he thought the sound came, and presently saw several dark forms.

“Holloa!”

He was able to make his rescuers hear him this time; for those to whom he spoke had come from Rough Leigh to find him.

“Have you found Miss Clitheroe?” he asked eagerly.

“She came home about half an hour after you left, sir.”

“Is she well?”

“Yes, sir. She went to a cottage farther down the hill, and came up through Heart Clough. Mr. Clitheroe sent us out to find you. You must be fair done up.”

* A noted hill in Lancashire.

He realised that he had come out in vain,—that his battle with the storm was all for nothing. Still, Mary Clitheroe was safe, so nothing mattered. And yet he felt almost ashamed as he entered the house half an hour later, for he was like one who had gone on a fool's errand.

Mr. Clitheroe met him with hand outstretched and a gleam of kindness in his eyes.

"It was so good of you to go," he cried, "even although Mary was safe. But you must have had a terrible time. Eh! What is this? You are ill, Mr. Hawthorne."

He was ill. His battle with the storm had so overcome him that when he came into the warm room he fell on the sofa utterly exhausted.

"Mr. Hawthorne!"

"Yes, I'm all right. I'm very tired, that's all. Let me rest a few minutes, and I shall be quite well."

"Let me give you a little brandy."

"I assure you there is no need. I am all right, only a bit done up. I am so glad Miss Clitheroe is safe!"

Mary Clitheroe was standing close by, but she did not speak. Indeed, she did not seem much interested in Bernard Hawthorne's condition.

"You are sure you are quite well?" said the young man to her.

"Quite well, thank you," she replied coldly.

A second later Bernard Hawthorne was unconscious. When he awoke he found himself in bed. A bright fire burned in a grate near by, and Mr. Clitheroe was sitting by his side.

"How long have I been here?" he asked.

"Only two hours. I dared not let you sleep in your wet clothes, so two of the menservants carried you up

here, and got you to bed. You must be ready for some food. Let me ring for some."

"You've had dinner, then?"

"Yes,—that is, the dinner-hour has been over hours since; but I've ordered something for you."

"I should like to get up."

"Do you think you are well enough?"

"Oh, yes, I'm perfectly well. Are my clothes dry?"

"Certainly. But I should advise you to stay in bed."

"No, thank you; I'll get up."

A little later he was in the library, talking with his host.

"I cannot thank you enough," said Hugh Clitheroc again and again; but Mary Clitheroc said nothing. Instead, she sat by the fire, evidently much interested in some fancy-work, of which women are so fond.

Presently Bernard addressed some remarks to her, which she answered only in monosyllables, until by-and-by the young man began to feel very uncomfortable.

"Did you find the storm very bad?" he said to her.

"Oh, no."

"I hope you do not feel tired now?"

"Not at all, thank you."

And so on. Not one word of thanks or appreciation did she offer him. For this the young man was, in a sense, glad, for he was not one of those who cared to have his doings talked about; all the same, he felt hurt that she should seem so indifferent to his welfare.

"Of course you'll stay the night?" said Mr. Clitheroc presently.

"No, thank you. It is very kind of you, but I must get back to my lodgings."

"I cannot allow it, Mr. Hawthorne. You have had

a most trying time, and I should never forgive myself if you return to Lynford to-night."

"I assure you I feel perfectly well, and there is not the slightest need for me to trouble you. Besides, the storm seems over."

But even although he said this, he looked towards Mary Clitheroe as if in expectation that she would second her father's invitation.

"But you must stay the night," urged the older man; "help me to persuade him, Mary."

"Perhaps Mr. Hawthorne thinks there are more lost maidens between here and Lynford," she said.

"What in the world do you mean, Mary?"

"Oh, I am sure it would be a pity to quell his spirit of chivalry! Would it not have been grand, Mr. Hawthorne, if you could have lived five hundred years ago?"

"Why?" asked the young man.

"Because then you could have mounted your charger and sallied out to rescue any number of distressed maidens."

"Mary!" cried her father in astonishment.

"I cannot forgive myself for having played my part so badly," she went on,— "especially as Mr. Hawthorne did his so well! It is the proper thing in melodrama, I believe, for the young hero to go out in the snow-storm to find the lost heiress. If events had taken the correct course I ought to have been sleeping to death in the snow, or have been lost on the moors. He ought to have searched for hours in vain, and then after the usual wild prayers, he should have found me in the last extremity. Following that, he should, by means of his superhuman strength, have carried me as though I were a baby, have brought me to the door of the family mansion, roused the inmates, and then

have fallen in a swoon on the threshold. I will admit that Mr. Hawthorne played his part splendidly ; but, by just going into a sheltered cottage, I have spoiled everything, and I am ashamed of myself."

"Yes, you did not act your part at all well," said Hawthorne, with a laugh. All the same the girl's sneer wounded him to the quick.

"But I hope you will continue to play your part correctly, and stay the night," she went on. "It would be ridiculous of you to go to your lodgings after your adventure. You might as well not have gone out at all."

"True," said Bernard, his heart becoming more and more bitter ; "but seeing you have spoiled the general effect, I must persist in doing the ridiculous thing. Besides, to-morrow is Saturday, and I have not yet fully prepared for my Sunday's work."

"Yes ; and as I propose going to Wesley Chapel on Sunday night to hear your attack on the Higher Critics, I hope you will be fully primed."

He could not mistake her meaning any longer. She was determined to insult him, even while he was her father's guest. In spite of his anger he wondered at her. He had nearly lost his life in his desire to render her a service, and yet she had offered no word of thanks ; instead she had deliberately mocked him.

He looked at his watch. "It is midnight, Mr. Clitheroe," he said. "I am sorry I have been the means of spoiling a pleasant evening, but I am afraid I was born under an unlucky star."

"If you *will* go, let me order my coachman to drive you," said Hugh Clitheroe.

"Oh, certainly not. I could not think of allowing a poor fellow to be dragged out of his bed at such an hour."

He pulled aside the window-blind and looked out.

"Look," he said, "it is a cloudless sky, and the storm has quite gone. I shall have a glorious walk home."

Mr. Clitheroe insisted upon his remaining, but the girl's behaviour had made him obstinate. A few minutes later he had left the house.

"I will never enter that house again," he said; "never, that is——"

He did not finish the sentence, but walked rapidly over the freezing snow, his heart burning with anger, his imagination aflame.

"And so she is going to be at Wesley on Sunday night, is she?" he went on presently. "Well, she shall see that being a minister does not mean committing intellectual suicide. She shall see—— But no, I will drive her out of my mind, and to-morrow I will answer Paulina Milano's letter."

For so he had already begun to call her in his heart.

CHAPTER X

PAULINA MILANO AND MARY CLITHEROE

THE following Sunday night, having no appointment, I found my way to Wesley Chapel in a very critical frame of mind. It is true I knew nothing of the events I have related in the last chapter, but I had discovered that Mr. Hawthorne's sermons on the Bible had set a number of people talking, and had begun to attract the outside public. I knew that many of these people were like the Greeks of olden time, who were for ever longing to hear some new thing; and, not being a believer in what some of our weavers called "newvangs," I determined to listen critically to all he said. I even went so far as to bring Field's "Handbook of Theology" and Horne's "Introduction to the Bible" with me, so that I should be in a position to correct any false statements at the end of the service.

There was a good congregation present, especially of middle-aged men; and I am bound to admit that an unusual amount of interest was manifested.

When Bernard Hawthorne entered the pulpit, I thought he looked careworn and haggard; the ruddy glow of health which I had noticed on his first appearance was gone, and he looked at least five years older.

“He’s not finding it child’s play to be minister at Wesley Chapel,” I said to myself. “He has discovered that Lancashire people are hard-headed and intellectual; we are not shilly-shally and shallow, like the Londoners.”

When he spoke, however, his weariness seemed to leave him. His voice rang out clearly, and I forgot the pallor of his face. I saw him gaze steadily around the chapel as if in search of some one, and then after a few seconds a scarlet flush mounted his face as though he had seen some one of whom he was afraid.

“Yes, young man,” I thought, “I am here. I daresay you did not expect me; but I have come, and I have brought ‘Field’ and ‘Horne’ with me,” and I noted with satisfaction the five volumes on the book-board before me.

Ten minutes after he had begun preaching I had forgotten both Field’s “Handbook” and Horne’s “Introduction to the Bible.” In fact, I had forgotten almost everything in my anger and indignation. The sermon, if such it can be called, might have been preached by Thomas Cooper in his atheistic days, or by Charles Bradlaugh. He conceded all those vile statements of Hugh Clitheroe and his daughter; he said that in all probability Moses never wrote the Pentateuch, nor David the Psalms. He declared that all the arguments built on the assumptions advanced by such men as Horne were of no value whatever. He moreover admitted that many of the Biblical records, such as the account of the sun standing still, and the command of God to Saul to slay not only men but women and children, were written without a proper understanding of the truth!

Oh, it was terrible, terrible! It would have been

bad enough in a Unitarian chapel, but in a Methodist sanctuary it was sacrilege—blasphemy!

It is true he concluded by saying that the Bible was in the deepest and truest sense the book of God. But how could it have been the book of God, if the men said to have written the various parts knew nothing about them?

Of course the congregation listened spell-bound. You might have heard a pin drop all the time he was speaking; but that, I felt, was all the more reason for being angry. The seeds of atheism were being sown,—the very foundations of our faith were being undermined by one who called himself an ambassador of Christ.

When the service was over I went into the vestry, where several of the leading people had gathered. Jonathan Giles, the old town missionary, was there, so were Brothers Bone and Tinklin, while even Kneepads and Moreso had come in, looking pale and fearful.

I waited in silence while the collection was counted and the amount entered in the collection-book; I even shook hands with all the brethren, and remarked that there was a large congregation. I mention this to show how calm and collected I was, and to prove the assurance that I did not give way to an anger that under the circumstances might be forgiven. When all was quiet, however, I turned to the young minister, and told him what I thought of him.

I have been told that I have a sharp tongue, and that I can say what is in my mind with clearness and force. This may be true; I have an idea that it is. Anyhow, if ever I spoke plainly, I spoke plainly that night. I accused him of being a traitor and a false prophet; I

told him he was taking God's money to do the devil's work; I declared that I would bring the matter before the next leaders' meeting, with a view to proposing a resolution to the Quarterly Meeting, which would recommend his expulsion from the ministry.

To my surprise he did not answer a word. Instead, he coolly sat down in the minister's chair, while I, righteously indignant, poured out my soul.

"What have you to say?" I asked presently.

"Nothing," he replied.

"Nothing?"

"No."

"Why? may I ask?"

"Because I do not think it would be wise."

"And why not wise?"

"Well, because I do not think you are the man to judge of such matters."

"I have been a local preacher for thirty years," I said. "I expounded the Scriptures before you were born. Why, then, am I not the man to judge?"

"Well, such questions require a calm judgment, and scholarship."

"It has nothing to do with scholarship," I said; "it is a matter of faith."

"Whether David wrote the Psalms is not a matter of faith at all."

"What, then?"

"It's a matter of scholarship."

I will not write down my answer to that, but Brother Bone has told me since that it was masterly. I soon let him know that I had not read "Field" and "Horne" for nothing, and I really think I made an impression on him. He sat looking thoughtfully on the floor, and I saw his lips tremble.



"I HAVE NO ANSWER TO GIVE YOU," HE SAID.

"Have you finished, Mr. Sutcliffe?" he said, when I paused.

"I am waiting for your answer," I replied.

"I have no answer to give you," he said.

"You are responsible to Methodism," I urged.

"I am responsible to truth—to God," he made answer; and then he left the vestry without another word.

Now, would you believe it? I got no thanks from the Wesley people, except from Brothers Bone and Tinklin, for my action in the matter. The best families in the church, that is, considered from the standpoint of social position, took sides with Mr. Hawthorne. It is true these people never came to the Quarterly Meetings, and therefore had nothing to do with appointing circuit officials, so I did not pay much attention to them. But that was not all. Even Kneepads, and Moreso, and Jonathan Giles, and the rest of them, failed to support me. It is true Mr. Jory, the superintendent, remonstrated with the young man, but without effect; for not only was he allowed to continue these sermons, but he actually, and without consulting me, altered the whole tenor of the Sunday nights' services. Instead of calling a prayer-meeting after pronouncing the Benediction, he said that possibly some present might desire to ask him questions on the subject of his discourses, and although he might not be able to answer them satisfactorily, he would promise to meet them as fairly as he was able.

I say it without fear of contradiction, this mode of procedure was without precedent in the history of our chapel. It is true he interested a number of outsiders in the services; but he broke away from the usages of Methodism, he turned the after-service into a conference,

and he allowed men who had not been to chapel for years to air their views in the House of God.

I brought the matter up before the leaders' meeting; I urged that steps should be taken to deal with Bernard Hawthorne in a summary fashion. But I could not get a following. It is true Mr. Jory sided with me, but then, as I have before remarked, he is not a strong man, and when he saw the congregation was against me, he said we had better wait a bit before taking any definite steps in the matter.

"Thou'rt noangeetin' convasions, Mester Hawthorne," said old Abel Bowyer a little later, "but thou'st done one thing—thou'st got Caleb Sutcliffe's knife into thee, soa I'll stand by thee. I will an' all."

"Thank you, Mr. Bowyer," said the young minister. "You don't think I'm so very bad, then?"

"Aw think as 'ow yer praichin' is poor stuff," said Abel. "It may be clever, it may be larned, Aw doan't knaw, but Aw knaw as aa it'll ne'er convert nobody. Still, thou'st got the foak to chapel, and that's summat. Besides, thou'st got grit in thee, and thou willn't allow Caleb to lead thee whichever way he wants to go. That's why I like thee. But thy sarmons 'll noan convert me, nor nobody else!"

"And yet I would give a great deal to lead you to give up the drink," said Hawthorne.

"Geet Caleb converted," said Abel. "If tha can geet him converted, I'll stand to my word."

During the time the young minister had been giving these heretical discourses he had received two letters from his unknown correspondent, and they exercised his mind greatly. He found himself thinking more and more about Paulina Milano day by day. It was she who made him care less and less about Miss Mary

Clitheroe ; it was her words of tenderness and affection that became a kind of antidote for Miss Clitheroe's cynical scepticism. Often in his lonely hours he would take her letters one by one and read them through, lovingly dwelling upon each line, and re-reading many times those passages which told of her love for him. For the last two letters especially were love-letters. The young man could not mistake the fact. No one could write so tenderly, and yet so passionately, if her heart were not burning with love. And yet a tone of hopelessness pervaded them.

"You will never see me," she repeated again and again. "I am destined to live my life away from you,—the only man to whom I have given a second's thought, and for whom I would give my life. Day by day I meet many people, but not one understands me, not one sympathises with me, for not one knows my true thoughts or the real longings of my heart. But you know, beloved ; in these letters I have written, you have seen me as I really am. You know the thoughts I think, and you have looked into the depths of my soul. In the letters you have written I sometimes seem to see your heart, and I fancy, although you only think of me as one mingling with life's busy throng, that I am more to you than any you have seen in the flesh. Is that so, I wonder? Do you really love one whom you have never seen, and never known save for what I have written? Sometimes I pray that it may be so, and again I plead with God to spare you from loving one who can never be anything to you but a name, a memory, a dream.

"And yet, why do I write you? Why do I reveal to you the inmost recesses of my heart? Why do I tell you that I love you, when I know that you

will never see me, nor know me save through these letters? For I could not bear to meet you face to face. I should die of shame if you came to me and said, 'You are Paulina Milano, and you have written me words of love; you have told me of your heart's longings!' For so hath God made woman. It is not for us to speak of our love before the king of our heart hath confessed himself. And you cannot confess yourself to me, having never known me.

"Why do I write? Because I cannot help it. Because I cannot resist my heart's pleadings. Because I am all alone in the world, knowing no one with whom I can commune; because no one save you can sympathise with me. I know I am feeding a hopeless love by writing to you, and that my loneliness to-morrow will be all the more terrible, because to-night I hold communion with you. But what of that? To-night I live in heaven, and I am willing to suffer hell if thereby I can know what heaven means, even if it be but for an hour.

"So good-night, and forgive me. Think of me kindly if you can, and remember that from one bleeding, hopeless heart prayers are ever rising to that great God of us all that He will bless you, and lead you more and more into the light."

It was this letter which determined Bernard Hawthorne to go to London, and, if possible, see Paulina Milano. He was tired and almost heartsick with his work in Lynford. For if I had done nothing else, I had made people criticise him severely. Many people wrote him anonymous letters calling him an atheist, while others advised him to get his addresses published in the *Free Thinker*. Moreover, he realised that although many of the non-church-going population

had gone to hear him, his new methods of work were not building up Wesley Church. As far as he knew, not one had been led to faith and to Christ.

And this saddened him more than words can say. For even I never doubted his desire to do good. It was this fact, moreover, which bound the church to him. Hundreds did not believe in the course he took in order to attract people to Wesley Chapel, but nearly every one believed in *him*. That was why I could never get a resolution passed against him, and why nearly every one turned against me for the steps I had taken.

During all this time he had never once seen Miss Mary Clitheroe. Since the night of the snowstorm she had sent him no message, neither had any communication passed between them. It is true Hugh Clitheroe had asked him to come to his house, in order to meet some scientific celebrities; but he had not gone. He felt that Mary Clitheroe had been laughing at him, and while, in spite of Paulina Milano's letters, she fascinated him in a way he could not understand, he did not care to become the subject for further ridicule.

By the time he had finished his notorious series of lectures on the Bible, the winter had gone; the days had become much longer, and there was a smell of spring in the air. In this fact Bernard Hawthorne rejoiced beyond words, for although we who have been born and reared in Lynford take but little notice of the grim sordidness of the town, it is to outsiders one of the ugliest places in the world. Especially is this true in the winter. Week after week and month after month we scarcely ever see the sun. Rain falls almost continuously, and the smoke, emitted from

two or three hundred factory chimneys, causes the rain to be unpleasant beyond words. Indeed, Lynford, during weeks on a stretch, is often enveloped in an atmosphere of smoke and grime. The mud in the streets is as black as ink, while nothing pleasant meets the eye.

Thus it came about, when Bernard Hawthorne was able to go into the country, where the birds sang, and the air was sweetened by the breath of spring, that life became more bearable.

One evening, therefore, having no meeting at Wesley, he went for a walk into the country. It was just after he had decided to go to London and see Paulina Milano. He was walking through some fields, painting pictures of his meeting with his unknown correspondent, and wondering with whom she stayed when she came to Lynford, when he was startled by a voice near.

“Good evening, Mr. Hawthorne.”

“Good evening, Miss Clitheroe.”

“You have quite forsaken us,” she said. “Father has often wondered why you do not come up. He enjoyed your society so much when you visited us that he wants to see more of you.”

“It is very kind of him, but I have been very busy,” he said, with fast-beating heart.

“But is it not rather unkind of you to neglect your friends?”

He looked into her eyes as she spoke, and in spite of himself he felt the hot blood surge into his face.

“I—I did not think you wanted me!” he said.

He had forgotten Paulina Milano, for the flash of Mary Clitheroe's eyes had mastered him. Never had

he thought her so beautiful as then. She, like all nature around, had adorned herself in spring attire. The flush of youth and health was on her cheeks, and the great wavy masses of her nut-brown hair glistened in the light of the lowering sun. Her tall, finely shaped figure was the very incarnation of grace, and vigour, and womanly beauty. He felt that here was a maiden infinitely superior to any one he had ever met.

"I have been so disappointed at not seeing you," she replied, and to the young man there seemed something caressing in her tones.

"I am glad of that," he said.

He had no desire to see Paulina Milano now. Her letters seemed only vapid and meaningless effusions. Why should he go to London? Most likely she was only some half-mad Italian girl, who had yielded to a feeling of wild romance. What pure, modest, sane woman would, unsolicited, send him such fulsome letters?

"I have been so much interested in your Sunday-night lectures, too," she went on. "Father thought they betrayed much sound thinking and correct scholarship. They must have cost you a great deal of labour."

"Yes, they did," he admitted. "In fact, I am a bit run down, and I had thought of going away for a few days' rest."

"Where do you think of going?"

"I—I have not settled," he said stammeringly. Somehow he could not, even in casual talk, say anything that might connect his words with Paulina Milano. The thought of going to London seemed absurd now, and he would not have Mary Clitheroe think of his

going there. "In fact," he added, "I do not know that I shall go away at all. Now that we have better weather, there is not so much need."

"Then why not come up to Rough Leigh for a day?" she said kindly. "We have staying with us a most interesting man. He is a member of the Psychological Society, and he has been making the most wonderful revelations."

He looked at her again, and his heart beat faster than ever. No wonder people called her the Queen of the Lynford Valley. Besides, she was so gentle, so kind, so gracious. After all, he had been absurdly sensitive about her previous behaviour. Possibly she had never meant to wound him.

All around the birds twittered, while the setting sun shed a golden glow over the whole countryside.

"I should like to come very much," he said, all his former resolutions going to the winds. "I am interested in occult questions, too, and should be delighted to meet your friend."

"Then come to-morrow, will you?"

"I *could* come to-morrow," he said; then he added, "Are you on your way home now, Miss Clitheroe?"

"Yes," she replied, "I am; and I must make haste: it will soon be dark."

"May I walk back with you?" he asked, almost humbly.

"It would be delightful if you would!" she replied.

In a moment all the wild Lancashire moors were transformed into a Paradise. Not one care nor sorrow did he feel. Earth seemed like heaven to him, and at that moment he determined never to write to Paulina Milano again.

"This has been the happiest evening of my life!"

he said, as half an hour later he drew near the Rough Leigh gates.

“I am so glad,” she replied. “Won’t you come in and see father, Mr. Hawthorne?”

And he went, only too glad of an excuse to stay a little longer in Mary Clitheroc’s company.

CHAPTER XI

BERNARD HAWTHORNE'S RESOLVE

BERNARD HAWTHORNE did not return to his lodgings until after midnight. It was about eight o'clock when he arrived at Rough Leigh with Miss Mary Clitheroe ; and when he entered the house he was received very warmly by Hugh Clitheroe, by whom he was introduced to Mr. Edgar Percival, a noted member of the Psychological Society. The young minister had expected to find in this gentleman a middle-aged person, wild of eye, and somewhat given to hysterical talk. Instead, he found a young man about thirty years of age, who possessed a musical voice, a quiet manner, and a distinguished appearance. Before long this same member of the Psychological Society had convinced the young minister, not by so many words, but by his general conversation, that he was a man of great culture, and one who boasted acquaintance with the most renowned men in the country. He spoke several modern languages with great fluency, had travelled much, and had read widely.

"You could not have dropped in at a more opportune moment," said Mr. Clitheroe presently, "for I have arranged for a most interesting gathering. In a few minutes we shall have here a girl who has become famous as a trance medium, while some men I

know who are interested in such matters are coming for the purpose of testing whether she has any real gifts in that direction."

"But surely you do not believe in spirit-rapping and all that kind of nonsense?" said Mr. Hawthorne.

"I believe in nothing, and I believe in everything," he replied. "I occupy a neutral attitude towards all matters pertaining to the so-called spirit world. If ever Huxley bestowed a blessing on the English race, it was in the invention of that word 'agnostic.' It puts into three syllables that which, without it, would take a long time to explain. There may be truth in all these so-called phenomena, there may not. I do not know. But I am willing and anxious to hear all that can be said in their favour. Ah! here they are."

A few minutes later the Rough Leigh library was filled with several men, three middle-aged women, Mary Clitheroe, and a girl about sixteen years of age. The latter was a girl supposed to be gifted as a trance medium. She was a pale-faced, hollow-eyed, under-grown creature, and evidently belonged to the ordinary class of mill-girls. She spoke in broad Lancashire dialect, and in nothing did she betray the fact that she was superior, either in education or in mental alertness, to the hundreds who may be seen thronging the streets of any factory town in Lancashire.

"What is your name, my girl?" asked Mr. Percival, evidently not from the desire of having this particular question answered, but to lead her into conversation.

"They call me Eliza Ann Shawcross."

"And you live in Preston?"

"Yi, I live i' Preston."

"How long have you been having trances?"

"Matter o' two year."

"How did you find out that you were gifted in this way?"

"I ne'er faand it aat. A chap as came to Preston towd muther as aa I wer' born a medium. He offered her five shillin' to let him test ma. He did, and then I know'd no more till I wer' wakened."

"You have no remembrance of anything that takes place while you are in your trances?"

"Noa, I remember nowt."

"And have you read any books on spiritualism and clairvoyance?"

"Noa, I've read nowt."

Mr. Hawthorne noted a look of disappointment on Mr. Percival's face; but presently he became so much interested in what took place that he forgot to think of any one, save Mary Clitheroe, who remained close to him all the evening.

It was the first time Hawthorne had taken part in any such gathering, and it impressed him greatly. I do not know the details of all that took place; nevertheless some wonderful revelations were made. The girl, while in a trance, related events concerning the life of several individuals present,—events which these people declared were hitherto known only to themselves. She also declared that she saw the spirits of the departed dead, described the appearance of some who were in the room at that time, and who, she said, always accompanied some persons who were present.

"There's a spirit behind yon clean-shaved felly," she said,—“the one as is minister o' Wesley Chapel i' Lynford.”

"A spirit behind me!" said Hawthorne.

"Yi."

"A spirit of some dead person?"

"Aw doan' know, but I do know as 'ow her body's noan i' th' room."

"Describe the spirit," said some one.

"It's a lass," said the girl presently.

"Yes, go on."

"Oo's a rare bonnie lass an' all. Oo is small, but oo's a beauty. Her skin's as smooth as ivory, and there's a bloom on her face just the colour of a pale red rose. Her hair is like gowd, and there's a sheen on it like as I never seed afore."

"Do you know her name?"

"Noa."

"Nor nothing about her?"

"Noa, but she loves yon felly, and is near him all th' time."

"Is it the face of a dead sister, or anything of that sort?"

"I doan't know."

After this Bernard Hawthorne was almost oblivious to further revelations, because the face the girl had described was like unto the one that he had seen in his dreams, and of which for many weeks he had been constantly thinking.

Still, he stayed to the end of the *séance*, and presently left the house with his mind in a state of confusion. Never had Miss Clitheroe seemed so fascinating, so bewitching. He realised, too, that she was regarded by all present as one who had deeply studied occult sciences, and that great heed was paid to her opinions. And yet, in spite of her kindness to him, in spite of her beauty, she repelled him while she fascinated him. Sometimes her face blotted out all others, while the thought of her kindness satisfied the deepest longings of his heart. At others, however, a noble influence

seemed at work in him, and overcame the fascination she had for him. Again the memory of Paulina Milano's letters came back to him, while the vision of that pure childlike face became a potent force in his life.

"We shall expect you to-morrow, then," Mary Clitheroe had said to him; "and mind you come early."

"I will if I can," he said. "Of course, something may turn up and prevent me."

"But nothing must turn up. I shall be cruelly disappointed if you do not come."

"Are you sure of that?" he asked, as he caught the glance of her great dark eyes.

"Sure? Of course I am. I shall not forgive you easily if you disappoint me."

"What does it mean?" he asked himself as he strode down the drive towards the footpath she had shown him. "Why does she take an interest in me? Why is she so kind at one meeting and so scornful at another? I believe I am in love with her," and he felt even then the warm pressure of her hand.

"Oh, if she could but love me!" he cried a little later; "if what she seemed to-night is indicative of the truth, I should be happy beyond words. I never saw any one like her. All the others there to-night seemed dull and foolish compared with her."

Presently, however, he thought of his work at Wesley, thought of the dreams he had in connection therewith; and then he realised that her world was different from his. In spite of everything she was practically an atheist. Her interest in his sermons was only a matter of curiosity as to how he would deal with difficult problems—only a desire to know how one reared in orthodoxy would meet the problems raised by recent discovery. She had no sympathy with him. She was

a materialist, almost a cynic. What to him were vital truths, which lay at the foundation of human happiness and salvation, were to her only interesting studies. The whole atmosphere of her presence was different from that which he breathed when he read those letters of Paulina Milano. Every one of these made him long to be a better man—ay, and made him feel, too, that somewhere in the world was one who suffered when he suffered, and was glad when his heart rejoiced.

“Who is she, I wonder?” he asked himself for the thousandth time. “With whom is she acquainted in Lynford? How did she come to hear of me, and what led her to write to me? What is the meaning of all this mystery? What did that girl mean in her trance to-night by describing feature by feature the face which has been haunting me for so many weeks?”

Again he thought of the words she had written, and again Mary Clitheroe became as nothing to him.

I know I am describing a curious experience, and I know, too, that there may be those who will be led to regard Bernard Hawthorne as weak and vacillating. To such I would say, wait till you reach the end of this history, and then judge if you will. Few can be more bitter in their criticism concerning him than I have been, and so I can sympathise with all the adverse comments which may be made concerning him. But in the days of my bitterness towards him I did not know him as I do now, neither had the facts which I shall have to reveal by-and-by come to light.

He went to Rough Leigh again the following day, and Mary Clitheroe was more gracious to him than ever. During the afternoon they walked together over the moors towards Scott's Folly. Not a word was said about his walk across these same moors through the

snowstorm, and yet he had a feeling that she thought of her behaviour that night with a feeling of repentance. Not a biting, sarcastic word did she utter ; in everything she was womanly and gracious.

Presently they got to talking about their experiences on the previous evening, and she asked him whether he believed in the revelations of the trance medium.

"I suppose there must be something in it," he said, "else how could she describe the history of the people who were there?"

"Do you believe, then, that you have a guardian angel ever near you, such as she described?"

"As to that I cannot say."

"Do you know of any one who answers to the description she gave?" she asked. "That is," she continued, "has any relative of yours died, any one who might be deeply interested in you, and who, supposing there are such things as spirits, would desire to be always near you to protect you?"

"No, I know of no one."

"Still, your faith does not prohibit a belief in such?"

"No, my faith does not prohibit it. Indeed, it might be said to encourage it. But then the whole affair last night seems so paltry, so mechanical."

"How?"

"Why, that trance medium was just an ordinary, ignorant girl. She has not an idea outside the narrow pathway of her life. She knows nothing of great thoughts or great souls. Is it not absurd, then, that she should be made a medium through which the deepest things of life are to be known? One could fancy the Apostle John seeing visions, but that girl——! Well, it is out of the question."

"And yet one must face facts."

"Yes, 'one must face facts. It is true I was never present at such a gathering as met at your house before last night ; but when I was a student at college, half a dozen of us stayed up late one night, and went in for table rapping. We got hold of an ordinary round table which might have been a couple of feet in diameter, and we made the thing dance like a Punch and Judy. We got it to spell out the things we desired to know, and I must say it was very obliging. We asked if a spirit was making the table jump, and it said yes. We asked the name of this said spirit, who told us it was Akob. Then we asked who would be first among my year's men in the coming examinations."

"And did it tell you?"

"Oh, yes, it spelt the name of one of the men who were present."

"Well, was he at the top when the results were made known?"

"He would have been nearly at the top if the paper had been turned upside down."

"Then your spirit told you falsely?"

"Yes, he turned out to be wrong all along the line."

"Then how do you explain the fact of the table jumping at all?"

"Oh, there must have been some forces at work of which we knew nothing. Besides, as far as I could judge, the table simply recorded the prevailing impressions of our own minds. I suppose our personalities somehow influenced the thing, and then it jumped according to our wills."

"I see; and do you think that the trance medium was influenced in the same direction? That is, do you think her sensitised nature received our ideas, and then spoke of them mechanically?"

"I should judge it would be something of that nature."

"Then were you thinking of some golden-haired maiden, with skin like ivory, and tinted like the blush of a pale red rose?"

For a moment the young man had a difficulty in speaking, but presently he was able to answer truthfully.

"No, Miss Clitheroe, I was not thinking of such an one."

"Were you thinking of any woman?"

"Yes," and his face flushed painfully. "I was thinking of a woman," he went on: "I was thinking of you."

"How good of you!"

"No, it was not good of me. I was thinking of you because I could not help it."

They had now reached the top of the hill, and were close to Scott's Folly. Away in the distance they could see Pendle lifting its giant head into the sky, while on every side, hill and dale rose and fell like huge billows.

"Is not Lancashire a beautiful county?" she cried.

"It must have been at one time," he answered, "but towns like Lynford have done much to destroy its beauty. Look at it now," and both turned to the town, whose hundreds of chimneys and furnaces belched out great volumes of half-consumed coals.

"Yes, but all that is necessary to our manufactures," she replied.

"Is it?" he said absently. "However, I do not suppose I shall stay in it long," he went on presently.

"No? Why?"

"Oh, I expect I shall be obliged to leave it."

"Obliged?"

"Yes. I suppose a few members of my congregation are doing their utmost to get me expelled from the ministry."

"Why?"

"On account of the unsoundness of my views, I suppose."

"And do you think they will succeed?"

"Probably."

"I congratulate you."

"On what?"

"On being able to regain your intellectual self-respect. On not being obliged to commit mental suicide," and she laughed as though she enjoyed the situation.

"You think I have lost intellectual self-respect, then?"

"Oh, forgive me."

"But do you think I have?"

"I ought not to have said—that is——"

"Do you think I have?" he urged.

"I think—that is—if you persist in my speaking——"

"I do."

"Then can a man who thinks honestly believe in . . . ? But you know what I mean, Mr. Hawthorne."

"You think he cannot?"

"I think it is time for us to turn back. I was wrong in saying what I have said. But then I do admire you so—sometimes." And she gave him a glance which sent his blood tingling through his veins.

During the next three or four weeks the young minister went often to Rough Leigh. In doing this he tried to make himself believe that he was interested in certain experiments which Hugh Clitheroe was making; but in his heart he knew that Mary Clitheroe was the magnet. They went for long walks together,

and while she continued to be gracious to him, he realised that some unaccountable barrier was between them. Sometimes this barrier seemed on the point of breaking down; she spoke to him in tones of tender interest, almost amounting to affection, and at such times he felt that she was the goal of his heart's desire. Then suddenly, and as far as he could judge without any sufficient reason, a chilling silence fell between them. Thus he continued to be repelled and attracted at the same time. He loved her, and yet he loved her not.

Presently the feeling of repulsion grew stronger. In spite of himself he realised that she was chilling his ardour for his work; she was making his faith less a reality to him. Beautiful she undoubtedly was; clever and bewitching, she fascinated him every day; and yet there was that in her conversation and her general demeanour which hardened his heart and checked the words that rose to his lips. All this made him, in spite of himself, cold and distant towards her. He could not tell her of his deepest thoughts and longings. They met often, and yet they came no nearer to each other. They discussed together the subjects in which her father was interested, they read the books for which she professed a great liking and compared notes, they had long walks together, and were seen roaming among the moors, by many of the Wesley people.

All this made the Lynford folks talk. Some were naturally scandalised, and declared that he ought to be asked to leave the church; while others of the Herbert Stanley school declared that it was no business of ours whom he courted. Every man, they said, had a right to choose his own wife.

During these weeks he did not neglect his work. Rather, he did too much. It was at this period that he made the acquaintance of strange characters in the town. He invited several atheists to his lodgings, not for purposes of prayer, or even for discussion ; indeed, as I mentioned in the first chapter of this history, he did not talk religion with them at all. Rather, he provided cigars for them, and took part in their worldly games. He also went to their clubs, and stayed with them until a late hour.

Of course, the most reliable people at Wesley felt their feelings outraged with all this ; and yet so great was his hold upon the church as a whole, that in spite of my continued efforts I could do nothing.

"I hear as how you are trying to drive Hawthorne out of Lynford," said Josiah Townsend to me one day. Josiah Townsend, I may say, was one of Bradlaugh's right-hand men when atheism had a strong hold in Lynford.

"And what then, Josiah?" I said.

"If you do, you'll be playing into the hands of the devil," he answered. "Yon chap has done more to mak' such as me think well of passons and religion than ony man as ever come to Lynford. There, I'm tellin' you. I'd given up believin' in th' devil, but I believe in him now, and that you are one of his tools."

But, in spite of scores of similar testimonies, I did all I could to make people realise that he was doing the devil's work ; and in spite of his continued popularity, I saw that I was gaining ground with many people.

During this period he had never answered Paulina Milano's last letter. Even while he was dissatisfied with Miss Mary Clitheroc's influence over him, her

hold on him was so great that he felt no desire to write to his unknown correspondent ; then one day he received another letter from her which led to strange results.

This letter was full of tenderness and pleading ; and it broke, as if by magic, Miss Clitheroe's influence over him. As he read he seemed to be lifted into a holier atmosphere and a nobler love. Every line breathed such a pure spirit that his faith became quickened, and the great spiritual verities became more real to him.

Besides, the mystery which surrounded both her and her letters aroused his imagination ; it stirred within him the spirit of romance ; it made him long, as he had never longed before, to see this maiden in the flesh.

"She says I shall never see her," he cried aloud, after he had read the letter through many times, "but I will. It is only a few hours to London, and I can manage to get away for a day or two. Yes, I will go!"

He caught up his diary, and scanned its pages eagerly.

"Yes, I can manage it," he cried presently ; "I can manage it easily."

A few mornings later Bernard Hawthorne was seen rushing towards the station in order to catch the first train to London.

CHAPTER XII

THE MYSTERY OF PAULINA MILANO

“WEEL, I hear as ’ow thou’st gotten a lass !”

Bernard Hawthorne, who was standing on the station waiting for the train to come in, turned around, and saw old Abel Bowyer at his side.

“Indeed !”

“Yi. I hear as ’ow thou’st hooked Hugh Clitheroe’s lass. Weel, oo’ll bring thee a tidy bit o’ brass, and oo’s rare and bonnie too ; but oo’ll noan do, mester.”

“No? why?”

“Oo’ll noan ’elp thee to convert owd Caleb Sutcliffe.”

“What do you mean, Mr. Bowyer?”

“I’m noan much given to soapin’, mester, but I tell thee I ’ad ’opes o’ thee. I seed as ’ow thou wert noan to be dragged about by Caleb Sutcliffe, and that thou’st the gift o’ th’ gab aboon middlin. Not as I reckon owt o’ thy sarmons ’bout th’ Bible. I reckon th’ owd Book ’ll stand all thee talk about it. It weren’t that. I said to myself, yon chap ’ll settle daan i’ a bit, and then he’ll gi’ us a bit o’ Gospel. But it’s all over naa, mester. Now thou’st took up wi’ yon lass, thou’lt neer geet noborry converted. Oo’s noan got religion, mester.”

“What do you know of Miss Clitheroe?” asked Hawthorne sharply.

"I knaw nowt mich; but Aw knaw oo's noan religious. Oo's clever, and oo's eddicated, and oo's bonnie; but oo's praad, and oo's a infidel. A lass like yon 'ud keep ony lad like thee fro' praichin' convartin' sarmons."

"Do you want me to preach convertin' sermons, Mr. Bowyer?"

"Ay, I do an all. Thou'st often spoke to me 'baat th' drink, but I tell thee, when I 'eerd as 'ow thou wert seen walkin' arm in arm wi' Clitheroe's lass up near Peter Dodson's, I just went to the Stag and geet reight druffen. I did for sure. As for th' owd Caleb, he's crawin' like a bantam. He says he'll geet thee out o' Lynford naa, aisy."

"Well, we shall see, Mr. Bowyer; but, believe me, I'd give a good deal to see you give up the drink."

"Yo knaw what Aw've said, mester. Geet owd Caleb converted, and Aw'll geet converted too. But yo ne'er will while yo keep company wi' Clitheroe's lass."

Just then the train came into the station, and a few minutes later he was on his way to London to see Paulina Milano. For some time his mind was filled with Abel Bowyer's words, but presently the thought of his purpose in going to London blotted out everything else.

Up to now, in spite of the fact that Paulina Milano's letters had moved him greatly, and had given him strange, unaccountable yearnings, she had seemed somewhat shadowy and unreal. Even while he read the lines she had written to him, there was ever something awesome about the hand that wrote them. He had, in a vague way, made inquiries about his correspondent, but never a word had he heard that could in any way be associated with her. If she had come to Lynford, no one knew of her. He had in a casual way tried

to find out if any of his congregation had friends in London, but he could hear of no one who in any way corresponded with his ideas concerning Paulina Milano.

But this morning she seemed more real. He was able, in a sense, to translate into tangible reality the visions of her which had come to him. He felt that he should soon hear the sound of her voice, look into the depths of her violet-blue eyes, and feel the pressure of her hands.

It was a strange experience—one which surely happens to but very few. As the train drew nearer London he felt this as he had never felt it before. Paulina Milano became more and more a reality as the miles between him and the great city became fewer and fewer.

He knew very little of the Metropolis. As a youth of eighteen he had visited it with his father, but since then he had never any occasion to go. Still, he remembered the main streets. The picture of Whitehall, Trafalgar Square, the Strand, Fleet Street, and Ludgate Hill remained in his memory. He was able also to call to mind the great crowds which continually thronged these thoroughfares. Of course, if Paulina Milano had given him no address it would be useless for him to attempt to find her. He knew that among the hundreds of miles of streets he might spend a lifetime in vain search. But then she had given an address. There could, therefore, be no difficulty in going straight to the house in which she resided. Of course she might be away from home, but he could be away from Lynford for two or three days, during which time she would surely return.

He had not told her of his intention to come to

her. He feared that by so doing he might cause her to take steps to avoid him. She had told him again and again that they could never meet; that from time to time she might see him from afar, but that he would never meet her, and never know her, save through her letters.

Hitchin, Hatfield, New Barnet. The train swept on through a smiling country, and then rushed into that vast wilderness of houses known as the northern suburbs of London. The passengers around him began to take off their travelling-caps and arrange for the arrival of the train. On their faces was no curiosity, no excitement. Coming to London to them was an ordinary event, but to him it seemed the crucial point of his life.

When the train arrived at King's Cross, he jumped out with feverish haste. His heart beat wildly, his nerves tingled with excitement. At that time there was to him no woman in the world save the one who called herself Paulina Milano. Even his work at Lynford became something dim and far off to him. There were only two people in the world—Paulina and himself.

Hailing a hansom, he gave the address with which she had headed her letters, and the cabman nodded as he gathered up his reins.

"Everything seems plain and easy," thought the young man. "I wonder why I have not come before?" And then the memory of Mary Clitheroe came back to him, and of the long walks and talks they had had together.

"I wonder what she would think if she knew?" he asked himself; but the thought did not trouble him. Mary Clitheroe was as nothing to him just then.

The cab dashed along Gray's Inn Road into High Holborn, then down Chancery Lane, while everywhere was a great tide of hurrying humanity. But Bernard Hawthorne thought little of all this. His heart beat faster and faster at the thought that in a few minutes he would be face to face with the maiden who at that time was all the world to him.

The cab stopped, and he got out, looking around him in a bewildered sort of way.

"Ther' ya aw, sir," and the cabby nodded to a door close by.

Bernard Hawthorne, scarcely knowing what he was doing, was walking thither, when the cabby spoke again.

"Shall I wait, sir?"

The question brought him to his senses. He remembered he had not paid the man. This done, he turned round again. Everywhere was a vast procession of cabs, waggons, omnibuses, people.

He went to the door close by which the cabman had dropped him, and saw a stream of people entering and coming out.

Again he looked around, confused and dazed; then he realised that he had come to a post-office. It was not a large place; it was one of the many branch offices with which the Strand and Fleet Street are dotted.

Mechanically he entered, and to his relief no one paid him any attention. Some were writing telegrams, some getting money orders, some buying stamps. There was none of that easy familiarity which may be seen in the post-office at Lynford. No one knew any one else, and no one asked him what he wanted.

He looked at the faces of the girls who stood behind the counter, which stretched from one end of the room

to the other. Was Paulina Milano one of those post-office girls, he wondered? But he dismissed the thought immediately: not one of them could have written the letters he had received. Still, they might know of her.

Seeing one who was for the moment disengaged, he went to her.

"Is there a young lady named Paulina Milano connected with this place?" he asked.

The girl eyed him curiously, and then smiled. "No," she said.

"Do you know of any one bearing that name?"

"No."

To the young man her answer sounded like "now," for she spoke with a suburban accent.

"But you have received letters here for a lady of that name?"

"Oh, very likely. I don't know."

"Could you not find out for me?"

"No, I couldn't."

"Have you never had any one here asking for letters for Paulina Milano?"

"If I had I shouldn't tell you," she replied sharply.

"Is all this house occupied by this post-office?"

"No, there are other offices overhead."

"Offices?"

"Yes."

"Could I go to them and inquire?"

"I s'pose so: how do I know?"

The young man realised that in his excitement he was asking foolish questions. Moreover, he saw that others beside the girl to whom he was speaking were listening.

He left the post-office, and walked along the street

with a heavy heart. His journey to London was in vain. He had travelled hundreds of miles for nothing.

After walking some distance, he remembered what the girl had said. There were private offices above the post-office. Might there not also be private rooms? He could hardly conceive of Paulina Milano living in one of these, but it might be the case. Besides, he knew that thousands of girls in London earned a living as shorthand clerks and typewriters.

He turned back again and entered the door which led to the upper rooms. Doubtless he asked many foolish questions, thereby frustrating the object he had in view. For his mind was in a state of bewilderment, and everything was strange to him. Half an hour later he was in the street again, having discovered nothing.

It was now after three o'clock, and he remembered that he had had nothing to eat since early morning. He therefore dropped in at a restaurant, and while sitting over his lunch, he tried to understand matters.

Evidently Paulina Milano was in earnest when she had said they would never meet. She had simply given the post-office as an address, knowing that she could call and get whatever letters might come for her without question. From what the girl had told him, moreover, he judged that no one would be allowed to divulge what he wanted to know. As for prosecuting his search in any other direction, he felt it was impossible. How could any one discover an unknown girl in London? He had no data upon which to go, no information to help him. Once he thought of going to a detective agency, and asking some trained expert to make inquiries for him; but he could not make up his mind to do this. He simply could not. For reasons which

he could not explain, it would seem like committing sacrilege.

But what should he do ?

Vainly he pondered over plan after plan, but as each seemed more futile than the other he at length gave them all up in despair.

Looking at his watch, he saw that he could catch a train which would take him to Manchester in time for him to get to Lynford that night. As he felt just then, he could not bear to stay in London. He felt utterly sad, utterly lonely. Perhaps under ordinary circumstances he might have desired to see the sights of the great City, but at that moment he longed to be away. He was a nobody in that great busy throng. No one expected him, no one would miss him when he was gone. The hope which had brought him there had been frustrated, she whom he sought could not be found. Moreover, the mystery surrounding her seemed deeper than ever.

When he reached Euston Station he felt he had been acting like a madman. Who but a fool, he asked himself, would come to London to see an unknown woman, who, unsolicited, had sent him strange, hysterical letters ? He had one consolation—no one knew of his madness. To no one had he breathed a word about his unknown correspondent, no one knew of the letters she had written. What balderdash they were, after all ! What inane things this person had written ; and then to think that he should have come to London to find her !

An hour later, however, as the train swept on past Rugby, he did not feel in the same humour. The letters were not foolish. They touched chords in his nature never touched before. They made him long for all that was holy and pure. They breathed an atmosphere that

made all life sweeter and grander. No, Paulina Milano was pure and good, and the thought that he knew not where to find her made his heart sad and lonely.

He tried to formulate plans for the future, but his mind refused to work ; he endeavoured to devise plans whereby Paulina Milano might be induced to meet him, but in vain. She had declared that they must never meet, and evidently she had meant what she said.

When he arrived at Lynford he saw, standing outside the station, old Jonathan Giles.

"Well, Mester Hawthorne, and 'ow are yo?" asked the old man kindly.

"Oh, pretty well, only tired," he replied.

"Ay, well, yo've been workin' 'ard, Mester Hawthorne : ever so 'ard. Those sermons on the Bible must a took you a deal o' time."

"Yes, they took me a great deal of time."

"Yo'll excuse my spaikin' middlin' plain, won't you, Mester Hawthorne?" said the old man kindly.

"Certainly, Mr. Giles," replied the young man heartily, for he always took more notice of what Jonathan said than of anything which came from me.

"I've been wantin' to 'ave a chat with you for months now," continued Jonathan, after walking for some time by Bernard Hawthorne's side. "Aw'm noan intrudin', am I?"

"Oh, certainly not. I am going straight home, and I shall be glad of your company."

"Yo've got rare gifts, Mester Hawthorne."

"It's very kind of you to say so."

"Ay, you have ; but I've been wonderin' if you've used 'em reight."

"What do you mean, Mr. Giles?"

"Well, there's they sermons on the Bible. I s'pose they've been vary good, and I'm not the one as would go agin you because I might not believe in all you say. But do you think you've been preachin' the Gospel, Mester Hawthorne?"

"I hope so."

"Well, I am gectin' an owd man, Mester Hawthorne, and I've gone through a rare deal in my time. I've 'ad sorrow and pain; there's been loss, and sickness, and death in my house, and ther've been times when I've needed comfort reight bad—reight bad."

"I daresay you have," replied Mr. Hawthorne; and there was a touch of sympathy in his voice, for he, like every one else, was fond of old Jonathan.

"Ay, I 'ave. And do yo know what's comforted me, Mester Hawthorne?"

"What?" asked the young minister.

"The presence of a living, loving Christ, Mester Hawthorne. I say nothin' 'gin argyment, and scholarship, and all that; but the thing as has gi'en me comfort has been just the fact of a livin', lovin' Christ cloas by my side. Ay, and ther's a lot o' people in trouble, Mester Hawthorne."

Bernard Hawthorne did not reply, for he felt that the old man's words wounded him, lovingly as they were spoken.

"Then, as yo know, Mester Hawthorne," went on Jonathan presently, "I've been town missionary here all my life—all my life, that is, since I've grown to manhood. As you may think, I've come across all sorts of people during that time."

"Yes, no doubt you have."

"Some of them have been bad characters, reight bad characters."

"Yes, no doubt," repeated Mr. Hawthorne.

"God's been very good to me, and He's allowed me to be the instrument in changing many bad lives."

"Yes, I've been told so many times."

"Ay, weel, Mester Hawthorne, do yo know what it wur that made drunkards give up th' drink, that made adulterers give up their sin, that changed homes full of vice and misery into little heavens? Do you know, Mester Hawthorne?"

"Tell me, Jonathan."

"It wur the presence of a livin', lovin' Christ. It wern't argyment, and it wern't cleverness nor scholarship, it wur just a lovin' Saviour, Mester Hawthorne. I am not sayin' a word agin cleverness and scholarship; ef I 'ad 'em I should 'ave been able to do more good. I should 'ave been able to proclaim the story of the Cross in a more winnin' way; but, Mester Hawthorne, the thing what's wanted first and foremost, es noan lectures on th' Bible, it's a livin', lovin' Christ."

Bernard Hawthorne was silent.

"Ay, and yo've rare gifts, Mester Hawthorne, rare gifts. Mony and mony a time aw've said to my owd lass, 'Ay, Mester Hawthorne has got rare gifts.' I know the town, no man better; and there's middlin' o' sickness, and much o' sorrow, and ther's far too much sin and wickedness. Ay, it's terrible, terrible. But I doan't despair. We've got a grand Gospel, mester, a grand Gospel; and yo've rare gifts, Mester Hawthorne."

"We have a grand Gospel indeed," replied Hawthorne.

"Ay, an' Methody praichers 'ave praiched that Gospel, Mester Hawthorne, noan more powerfully. They've done a wonderful work i' England."

"They have."

"Yi, they 'ave. Of course, we got our formalists and our officialism far too much. I s'poase there's allus men like Caleb Sutcliffe who can get a followin', and find their way into office; but they doan't represent Methodism, Mester Hawthorne."

"No, thank God!"

"And what's to mak' us all real, Mester Hawthorne? What's to convert the formalist and the sinner?"

"What?" asked Hawthorne, like a man whose thoughts were far away.

"Th' owd Gospel, Mester; th' story o' the Cross. Only that, only that.—Yo're noan offended, Mester Hawthorne?"

"No, Jonathan, certainly not."

"Aw was sure yo wouldn't. Weel, I must be gectin' 'oam; my owd lass 'll be wondering about me. Good-nect, Mester Hawthorne."

"Good-night, Jonathan."

Had I known of this conversation at the time I should have been very angry; but now I write it down word for word just as it was told me, even those parts which were anything but flattering to me. The reason for my doing this will appear later.

And now it becomes my duty to relate a series of events which to some may be hard to believe; but I, Caleb Sutcliffe, vouch for their truth, strange as they may seem

CHAPTER XIII

THE SHADOW OF A GREAT CLOUD

THE day following Bernard Hawthorne's return from London, he wrote a long letter to Paulina Milano, telling her of his fruitless journey to London, and asking her to give him an opportunity of seeing her. This letter was answered, but I am not able to set down what she wrote. After this, the young minister wrote the letter which fell into hands for which he did not intend it, and which led to his appearing before the Connexional authorities.

As I stated in the first chapter of this history, he did not make a very favourable impression upon many before whom his case was heard. He did not seem to realise that he had broken away from the traditions of our Churches; neither did he seem to think that any one had any right to interfere with what he called his private affairs. Possibly, had he been willing to explain the facts of the case fully, as I have explained them here, his position might not have been taken so seriously. But he refused to explain anything; he even answered the questions that were put to him in a manner unbecoming a probationer. As a consequence, some were in favour of his being immediately suspended until the following Conference, and at the same time urged that a resolution be passed calling upon him

to resign. Others, however, were for dealing with him more mildly; while some went so far as to suggest that there was nothing worthy of censure in the young man's behaviour. Of course this latter view was warmly debated and opposed.

"Nothing in his behaviour worthy of censure!" cried one brother; "nothing worthy of censure! Why, think, Mr. President: take the charges one by one and consider them. He has treated his superintendent and his circuit steward with scorn; he has given expression to views concerning the Bible entirely out of harmony with our doctrines; he has been friendly with doubtful characters; he has been making love to a young woman who is an atheist, while at the same time he has been writing love-letters to another. If this is not worthy of censure, what is? Mr. Hawthorne is a probationer, and therefore is especially amenable to authority, yet he has practically defied us all; he has refused to answer our questions, and has shown no regret for what he has done. I submit, Mr. President, that if this kind of thing is allowed to go on, anything like discipline will be impossible!"

"True," said another; "and let us also bear the President's words in mind. It is not only our right, but our duty, to pay attention to this young man's love affairs. I submit that his behaviour is of a nature to bring disgrace upon our denomination, and that our only course is either to call upon him to resign, or to recommend that he be expelled."

After a great deal of discussion the President got up to speak, and every one waited in deadly silence for what he had to say. For not only was the Rev. Robert Richardson, President, he was also one of the ablest and best-beloved men in the ministry.

“Brethren,” he said, and there was a merry twinkle in his eye, “I would like you to bear in mind first of all that our Brother Hawthorne is young. We have been young ourselves,” he added, after a pause, “and I can remember when some of you were probationers.”

There was a laugh at this, and it may be that his words made the older ones think of the time when they first entered the ministry, and when a fair young face set their hearts beating fast.

“We were not always fathers of families,” he went on; “and there was a time when we had the thoughts of youth about life, and work, and love.

“Let us remember this, too: Mr. Hawthorne is scarcely an ordinary young man. He has a strong personality; he scarcely knows what fear means. As a consequence, the thought of conventional trammels is without weight to him. Let us not expect,—nay, more, let us neither hope nor desire, to make all our ministers after the same pattern. Let us allow room for nature, for individuality, and for independence of character.

“Do not mistake me. I would not excuse in the slightest degree anything like dishonourable dealing; but let us remember that there was never a man of power and purpose who did not, in his youth, cause a great deal of head-shaking among his seniors.

“Well, now, consider Mr. Hawthorne’s case in this light. Here is a young man, full of the enthusiasm of youth, who comes to an old and decaying church. He is full of new ideas, he is also influenced by the general trend of the thought of the age. As a consequence he oversteps the bounds of usage. I do not condone his actions, but I do say that he is like a

young, restive horse, unable to keep step with those who have worn harness for many years.

"Then consider his love affairs. Are we not going a step too far? We have no proof that he is engaged to Miss Clitheroc. He has been invited to Rough Leigh, and he has been seen often in the company of the daughter of the owner of that house. It may be, brethren, that he is not the only young man who has enjoyed the society of a young lady concerning whom he has no thoughts of love."

"But he refused to answer our question," urged some one.

"In a sense," replied the President. "In that sense I sympathise with him in his unwillingness to allow a lady's name to be discussed by a number of men who know very little about her. Moreover, I very much question whether Mr. Hugh Clitheroe would not strongly resent the course we are taking. Mr. Hawthorne has gone to Rough Leigh at that gentleman's invitation,—at any rate with his consent,—and unless we have proof positive, we have no right to assume that Mr. Hawthorne is engaged to his daughter. This being so, that letter to the lady in London may be explained. Is it not possible that this Miss Milano may be a friend of Miss Clitheroc's? And might that not account to some extent for his friendship with that lady?"

"But, Mr. President," urged a brother, "if that were so, should not Mr. Hawthorne have explained the matter to us?"

"There is matter for debate in that question," replied Mr. Richardson drily. "Be that as it may, I ask you to think twice before acting severely. Personally, I believe that Mr. Hawthorne has the

makings of a very fine man. He has evidently endeared himself to many people, even although he has alienated himself from the affections of Mr. Sutcliffe and others. If we deal harshly we may do untold harm ; we may embitter those who, in spite of all that has been said, have been drawn to the church. Let us remember that."

"Then what would you suggest?" was the natural question on many lips.

"This is what I would suggest," replied the President. "I would suggest that I pay an informal visit to Lynford, and in an unostentatious way learn exactly how matters stand. If you agree to this I will hear him preach, I will try to estimate the influence of his life and work, and I will report at our next meeting, which will be held immediately preceding Conference. Brethren, you all know how I love our churches, and it is in the interest of those churches, as well as in the interest of a very promising young man, that I mention this course of procedure."

After some discussion this was agreed upon, and I came back to Lynford, on the whole pleased with the trend of things. I believed that when the President came I should be able to make him see things as I saw them, and I felt sure that when once he heard Mr. Hawthorne preach he would be as eager as I to keep him from ever again entering one of our pulpits.

As for what he had said about his engagement to Miss Clitheroe, every one believed in it. Indeed it was the talk of the town, and many of the people had fixed the date of marriage, and the kind of dress Miss Clitheroe was to wear.

The only information given to Mr. Hawthorne, however, was that the charges against him would be

further investigated, and that meanwhile he must refrain from introducing debatable subjects into the pulpit, and that he must conduct the services according to Methodist usage.

Of course, although the people in the town did not know the details of the charges which Mr. Hawthorne was called upon to answer before the Connexional authorities, they were well aware of the fact that he had appeared before them. They knew, too, that it was largely through my influence that he had got into this trouble, and I must confess that feeling ran very high against me. Indeed, I had no idea that people were so fond of him. During the months which preceded the meeting at Bradburn, and while he had been visiting Rough Leigh and preaching his heretical sermons, many there were who severely criticised him. Nay, there was a good number who agreed with me in saying that he must leave Lynford. But when the news got afloat that he had been arraigned before the denominational authorities, and that I had given evidence against him, I became the most unpopular man in Lynford. I was abused on every hand, and even those who had supported me turned right round and sided with Mr. Hawthorne.

Indeed, I felt quite like a martyr for the truth, especially as I could not pass down the street without being met with scornful looks or hearing unpleasant words. People who, as I thought, took no interest in religion, spoke to me freely, and told me, in anything but honeyed tones, what they thought of me. For I must here explain that neither Mr. Jory nor myself dared to say one word about the charge which involved the discussion on Miss Mary Clitheroc. We knew Mr. Hugh Clitheroc's position in the neighbourhood,

and we knew his temper, therefore we dared not suggest that his daughter's name had been brought before the authorities, and that her qualifications for a minister's wife had been discussed. It was, therefore, believed that the case I had brought against him consisted entirely of those three charges mentioned in the opening of this narrative.

"Mr. Sutcliffe, I am ashamed of you," said Mrs. Stanley to me one day, "absolutely ashamed. If all Methodists were like you, we could have no independence of thought or action. Our ministers would become a race of parrots, repeating what was said a hundred years ago,—that and nothing else. Our services would become hollow and meaningless. If ever a minister has tried to meet the needs of the town it is Mr. Hawthorne; and now possibly,—probably, you will drive away a man who has done more for the extension of Christianity than any minister we have ever had. Besides, think of the influence of your action on the educated young men. Young fellows like my Herbert will get disgusted and leave us altogether."

"But can you say that you agree with Mr. Hawthorne?" I asked. "Can you, as a Methodist, say that you believe in his teaching?"

"No, I have not agreed with much that he has said; he may have been unwise in many things he has done; but he has been sincere, and honest, and manly. He has acted throughout as a Christian minister ought to act, and I regard your behaviour as most unworthy, and I shudder to think how much harm you have done."

"But is a probationer to defy his circuit steward?" I asked.

"I take it that a young Christian minister is responsible to Christ," she replied, "and that he must preach

and act as he believes Christ would have him act. Surely you can't expect an educated young gentleman to be a mere echo of your opinions?"

"But I must be faithful to Methodism," I said.

"Methodism!" cried Mrs. Stanley. "I do not regard Methodism as the poor little thing you seem to think it is. Do you think many of us would be Methodists if we believed that those holding your opinions represented it? Do you mean to say that if John Wesley were alive to-day he would close his eyes to every new discovery, and to all scholarship? He was a scholar himself, and a man far in advance of his age. Do you think he would seek to have all Methodist ministers cast into one mould, as you seem to think they ought to be? It is true I don't understand much about official Methodism, as you interpret it; but Methodism, as I understand it, is applied Christianity; it is an earnest expression of the great principles which Christ lived and died to bring to the world."

"I'm not the scholar you are, Mrs. Stanley," I said, "but I've acted according to my conscience."

"Have you not acted rather in a spirit of dislike to Mr. Hawthorne?" she asked. "Have you not, because he refused to obey your behests, done your best to drive him out of our midst?"

Even Mrs. Beswick, who I thought would have stood by me, was just as bad.

"I tell thee, Caleb," she said, "I'm fair stalled wi' thee. To think that tha' shud a' got th' lad into trouble in such a way!"

"But, Mrs. Beswick," I urged, "I have heard you criticise him as strongly as any one."

"Ay, and s'poase I have?" she said. "Surely thou'st lived long eno' to know that women must talk? What

I said 'll braik no boans, and ef I thowt as 'ow yo' would a' done like this, I'd a noan' spok' a word to thee. But look ye, Caleb, doan't think as 'ow yo'll drive Hawthorne out o' th' circuit. You'll do nowt ut soart. Us'll stick by him, remember that. Yon chap has done a rare lot o' good, and he's got hold o' people that thou wouldst drive reight away from everything good. He's made me want to be a good woman, too. And although I've noan agreed with a lot as he's said and done, I'm goin' to stand by him, ay, and lots more'll stand by him too."

The truth was, that as I heard this kind of thing every day, I became the most miserable man in Lynford. Nearly everybody abused me, and very few gave me a helpful, cheering word. For once, both Kneepads and Moreso saw eye to eye. While they had criticised him without mercy in the past, they now agreed in condemning me.

For this is the truth about Lancashire folk. They love a bit of gossip as much as any people in the country, and they take infinite pleasure in discussing the affairs of other people; all the same, directly they think any one is unfairly treated they get a soft place in their hearts for him. Never did I realise this as now. Up to this time scores of people at Wesley criticised Bernard Hawthorne, but after his appearance before the denominational authorities they seemed to forget everything that appeared wrong in him, and remembered all the good.

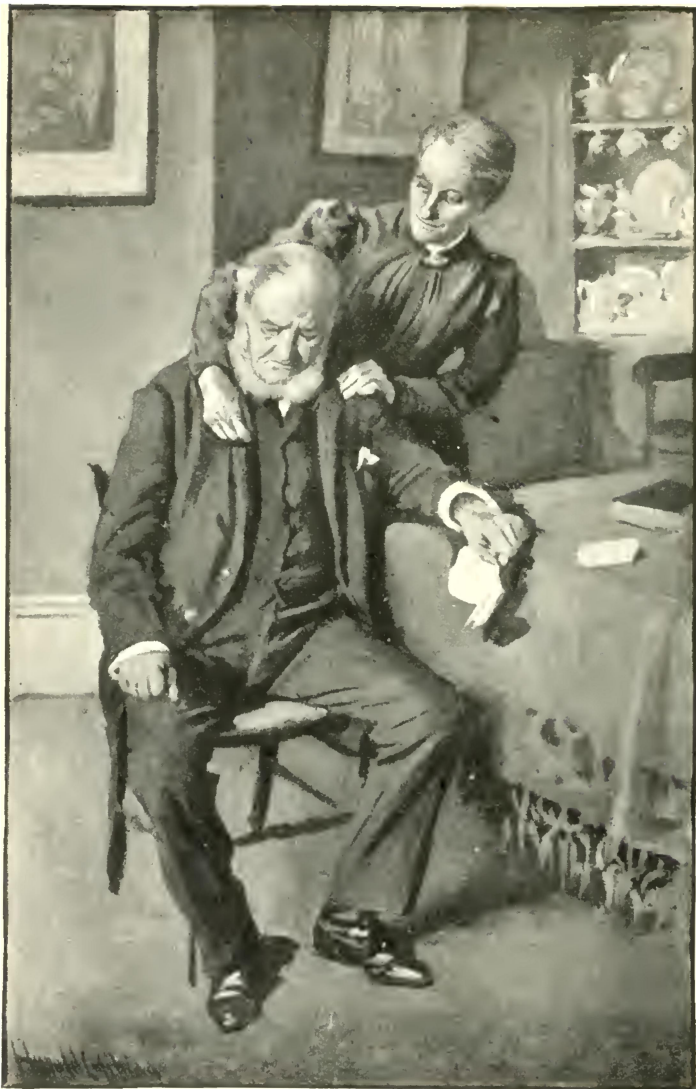
"Doan't yo' fear," said Moreso to the young minister one day. "Caleb Sutcliffe's noan goin' to 'ave it all his way. We doan't believe in soap, Mester Hawthorne, and aw doan't say as 'ow aw've agreed with all your views, but us'll stand by yo'. Yo've said and done

what yo' thought reight, and that's th' main thing. And thou'st done good, too,—ay, thou hast an' all."

After this I saw that something out of the ordinary was going on in the church. What it was I could not tell, and although I asked again and again I could find out nothing. In fact, people became very shy of me, and I knew when the time for election of circuit steward came around again that I should get very few votes, while Richard Best would get the post he had been aspiring to for years.

Then suddenly a great trouble befel me, which for the time made me careless even of the anger of the people in the church. I don't think I have mentioned anything about my financial affairs, but I had never been what you might call a rich man. Indeed, the £40,000 and £50,000 men looked down upon me as a very small man. For, as every one who lives in Lancashire knows, people are often estimated by the money they've saved. As a consequence, when a certain man is discussed you often hear it said, "Ay, and he's niccly off. He's a £30,000 man, or he's a twenty-five thousander."

Well, I had never been a man of this standing. In fact, while I had just enough on which to retire comfortably, I was by no means rich. Thus it came about that I was glad to do little bits of business which meant the purchase of a little property, or a share or two in a company, just to make the nest-egg a little bigger. Let me say this, however: I never took part in anything which could be called a speculation. But I was led one day to sign my name to a document which involved what was, for me, a large amount of money. I did this in perfect good faith, as I believed the man who asked me to do it to be strictly honour-



"NE'ER MIND, LAD," SHE SAID, "I'M ABLE TO WAIVE YET, AND YE CAN WAIVE TOO, SO US'LL GEET WORK."

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able. Judge of my dismay, then, when the news suddenly came to me that the man I had trusted was a rogue, and that I was regarded as responsible for the money which he, and he alone, ought to have paid.

"I tould thee to 'ave nowt to do wi' Peter Dodson," said my wife, when I read the letter to her.

"Ay, I know thou didst, lass, I know thou didst; but I thought he was straight. He promised great things, and showed me all sorts of securities. Ay, but I'm ruined!"

"Ruined!"

"Ay, ruined. If I'm sold up to-morrow, every cottage and every bit of property I possess will not make enough to clear me."

"Dost a' mean that, Caleb?" asked my wife.

"Ay, I do, lass, I do. I'm ruined. I shall be known in the town as one who has paid ten or fifteen shillings in the pound, and I shall never hold up my head again."

Mary Ellen did not speak for some seconds, while I waited expecting hard words. That she was a woman who could speak her mind I had reason to know, and as I had refused to take her advice in the matter I expected them now.

But she did not speak them. Instead she came to me, and put her arms around my neck.

"Ne'er mind, lad," she said, "I'm able to waive yet, and ye can waive too, so us'll geet work."

"Ay, Mary Ellen!" I cried, for I was fair overcome.

"But we can, and we will," she said. "Let's noan mak' a fuss, lad. Us 'ave aich other, and us'll noan show the white feather."

"Ay, lass, thou art good!" I cried.

"Nay, doan't be a ninny. We mun cheer up. Tell us all about it. Is this coal mine of no use?"

"There's nothing in it, I'm afraid. Of course, if it were taken up, and properly financed, it might be worth something. But trade is bad, and money is scarce. No one would buy it: in fact, from what I can see it's not worth this piece of paper. Ay, but I was a fool to trust Peter. I was old enough to know better."

"Weel, it's no use croakin'. We mun geet work."

"Ay, and I shall have to resign being circuit steward," I said.

"Tha' never ses!"

"Ay, I shall. I expect Hawthorne will crow over me now. He'll say it's a judgment on me for bringing up his case."

"Nay, he's noan that soart, Caleb," said my wife. "Cheer up, lad!" and then she kissed me just as she did years before, when we were courting.

In truth, as we got to talking, and as I explained my trouble to her, Mary Ellen seemed like a new woman. All her hard, sharp ways seemed to go, and she became tender and loving.

"Ay, Caleb," she said presently, "it may be hard; but thou'll have to give up thy office of circuit steward."

"It'll break my heart to do it. Fancy what the members of the Quarterly Meeting will say."

"I wouldn't wait for the Quarterly Meeting," she said. "I would just call a meeting of the circuit officials and explain the case to them."

For two or three days after this every one was talking about my trouble; but no one offered to help me, and thus it was with a sore, sad heart that I made

my way to the meeting of the circuit officials, which, according to the advice of my wife, I had called.

“The hardest thing to bear will be that Mr. Hawthorne will be there,” I said to myself as I made my way to the vestry. “I heard that he went home to talk with his father and mother about his own trouble. Oh, I do hope that he’s not yet returned!”

But when I entered the room my heart felt like lead, for there, sitting near the superintendent minister, was the man I had tried to get out of the circuit.

CHAPTER XIV

WHY I VISITED BERNARD HAWTHORNE'S LODGINGS

AS soon as the meeting was properly opened, I rose and commenced to tell them the reason for which I had called them together. Of course, I need not have taken this course; but Mary Ellen seemed to think it was the best plan to adopt, and I wanted to fall in with her wishes. Besides, I somehow felt that it was the proper thing to do. I could not bear for it to go out to the town that the senior circuit steward of our circuit could not meet his liabilities, and had to be declared insolvent. I wanted to get as much responsibility as possible off my mind, and to be able to declare that official Methodism had not suffered through me. True, I had done nothing to be ashamed of. I had acted foolishly, but no man could accuse me of being guilty of an improper deed. This, of course, was a great comfort to me; all the same, I felt very sad and bitter at heart as I rose to speak.

I took a hasty glance around the vestry, and saw Richard Best, who was evidently wondering what I wished to say. In my heart I felt sure that he was glad because of my sorrow. There were others there, too, who felt jealous of me because I had been more influential than they, and the thought that I should have to tell them of my determination to resign, almost

broke my heart. But the man whose presence I most dreaded was Mr. Hawthorne. Strange as it may seem, people believed I had acted as his enemy ; they believed I had deliberately plotted to get him out of the circuit, and as a consequence many who might otherwise have befriended me kept aloof from me. I felt sure then, as I feel sure now, that but for the action I had taken in regard to the young minister, Herbert Stanley and others would have come forward, and very likely bought the old coal mine which spelt ruin to me, not because they thought it would be a good investment, but because Methodists are in the habit of standing by one another in times of trouble. Of course I may be mistaken, for Lancashire men are keen business men, and do not allow sentiment to influence their business transactions. All the same, I believe Herbert Stanley would have done this ; for although he bitterly opposed me in Quarterly Meetings and such like, I must admit that he was a very generous young man.

Anyhow, the fact remains that no one had come forward to help me. Many had told me of their sorrow because of my trouble, but no one had offered to stand by me in the way of money. Therefore, when I saw Bernard Hawthorne looking steadily at me my heart grew, if possible, more bitter than it had been before.

I braced myself up, however, and vowed that I would show no sign of weakness.

"My trouble will make no difference to you, young man," I said to myself. "Methodism goes on, no matter what may happen to circuit stewards. The President will come to Lynford in a week or two, and then, although you have a lot of followers, you'll get your dismissal right enough. I've done my duty by you, young man, and whatever may happen to me, I shall

have driven out of the town one who defied his circuit steward and violated the most sacred usages of our denomination."

It was in this spirit, therefore, that I began to say what was in my heart, and I am afraid it did not soften the feelings of any one towards me. You see, when I felt that my influence and my position were slipping from me, I said things which had better have been left unsaid. I aroused the fighting instinct of all who were present, and thus, instead of leading the brethren to pity me, I just did the opposite thing.

Perhaps I may be excused, for it is not an easy thing for a man cradled in Methodism, a man who has occupied every office a circuit can offer to a layman, to feel that through no fault of his own he has become a bankrupt, and thus has to give up the dearest things in his life. No doubt it was this that led me, even then, to tell Mr. Hawthorne what I thought of him.

"Brethren," I said, "I have held office for the sake of the good of Methodism, and now I give it up for the same reason. While I have held office I have tried to do my duty. It may be that some of you have regarded me as a very strict disciplinarian, but if I have been strict it has been from a sense of duty. Methodism is as dear to me as my own life, and thus I have taken care that no scandal shall rest upon it. For this reason I have tried to safeguard our theology, I have done my best to put a stop to anything like heretical teaching, I have been quick to bring to account those who would violate those usages which have become sacred to me. I know this has made me unpopular, but I would do it again. While I have breath I mean to uphold discipline, no matter who may suffer; and I do trust that whoever may succeed me

in my post as circuit steward will see to it that no man, whether he be minister" (here I stopped and looked at Mr. Hawthorne) "or layman" (and here I looked at Herbert Stanley), "shall be allowed to preach doctrines or establish customs other than those which have been our crown and our glory."

This I said, and more, for I was very anxious that Mr. Hawthorne should see that I was not going to yield an inch to him, although I was under a cloud. As I said, I may have spoken bitterly, for my heart was very sore, especially as I saw that young man who had defied me ever since he came into the circuit sitting in judgment on me.

Of course the meeting was informal, but, as the Quarterly Meeting was close at hand, the findings of this meeting would naturally be reported and acted upon.

After one or two brethren had expressed their sorrow because of my misfortune, some one got up and moved that "the meeting expressed its sympathy with Brother Sutcliffe, but that under the circumstances it recommended that the Quarterly Meeting accepted his resignation." This was seconded, and the chairman rose to his feet to say a few words and put it to the vote.

I must confess it—I *did* think stronger expressions of sympathy would have been used; I *did* think some reference would have been made to my many years of loyal and devoted service. But the truth must be told. Very little warmth of feeling was manifested, and this, I am sure, was just because people had taken sides with Mr. Hawthorne, and because they believed that through me he would have to leave the circuit.

As I say, Mr. Jory had risen to his feet in order to say a few words and then put the resolution to the

meeting, and I was comforting myself with the thought that he at least would do me justice, when I felt as though some one had stabbed me, for I saw Mr. Hawthorne rise to his feet and heard him ask to say a few words.

"Surely," I thought, "he'll not dare to say much. A probationer who is practically under the ban of the denominational authorities will be ashamed to attack one who was a preacher before he was born."

And yet as I looked at his face I expected an attack. I felt sure that he would now seize his opportunity, and take his revenge for what I had said and done. Time after time I had conceived it to be my duty to bring his name and doings before our circuit authorities; and now I believed that he, seeing me in a tight corner, would pay me out for my conduct towards him. Perhaps, had I been in his position, I should have done this.

"Mr. Chairman," he said very quietly, "I am sure that all of us deeply sympathise with Mr. Sutcliffe."

"A bit of honey to coat the pill," I said to myself.

"More than that," he went on, "I am equally sure that not one of us entertains a shadow of suspicion concerning his business integrity."

I looked at him in astonishment.

"Personally, I am sure that what he has done has been done in good faith. Doubtless he would have been wise had he taken advice from persons skilled in such matters before he became involved in the transaction which has brought him such trouble, but no one here, I am sure, associates him with anything like moral laxity. This being so, and remembering also that he has to the best of his ability served this circuit practically all his life, I would suggest that we hesitate

before recommending that his resignation be accepted. Let us remember that by so doing we should bring a still greater sorrow upon him, and it may be that we should create an impression among the townfolk that we no longer trusted him.

"Indeed, gentlemen, I ask it as a favour that this meeting do nothing except express its sympathy with Mr. Sutcliffe. I have grave and weighty reasons for asking this, for I have confidence, ay, and more than confidence, that before the day of the Quarterly Meeting arrives Mr. Sutcliffe will feel justified in retaining his post as senior circuit steward."

I tell you, you could have knocked me down with a straw. Had any one told me that he would have uttered such words a few minutes before, I should have laughed in his face. But there he stood, his fine handsome face full of kindness and sympathy, and his voice almost husky with emotion. A moment later, however, a suspicion entered my mind. What did this mean? Had he some deep-laid scheme whereby he could make my ruin more complete? I could not believe that the man against whom I had used all my influence, the man whom I had tried to expel from Methodism, should endeavour to keep me in one of the most important offices.

"You say you have grave and weighty reasons for saying this, Mr. Hawthorne?" said the chairman.

"Yes, I have."

"Perhaps you have information unknown to us."

"Perhaps I have," he answered, with a smile. "Anyhow, I suggest that only the former part of that resolution be passed."

"But—but——" And then several began to ask questions.

"I only arrived at Lynford a few minutes before this meeting commenced," he interrupted. "Had I got home earlier, perhaps we should have taken another course. As it is, I hope you will carry out my suggestion."

I think I have said that Mr. Hawthorne had a way with him that almost compelled people to fall in with his views. That, I believe, was the reason why he had obtained such a hold upon the town. Be that as it may, however, he had his way in this instance. A few minutes later many warm words of sympathy were expressed concerning me, while even Richard Best said he hoped that I should not be obliged to give up my office.

As you may imagine, I seemed like one in a dream. As I walked out of the vestry, I felt as though a great burden had been taken from my shoulders, and yet I could not understand the reason for the feeling. In spite of what Mr. Hawthorne had said, I could not see how my position was altered in the least, and yet the fact remained that I was as light-hearted as a boy.

"I shall be glad if you will walk with me up to my lodgings, Mr. Sutcliffe," said the young minister, as we left the chapel yard.

"Certainly," I said; and yet I spoke coldly, for I was still suspicious of him.

After that neither of us spoke a word until we reached the door of the house where he lived.

When presently we were seated in his study, he turned towards me, and said quietly, "You are naturally wondering what is in my mind?"

"I am—very much," I replied.

"I am afraid you will think I am an inquisitive sort of fellow," he went on, with a smile, "but when

I heard of your misfortune, I went to the lawyer who has the affair in hand, and made many inquiries about it."

"Well, you heard nothing that can help me," I said bitterly.

"I am not so sure. Although trade is very bad in Lynford just now, especially the coal trade, the lawyer seems to think that this mine which is the cause of your trouble may turn out a valuable property."

"I am afraid it is impossible," I said. "If Peter Dodson believed that, he would not have left the country. But there, I have made my bed, and I must lie on it. No one would advance sixpence on the place. The coal seam is worked out, the machinery is practically useless, and I see nothing for me but blank ruin."

"The lawyer doesn't seem quite so hopeless," he said. "He believes that trade will become brisk in Lynford again in a year or two, and then the property may become valuable."

"But even if that be so," I said, "it does not help me now. The cotton trade is bad, mills are being run at a loss, money is scarce, and no one is prepared to take that mine off my hands on a very uncertain chance. I was a fool to touch it, I know; but I trusted Peter Dodson. Besides, he showed me a lot of securities which I thought as safe as the Bank of England, but which are not worth sixpence."

"Anyhow, I have gone into the matter," he replied, "and I have determined to ask you to transfer your interest to me. As it happens, I have some money lying idle, and I can afford to make the purchase, and wait for better times."

"But, Mr. Hawthorne!"

"Do you consent?"

"Why, why do you do this?" I stammered.

"Oh, for several reasons," he replied. "First, I can afford it; second, I am not without hopes that it will turn out a good investment; and third—well, I should not like my senior circuit steward to be obliged to give up office through bankruptcy."

"But, but—Mr. Hawthorne, I—I——"

"The question is, will you consent?"

"You are sure that—that you understand what you are doing?"

"Perfectly. I have to-day come from my home, where I have been to consult my father and mother. Besides, I am acting on the lawyer's advice."

"I pray God that—that——"

"You consent, then? Excuse me for pressing for your answer, but there is much I wish to do to-night. I know it seems inhospitable to drive you away so quickly, but I cannot help it."

"If—if——" I stammered with fast-beating heart.

"You consent, then?"

"Yes," I said; and there was such a lump in my throat that I could not speak another word.

"That's right. Will you call at Mr. Harrop's office to-morrow, and then the affair can be settled in a proper manner? Good-night, Mr. Sutcliffe.—But stop: there is just another matter. Nothing further need be known about my part in the transaction. Of course the members of the circuit committee may think I have done something to help you, or perhaps they may conclude that I have heard of some one who was willing to be responsible for your liabilities. Anyhow, please don't tell any one about our conversation.

"I must tell my wife!" I said.

"Oh, yes. Your wife is a woman in ten thousand, and can keep her own counsel," he said; "but no one else, mind. Good-night."

How I got home, I don't know. I suppose I met acquaintances on my way from Mr. Hawthorne's lodgings to my own door, but I don't remember.

"I wonder what Mary Ellen will say?" I said to myself when at length I reached the door of my house; and then I wondered how I could best explain the great change in my fortune.

I entered very quietly, for I wished to surprise her; and as I opened the door of the sitting-room, I saw that she was sitting in the rocking-chair; and as she rocked to and fro she looked the picture of misery.

She heard me enter, however, and then she looked up with a wintry smile.

"Ay, Caleb," she said, "I was a six-loom waiver when I wur a lass. As thou know'st, after I'd paid the tenter, I made a tidy bit o' brass. I'm afraid I can only run four looms now, but I can waive yet."

"Nay, lass," I said, "please God I shall have enough for both!"

She mistook my meaning, and thought I meant that I should be able to earn enough for both of us, for she said: "Nay, Caleb, I can work as well as thee, and I will. Atween us we can mak' thirty-five shillin' or two pound a week. But tell me what they said at the circuit committee meetin'."

"Lass," I said, lapsing into Lancashire, "I've that to tell thee as'll mak' thee think thou'rt dreamin'."

"Nay, doant tak' on soa, Caleb. Perhaps it's the Lord's will as we should 'ave a bit o' trouble. Sin' we've been so comfortably off, I've often thowt as we've got selfish, and less spiritual. I'm 'fraid, Caleb,

as 'ow Aw've been, as it were, at aise in Zion. The Lord's doin' reight by us, owd lad."

"Hearken, lass, while I tell thee summat," I said. And then I related all the events of the evening.

"Ay, Caleb, Caleb, Caleb!" she said when I'd finished, and then she kissed me.

A minute later she put on her bonnet.

"Where art a' goin'?" I asked.

"I'm goin' to see Hawthorne—I'm goin' to thank him. I couldn't go to bed wi'out doin' that."

"Not to-night—not to-night," I said. "He sent me off because he was busy."

"Busy or noan busy, I'm goin'," she said; and I let her go.

I did not accompany her, however. I could not. Instead, I sat down and tried to realise what it all meant.

"But I must do my duty," I said presently. "I must not be made soft because he's helped me out of this difficulty. He doesn't preach the Gospel, and he's not the man for our circuit. No, no, I'll not be soft. I've been a Methodist all my life, and I was a local preacher before he was born; and I can't alter now. I may seem to be ungracious, but the man who holds his views, and acts like he acts, is not fit for the Methodist ministry."

This I said because even yet my eyes were not opened, and because I knew not the man whom I had determined to drive out of our denomination.

The next day I was told that a special meeting was arranged to be held in the schoolroom, about which I had never been consulted, but to which I was invited.

"There's something special on foot," I said to myself,

“something very special, of that I am sure. What does it mean?”

But even then I did not dream what the people had been planning, for so much were the people incensed against me that no one consulted me about anything.

However, I made up my mind to go.

CHAPTER XV

BERNARD HAWTHORNE'S MESSAGE TO AN OLD LANCASHIRE WEAVER

BEFORE saying anything about the movement which was on foot among the Wesley people, and concerning which they would not discuss with me, it is necessary, if I am to tell this story properly, to relate a circumstance which was of great interest to the young minister.

On the night of the circuit committee meeting, I had left Mr. Hawthorne at his own lodgings, and my wife, believing that he would be at home, had gone to thank him for his kindness. She did not find him at home, however. Immediately after we had parted, Malachi Whalebone, who keeps a big draper's shop, from which he supplies a large number of the poorer people of the town, came to him. Malachi is a character in his way, and is regarded by many as a man of great humour. During Mr. Hawthorne's stay in Lynford he had never been once known to pass an opinion about him. I had repeatedly asked him what he thought, but he had obstinately refused to say a word either for or against the young preacher.

"Ther's no foofil as bad as a talkin' foofil, Caleb," he had said to me again and again; "and Aw reckon yar tongue is long eno' for both on us!"

"But you are a man of influence, and your word would go a long way, Malachi," I urged.

"Yi, Aw reckon my word goes a goodish way; but why? It's because my word is weighty. I'm noan like some foak. Aw doan't give opinions withaath thinkin' middlin'. Also, bein' a man o' judgment, I think boath sides of a question. Now, ef I wer allus passin' opinions, do yo' think foak would look up to me as they do? Noa, for sure they wouldn't."

When Malachi came to Mr. Hawthorne, the young man was somewhat surprised to see him. Never before had he called at his lodgings, neither had he seemed to take much interest in him.

"This is a surprise, Mr. Whalebone," he said.

"Ay, I thought yo'd be a bit puzzled when yo' caught sight o' me at yar door. What might yo' think Aw've come for?"

"I've not the slightest idea."

"Nay, I thowt you'd noan know."

"Won't you come in?"

"Noa."

Mr. Hawthorne looked at him, wondering what was in his mind.

"Aw reckon yo' think yar day's wark is done," he continued presently.

"To tell you the truth, I've not done much to-day. I've been very idle."

"That'll noan be much of a change for yo', I reckon."

"You think not?"

"Nay, I've often thowt as 'ow it 'ud do all yo' passons good to wark a bit for a change."

"Well, you are a thinking man, Mr. Whalebone."

"Yi, I s'poase so."

"You'll not come in, then?"

"Nay, I want thee to come wi' me instead."

"Where?"

"I'll tell thee on th' rooad."

"All right; I'll come with you."

Malachi waited at the door while the young minister prepared to accompany him, and a moment later they were walking away together.

For some minutes Malachi did not speak, while Mr. Hawthorne wondered whither he wanted to lead him. Presently he stopped suddenly.

"Mester Hawthorne," he said, "do you see yon doorstep what's ruddled rarely?"

"Yes, I see."

"Dost a' see th' owd woman lookin' aat o' the door?" he continued.

"Yes; who is she?"

"Better nor seventeen year agone th' owd lass yon—oo's called Emily Maria Pilling—came to me lookin' rare and solemn. Aw knawed 'er owd man, Aaron, wur poorly, and so Aw ses, 'Weel, Emily Maria,' Aw ses, 'ow's th' owd man?' 'Ay, ee's rare and poorly,' oo ses. 'Doctor been to-day?' Aw ses. 'Yi,' oo ses. 'What did a say?' 'Ay, th' doctor ses as 'ow 'ee can noan live after to-morrow.' 'Tha never ses!' ses I. 'No, Mester Whalebone, ee's varry poorly, and as the doctor ses as 'ow 'ee can noan live after to-morrow, Aw've bin thinkin' as aa I might as weel order th' mournin' at once.' 'Ay,' I ses, 'that's varry sensible on you, Mrs. Pilling.'

"Weel, oo ordered th' mournin' things, and a tidy order it was, too. Yo' see there wur three lasses growed up, and they all wanted black dresses and 'ats trimmed wi' crape, and oo bought for all th' lot. When oo'd bought it, 'oo took it to th' dressmaker and tow'd her to work 'ard and mak' it up. Weel, th' dressmaker did. Oo got the things weel on, and by th' next day

'oo'd welly nigh got all th' dresses made. Art a' followin' me?"

"Yes, I'm following."

"Weel——" and then Malachi stopped.

"Well, what then?" asked Mr. Hawthorne.

"Th' owd man's noan decad yet!" remarked Malachi.

"He didn't die?" laughed Mr. Hawthorne.

"No, he begun to geet better directly th' owd lass had ordered the mournin'. Aw spoase oo was rarely put aat, for yo' see, she and her thre lasses wur oal knockin' araand Lynford wi' black crape dresses."

"And what did her husband, Aaron Pilling, say?" asked the young minister.

"Ay, he rarely laughed, and every time th' owd lass put on th' black dress, he'd say, 'Thou thought Aw wur decad, but Aw'm rare and tough, Emily Maria, and Moses Scott is noan goin' to wear my old shoon for a bit!'"

After this, Malachi, whose face had not moved a muscle during the recital of his story, moved towards the cottage where Mrs. Pilling had entered.

"But Aw reckon oo's done for this time," said Malachi presently.

"What! Aaron Pilling?"

"Ay. I called to see him an hour agone, and he was varry poorly. That's why Aw'm takin' thee to see him."

"Oh, we are going to see him, are we?"

"Why, ha' yo' ony objection?"

"Oh, certainly not."

"Do yo' know who all yon row of cottages belongs to?"

"No."

"But tha should. That house o' Aaron's, and all

th' others, belong to Mester Hugh Clitheroc, of Rough Leigh."

"Well, they appear to be very good cottages."

"Ay, they're noan so bad. Aw made a bid for them mysen, but Mester Clitheroc's agent put on a pound a cottage more than I cared to give. Ay, but here we are."

Malachi opened the cottage door without knocking and entered, Bernard Hawthorne following.

"Weel, Emily Maria," said Malachi, "how's th' owd man by this time?"

"Ay, varry poorly; Aw doan't think ther's ony mistak' this time, Mester Whalebone."

"Aw've brought th' passon."

"Ay, I see. Yo' can go up; there's nobody wi' 'im 'cept our Eliza Ellen."

Mr. Hawthorne followed Malachi up the stairs and entered the room of the sick man. The young minister saw an old man, whose face was typical of a class of men still living in Lancashire. His hair grew thick and bushy, his cheekbones were prominent, his mouth hard almost to sternness.

"Weel, Aw've come agean, and brought th' Wesley minister," said Malachi.

"Ay, Aw see. He's rare and young!"

"Ay, he's young, but tha thought tha'd like to see him."

"Ay, Aw did, and perhaps he'll do as weel as another. Aw did'n' 'ave a passon th' laast time Aw was reckoned to dee."

"No; but tha fair bait 'em oal then, Aaron."

"Ay, Aw did. But yo' did varry weel. Th' owd lass and th' young lasses 'ad to work a goodish bit and to save a goodish bit to pay yo'. Ay, but Aw've

laughed 'baat it mony a time ; but Aw reckon Aw sh'll 'ave to go this time."

"Aw reckon thou wilt," said Malachi.

"This 'll be a warnin' to thee," said Aaron ; "Aw'm noan so mich older nor thee, so thou'd better geet ready."

"Ay, I trust I am ready, Aaron ; but 'ow 'baat thee?"

"Coom 'ere," said the old man to Bernard Hawthorne, who went close to him.

"Aw've bin thinkin' middlin' 'baat decin'," he said slowly. "Aw've noan been what yo' call a chapel-goin' man like th' owd Caleb Sutcliffe ; but, still, Aw'm religious."

"I'm glad to hear that," said the young minister.

"Ay, I am. I've allus paid for two sittin's at Wesley."

"But I've never seen you in the chapel."

"Nay, but Aw've allus paid for my sittin's, soa I s'poase that'll reckon. Then Aw've allus gone to chapel at charity sermons, and Aw've put in haalf-a-sovereign regular into th' collection-box. So Aw reckon Aw'm what yo' call a religious man."

Bernard Hawthorne was silent.

"Doan't yo' call that bein' religious?" he asked, somewhat anxiously.

"I'm very glad you've been interested in religious work," said Mr. Hawthorne ; "but religion is more than that."

"Ay, Aw know it is ; still, it's summat. And I 'ope as 'ow th' Almighty 'll tak' it into account."

"He'll take everything into account, Mr. Pilling."

"They ca' me Aaron," said the dying man, rather impatiently.

"Well, Aaron, God will take everything into account."

"Then Aw doan't see no raison to be so much feared. Aw've allus paid my debts, and ther's noan bin a better waiver in Lynford. Aw've allus made the children go to Sunda'-school an' all. Besides, once, when aar William George swared, Aw gied him a rare lickin'."

"Well, God takes everything into account," said the minister again.

"Ay, I hope so : but tha'art noan sayin' this because thou art a passon, and think it the proper thing to say summat, art a'?"

"No, I'll say nothing but what I really believe."

"Weel, I want a bit o' comfort, for, after all, deein's a weary job. Aw'm noan goin' to turn coward nor nowt o' that, but it's a weary job. Now tell me fair wot yo' think 'll 'appen to me when I dee?"

Had I, Caleb Sutcliffe, been called to see Aaron Pilling, I should have given him some straight talk. I should have told him of the doom of the sinner who died without conversion. I should then have unfolded the plan of salvation, and have told him that if he wished to be saved he must believe in it. But Bernard Hawthorne did nothing of this : I know this, because Emily Maria Pilling had come into the room—with another woman, whom I shall have to speak about presently—and Emily Maria told me every word that the young minister said.

"It is not for me to say what will happen to you when you die," said Bernard Hawthorne. "This I know, God will not leave you, and because God loves you He will do what is best for you."

"Will He send me to hell, think yo'?"

"If He does it will be because He loves you,"



BERNARD HAWTHORNE'S MESSAGE TO AN OLD LANCASHIRE WEAVER.

replied the young man. "God is love, and does everything through and because of His love. If He punishes, He punishes in love; if He rewards, He rewards in love. His will is that you shall be made a pure man, filled with the Spirit of His Son, and fashioned after His likeness."

"Tell me more, lad, tell me more," said the old man eagerly.

Then Bernard Hawthorne told him that God loved all men, and regarded all as His children; told him, too, that in order that men might realise His love He sent Christ, His own Son, who showed forth in His life and death the Father's love and pity. He said that Christ came to lead men to the God who loved them, and to give them life, eternal life. He told him that God could never be harsh and cruel, and never did anything except as the outcome of His love for His children, and that in His own good time all who came to Him would enter into joy.

I know I'm not saying this as Bernard Hawthorne said it, for Mrs. Pilling told me that his words made her cry, and seemed very beautiful to her. I must admit this, too, that the young minister, even when he was preaching what I believed to be false doctrine, always put it in a very plausible, taking way.

"It's rare beautiful Gospel, Mester," said old Aaron, presently, "a rare beautiful Gospel, but I can hardly mak' it aat. Once, I heard owd Caleb Sutcliffe praich, and he said that God was angry wi' us, and that He could only cool His red-hot sword by plungin' it in the blood of Jesus Christ."

I will say this of Mr. Hawthorne—he didn't attack me; but he went on repeating what he had said before. He said that God was sorry because of the sin of

the world, and was ever pleading with men in a thousand ways to repent of their sin. That while they loved sin they could not enter into God's joy, any more than a blind man could see the beauty of a flower. He also told the story of the dying thief, to whom Christ gave peace and joy while he hung on the cross.

"I'm noan a thief," said Aaron, "and Aw've never tow'd a lee for twenty year. Aw've allus kept true to th' owd lass, too, and Aw've done my duty; but, still, I do need mercy, and what you've tow'd me is varry good."

I will not dwell on this scene longer, save to say that when the young minister ceased speaking the dying man was wondrously comforted.

"It's Gospel, it's Gospel," he repeated again and again. "Come agean in th' morn, mester."

"Shall I pray with you, Aaron, before I go?"

"Yi, do, mester."

When they rose from their knees—for by this time there were several people gathered together—Bernard Hawthorne looked up and saw Miss Mary Clitheroe in the room.

"I did not know you were here, Miss Clitheroe," he said.

"I've been here a good while," she replied. "Mr. Pilling is one of my father's tenants, and I have brought—that is, I called to see how he was."

A few minutes later the young man and the young woman were in the street together.

"It's late, Miss Clitheroe," he said: "shall I walk home with you?"

"I shall be glad if you will," she replied quietly; and then they walked away together, while Malachi

Whalebone and Emily Maria Pilling exchanged meaning nods.

"He talked varry nicely to th' owd man," said Mrs. Pilling presently.

"Ay, he's noan so bad," replied Malachi, "noan so bad. Ef I wur given to talkin' much, I should say he wur champion, I should an' all."

"Dost a' think he'll wed you lass?"

"Those as lives longest 'll see most," replied Malachi, sententiously.

Meanwhile Bernard Hawthorne and Miss Mary Clitheroe walked away together. While they threaded the streets neither spoke, but when they got away into the country Miss Clitheroe said:

"Is it true that you have been arraigned before your ecclesiastical authorities on account of your preaching, Mr. Hawthorne?"

"Yes," he replied.

"And what will be the result of it?"

"I don't know yet. In all probability I shall have to cease being a Methodist minister."

"No, no, surely not."

"I expect I shall."

"But I'm told that lately your congregation love you more than ever, and that they are going to do every-thing in their power to keep you."

"Yes, I have been overwhelmed with kindness. I had no conception of the kindness and the goodness of the Lancashire people until they thought I was in trouble. But I am afraid I have offended some of those in high places."

"How is that?"

"Well, I suppose I've not been amenable to authority. I refused to answer certain questions that were asked

of me. You see, I did not feel that they had any right to ask them, and so—well, I declined point blank to satisfy them.”

“But it has been said that your doctrine was unsound—that you held heretical views.”

“Yes, I suppose so.”

“I hope you'll not cease being a minister, Mr. Hawthorne.”

“What!”

She repeated her words.

“But, but—you said only a few months ago that you hoped——”

“Yes, yes, I know.”

“Then you have changed?”

“I don't know, but what I have just seen and heard has made me wonder. I was imagining what my father would say if he were asked to give a few words of comfort to old Aaron Pilling. Do you believe in every word you said, Mr. Hawthorne?”

“Every word.”

She was silent as they walked on side by side, then she said suddenly, “Still, being minister does mean intellectual suicide, doesn't it?”

“No.”

“But just think. You've preached what you believed to be true. You've dared to think for yourself; and now, well—you say you'll have to cease being a minister?”

“Never. I may be driven from Lynford, but I shall not cease being a minister.”

She looked at him steadily for a moment, then she said, “I want to say something to you—that is——”

“Yes, Miss Clitheroc,” he said, as she hesitated.

“It is only this,” she said. “I want you to forgive

me for having misjudged you. I have not believed in Christianity as you believe it, neither have I admired those belonging to your profession. Neither do I now," she added, after a second. "Christianity, as I have been taught to believe in it, is illogical, and rests upon a most insufficient basis. Those sermons of yours, for example, were utterly unconvincing. As for the clergy of all sorts—well, they are mostly a set of parrots, repeating what others have said before them. If there is anything in this world which is contemptible, it is the general run of ministers of all denominations. Here are your High Church curates, with their draperies, their incense, and their unbelievable 'dogmas; then, again, there are the Catholic priests, with their foolish assumptions, their ridiculous doctrines, and their worn-out fallacies. In addition to these are the Nonconformist ministers, who, in another way, are just as creed-bound, just as lacking in intellectual growth. But that is not what I wished to say. Months ago I believed that you were a parrot also. I misjudged you, and I apologise. I believe you are an honest man."

"Thank you. But you do not believe as I believe?"

She shook her head.

"You have no sympathy with my work at Wesley?"

"No, at present, not a bit. For your social work, for your desire to lead those men you are associated with to read good books and to live good lives, I have every admiration; but for your distinctly religious work I have at this moment none."

"I am very sorry."

"Why should you be?"

"For many reasons. Miss Clitheroe, do you know, or have you ever met with, any woman named Paulina Milano?"

“Paulina Milano?” she repeated quietly; “no, never.”

“You never knew of such an one coming to Lynford? Try and remember.”

“No, I never knew of such a person. Is she a friend of yours?”

“I—I don't know. I have a long, strange story to tell you some time.”

“To tell me?”

“Yes. When may I tell it? I cannot speak about it to-night. I do not know why, but I cannot. Tell me when I may come and see you.”

“Next Tuesday evening. I shall be at home.”

“I cannot come next Tuesday. There is to be a meeting that night to which the people seem anxious I should go.”

“I leave home next Wednesday for a few days, but could you come the following Tuesday?”

“Yes, I can come then. Thank you very much. I wish I could speak to you about it to-night, but I cannot. It may seem trivial and unimportant to you, but it means very, very much to me.”

“If you think I can help you, come next Tuesday week, then.”

“Very well, I will come.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE HOUR BEFORE THE DAWN

WHENEVER there is a great event in Lynford now and when some building is more than usually full, the folk compare it with the great gathering in Wesley Chapel which was held shortly after the circuit committee meeting about which I have just been writing. I have been told since that it was the intention of the people first of all to hold the meeting in the schoolroom, but such numbers came that they had to adjourn to the chapel, and even then many had to be turned away. There were no announcements of any sort—indeed for some time I did not know what was in the minds of the people ; but presently the news reached me that many wished to discuss the reasons for which Mr. Hawthorne had been summoned before the denominational authorities.

Had I been a trustee, I would have refused to allow our premises to be used for such a purpose. This may seem strange in view of Mr. Hawthorne's kindness to me, but I write the truth. In spite of what he had done for me I did not believe in him. and I did not regard him as a suitable person to enter our pulpits. I did not think he was faithful to our doctrine or our discipline. He did not hold the old safe views about the Bible, and he certainly did not pay respect to his circuit officers.

Besides all this, however, I did not forget the fact that he had acted to Miss Clitheroe as though he were engaged to her, while during the time of their intimacy he had been writing love-letters to another woman.

"No, young man," I repeated to myself again and again, "you must not think because you have helped me in my trouble that I can forget my duty to the churches I love. A man may be a good friend, and yet not be fit for a Methodist minister. We have our doctrines and we have our discipline, and if you are not faithful to them out you must go."

Just before I started to attend this meeting, I received a letter from the President, telling me that he intended coming to Lynford that week, and although he had arranged to preach at Grayburn the following Sunday morning, he hoped to be present at the service at Wesley in the evening.

I must confess that I felt sorry for Mr. Hawthorne as I read the letter. After all, the young man *had* been kind to me. He had saved me from a terrible calamity, he had enabled me to retain my office as circuit steward, and therefore it seemed hard that I should use my influence against him.

"Thou'lt never go agin Hawthorne no more now, wilt 'a?" said Mary Ellen to me again and again; and my heart became heavy as I repeated my case against him.

"But think, lad," said Mary Ellen,—“think. He's saved thee fro' ruin, he's helped thee to keep thy office as circuit steward; surely thou'lt noan try and kick 'im out o' th' ministry!"

"Duty is duty," I answered sternly; "and it shall never be said of me that personal kindness, or anything

of that sort, kept me from doing my duty to the denomination."

"Ay, lad, thou art 'ard," she said.

"I hope I'm a faithful steward," I replied. "In this particular case I must not think of individuals; I must think of the denomination."

"Think o' Christ, rather," she answered.

"It is because I do think of my duty as a Christian man that I take this stand," I said. "It may make me unpopular, it may make me hated, but while I have any influence it shall be used against any Methodist minister who is untrue to his calling. It's unpleasant for me to do this; but I'll do it."

"Thou'lt be hooted out o' the town," she said.

"No, I shall not. The better sense of the people will prevail, and they'll see I've only done what is right."

"But thou'lt tell him that the President is coming to hear him on Sunday neet?" she urged.

"No," I said. "The President shall hear him just as we have had to hear him, and then he shall judge of his blasphemous doctrines."

"I hear as how the people propose passin' a vote of confidence in him to-neet," she remarked, as we made our way towards Wesley Chapel.

"If they do, I shall propose something else," I replied.

"Ay, and after he's saved us from ruin!" she urged.

"Duty is duty," I replied, and after that I would discuss the matter no further with her.

I must confess to being surprised as I got near the chapel. Such a crowd as I had never seen before was there. People of all sorts and conditions were thronging into the building, and I, because I was not a trustee, had no power to stop them.

"I'll have the whole question discussed, though," I thought. "I'll see to it that our chapels shall not be used for such purposes." And then I made my way in with the rest, only to find that the great building was already full.

After some difficulty I found a seat, and when the time arrived for the opening of the meeting, every available bit of space in the chapel was occupied.

I am not going to describe the meeting, and that for two or three reasons. For one thing, it baffles description. Never before had I seen such enthusiasm, never had I dreamed that the young man would receive such a manifestation of the people's affection. Old men and women, young men and maidens, were laughing and crying at the same time. And yet there was nothing, as far as one could see, to produce such an effect. There were no presentations, no printed testimonials, no eloquent speeches. Indeed, if the truth must be told, the speeches were of a fourth-rate order; and I could not help feeling that, from the standpoint of really good speech-making, they were throwing away their chances. Indeed, I found myself thinking what I should have said had I been in their places, and felt as they felt. For after all it was a grand opportunity. Nearly two thousand people had gathered together, and every one there, except myself, was filled with enthusiasm.

And yet I must admit that what was said seemed to take tremendously with the people, and I must also admit that men like Kneepads and Moreso spoke in a way which surprised me. I did not believe that they could speak so feelingly, so tenderly.

"I'm noan much of a spaiker, Mester Cheerman," said Kneepads, "and I doan't pretend to say owt

as'll be fit for print; but this I must say, Mester Hawthorne have took ho'd o' me as Aw've never been took ho'd on afore. Some o' yo' may knaw as Aw wer'n't overmuch plaised when Mester Hawthorne cum into th' circuit. I thowt as 'ow we ought to a' 'ad a married mon. More nor that, I've not been able to make much out with some of his sermons. I've criticised him, too, as moast on us 'ave, as yo' knaw. All the saame, I do luv our minister. I'm noan given to soap, as yo' knaw, and my heart has gone out to th' lad. Even when he set my teeth on edge, I were prayin' for him, and naa that there have been some i' th' circuit as think it their dooty to gi' 'im the sack, I ses, Not if I can 'elp it. I've been as much grieved as yo' have been that more folk have noan been converted, but he's made me want to be a better man. He has, friends, and I believe this, the Loard is leadin' 'im, He's leadin' 'im, friends. I doan't believe in kickin' aat everybody who doan't see eye to eye wi' me. I say, they may knaw a bit as weel as me. And I 'ave been prayin' for Mester Hawthorne, I 'ave, and so 'ave scores and hundreds besides. God bless him! I ses, and if he doan't feel the full light o' God may he be led into the light."

"Amen! Amen!" shouted hundreds of voices all over the building.

Kneepad's speech was a fair sample of all the rest, except those made by Herbert Stanley and one or two others. This I will say, too: no one spoke unkindly, eith'er of me or of the denominational authorities; but every one spoke well of Mr. Hawthorne, and told of their love for him.

Presently a resolution was submitted to the meeting, and it was at this point that I made up my mind to

speak. There was nothing particular about the resolution. It simply expressed unbounded confidence in Mr. Hawthorne; it thanked him for his work in the town, and told him of the hope that everybody had, that he would be able to stay in their midst. "How is it," I thought to myself, "that he has gained such a hold of the people? Why is it that this young man has so gripped the town?"

I looked around on the great multitude of people, and saw that it consisted of all sorts and conditions of men. Great rough colliers, weavers, and labourers were there; rich men and women were also there. Men and women who were known to be religious people sat side by side with those who were regarded as blatant blaspheming atheists. Young men and women, with fresh, eager faces, joined the aged and the infirm in seeking to do honour to Bernard Hawthorne.

"It is because these people have itching ears," I thought; "it is because they, like the Greeks of old, are ever on the look-out for some new thing. He has led them away with science, falsely so called, and thus they have no desire for the plain Gospel."

"Tha'lt never move an amendment," said Mary Ellen to me, as she saw me preparing to stand up; "tha'lt never mak' sich a ninny o' thesen! Why, he's saved thee fro' ruin."

"Duty is duty!" I said; but I did not rise, for such a burst of applause rose from the audience when the resolution was read that I could not make myself heard.

Presently it died away a little, and again I prepared to get up, when Herbert Stanley, who was the chairman, rose to put the resolution to the meeting.

"Doan't," said Mary Ellen, but it was not her request that kept me to my seat. Even now I cannot explain

why I did not rise to say what was in my mind. It was not that I feared the audience, or because I knew that my amendment would not find a seconder. It was something different. I felt as though an unseen hand were placed upon me—as though some wondrous presence overmastered me.

“I rise with unbounded pleasure to put this resolution,” said Herbert Stanley. “And in putting it, I wish to express my personal thanks to Mr. Hawthorne for what he has done. I also wish to convey to him facts of which he may be ignorant. Mr. Hawthorne has led a number of the educated and thinking men of the town to turn their attention to religious matters. Many of them have had agnostic tendencies, and had practically discarded Christianity. I do not say that these men have become Christians, but Mr. Hawthorne has led them within the pale of religious influences, he has led them to think of religious matters. Although they are not Christians, they are on their way to become Christians. I should like to testify to this fact also. Mr. Hawthorne has helped me. He has made me desire to be a better man, and because I believe that goodness is the greatest thing in life, I desire to thank him.

“But why has he exerted this influence? It is because he has been sincere and honest. It is because he has refused to be a parrot—a mere echo of the sayings of others. It is because, in the face of abuse and false reports, he has continued to do and say the things he felt ought to be done and said.”

I felt sure that this was levelled at me, but still I could not rise to utter one protest. It seemed as though a weight were upon me. Besides, if the truth must be told, I felt so anxious to hear what Mr.

Hawthorne would say in reply, that my desire to speak became less and less.

I have admitted in these pages that Bernard Hawthorne was a good speaker, that he had the power to express his thoughts clearly and powerfully. But that night he could hardly say a word. Just this sentence, however, I remember, as indicative of the thought in his mind.

"I thank you for gathering here to-night," he said. "I thank you all for saying such kind words, and for manifesting such affection towards me. I will tell you why. All you have said and done has made me ashamed of myself. It is true I can lay claim to this: I have tried to speak and act honestly; nevertheless, I feel as though I have been, and am, unworthy to be called a minister of Jesus Christ. Probably I may have to leave you—it seems as though this is the trend of events; but if I do stay, I pray that I may become more worthy of the name I bear."

He said this so quietly, so humbly, so sincerely, and there was such a plaintive tone in his voice, that I found the tears starting to my eyes, and when I looked around and saw many with tremulous lips and tearful faces, I did not wonder.

Still, as I walked home with Mary Ellen, I determined to stand by my guns, for I did not feel that he was truly a converted man. Old Aaron Pilling was dead, and although the young minister had visited him again and again, he did not unfold to him the plan of salvation as a Methodist minister should.

He did not get to his lodgings until late that night; hundreds of people came to him to grip him by the hand and say kind words to him, so that at length when he did get to his own rooms it was past ten o'clock.

Any one might have thought that there would be no happier man in Lynford that night than Bernard Hawthorne. As a matter of fact, however, not one was so miserable. For hours he sat alone pondering over the events of the evening. He remembered all that had been said, and yet the words spoken to cheer him made him more downcast and dejected.

"What have I been? What have I done?" he said presently. "I have been little more than an ethical teacher, preaching moral platitudes; and, as a consequence, while people have come to listen to me, I do not know that I have led one bad man to change his life. I have given them ill-digested lectures on Bible history; I have spent weeks discussing the question whether Moses or some one else wrote the Pentateuch; I have given the findings of German critics concerning the Books of the Bible, while the people have been hungering for something else. Oh, I felt it to-night more than ever! I never realised how religious these Lancashire people are, never understood the great longings of their hearts. And thus, while I have led them to care for me, I have been a mere intellectual juggler. I have desired to appear before them as a thinker and as a scholar instead of a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Had I, Caleb Sutcliffe, known that he was thinking such thoughts, probably I should not have been preparing a statement of the case which I determined to bring before the President when he came. Yet so it was. That night I was arranging my plans, whereby I might be able to lead the President to see as I saw concerning him, and thus persuade him to bring about his expulsion.

But I did not know this then. The truth came to

me later, and came to me at a time when I was able to understand the young minister as I had never understood him before.

For hours, I say, he sat communing with his own soul, and pondering over the events of his life since he came to Lynford. He thought of the first weeks of his ministry, then he remembered his meeting with Miss Mary Clitheroc, and the thoughts he had concerning her.

"I love her, and yet I do not love her," he said to himself. "I know that she cannot care for me, and yet there are times when I feel I would sacrifice anything—everything—to win her love. Why is she friendly to me, I wonder? Why has she invited me so often to Rough Leigh? We have so very little in common. Even when I love her most, I feel that her influence upon me is not good. I know, too, that she scorns my profession, and has no faith in the religion of which I am a minister. She repels me, and yet she attracts. She makes me love her, even although I know my love is hopeless, and while I am sure her influence upon my life and work are harmful. Yes, she is an agnostic, if not an infidel, and I must drive her out of my heart. It is my duty to do so, and I will. That meeting which we have arranged—well, it need not take place. I must drive her out of my life. But can I? Can I? It would be like living without the sun."

And then he thought of Paulina Milano, the stranger who had written him many letters; and when he did so his feelings were changed. He remembered that these letters expressed spiritual insight, faith, love! Yes, there could be no doubt about it—Paulina Milano loved him. Oh, if he could only find her! but he

could not. He had been to London and tried to discover her, he had even used means other than those of which I have told to find out something about her, but all in vain.

As he sat and thought, it seemed to him that Miss Mary Clitheroe satisfied one part of his being, while Paulina Milano satisfied another. The former attracted him, fascinated him by her beautiful presence, her scorn for meanness and lies, and her bright, eager intelligence. But she repelled him by her cynicism, her agnosticism, her materialism. With one part of his being he loved her, with another he shrank from her.

As for Paulina Milano, she was unreal; she appeared to be a long way off, and yet, as he read her tender messages, as he brought to mind her words expressive of faith, of vision, and of love to Christ, his heart went out to her. Besides, she had told him that she loved him, told him in unmistakable terms.

"If I could find her, could see her, could look into her eyes!" he thought; but he did not see how it was possible. He had asked Miss Mary Clitheroe, and she had never seen her; he had used all the means in his power to discover her whereabouts, all in vain.

Then his mind came back to his work once more, and again he felt depressed and despairing.

"Old Abel Bowyer was right," he said; "my sermons will convert nobody. I have interested the people, I have startled them, I have aroused them to think; but that is all. The drunkards remain drunkards, the outcasts remain outcasts. In John Wesley's days it was different. The preachers' messages held men spell-bound, and led to changed lives. Thieves, vagabonds, adulterers, drunkards were converted. Why is it my work has been so barren of results? Is it because

the Gospel has lost its power, or because I have not preached it aright?

"My sermons will convert nobody," he repeated again and again. "No, they will not. I've mistaken my calling: I'll give up preaching!"

He started to his feet at the thought, for it was new to him.

Should he? It would mean breaking his mother's heart, the shattering of his life's hopes; but what was the use of preaching when he failed to understand the heart of the Gospel? Yes, he would end all the trouble by resigning the ministry and leaving Lynford for ever.

He realised that he had been sitting for hours in a dark room. He rose and lit the gas, and then his heart began to beat aloud, and every fibre of his being quivered, for lying on the table before him was a letter which he knew to be from Paulina Milano.

CHAPTER XVII

A FLAME OF FIRE

IN a few minutes all the events of the evening were forgotten. Bernard Hawthorne was no longer living in Lynford amidst smoke and grime, but away in some flowery dell where the birds sang gaily all the day, and where the music of waters harmonised with the jubilant notes of the merry songsters. That letter of Paulina Milano changed everything. Stranger to him she might be, but she made life seem new.

“I write you because I am lonely,” she said,—“lonely not because I am alone, but because I feel for you in your trouble. For you are alone and sad of heart, Bernard. I am as sure that this is so as if you told me with your own lips. I feel it in every fibre of my being, far away from you as I am. What although you cannot come to me, and speak to me? what although I am forbidden to show you my face?—I can still feel your sorrow, I can still share your troubles. News has come to me that you have been arraigned before the authorities of the denomination to which you belong. I do not know much about such matters, but I know that this will give you great pain, and I write to tell you how I sympathise with you, and how I long to help you. I would that I could come to you, and tell you all that is in my heart, but this is impossible. You

know by this time that I love you, Bernard—love you more than pen can write, or tongue can tell. Sometimes I wish that I had not written to you, and then perhaps we might have somehow met. For I do long to meet you, I do long to hear you speak to me! But this may not be. I wrote to you because I could not help writing; I told you what was in my heart because I could not keep my love a secret from you. I was able to do this because you did not know who I was, because I knew you would never see me. Supposing I had never written, should we have ever been brought together, I wonder? Perhaps we should; and that is why I sometimes wish I had never written. And yet I could not help what I have done. You have seen my heart, and although you can never see my face, I try to be content.

“I want to comfort you, my beloved. I want to tell you that you are never alone. I am with you in spirit all the time, and I weep at your troubles; my heart goes out to you when the burdens of your life are heavy.

“And yet I think I feel glad that you have been arraigned before the authorities of your denomination; I believe you will be helped thereby. Not that I sympathise with anything like iron-bound creeds; not that I believe in putting weights upon the wings of the mind. It is not that. But I have heard you preach, Bernard; I have heard some of your addresses on what is called the ‘Higher Criticism,’ and they gave me pain. Not that I did not think you were sincere, and not because they did not show conscientious study and much mental acumen. I believe you were sincere, and I thought you were very clever. But it seemed so poor, so little. Such studies may be good for the

professor, for the writer of books, and for the study ; but they could not help those weary, tempted, struggling, anxious men and women who came to hear you. They wanted a great gospel, and you gave them no gospel. That is why I am glad you have been led to consider what the future of your ministry is to be. For you have such a great gospel, Bernard,—a gospel which appeals to the heart's deepest needs.

“I have been reading the history of Methodism, and I find that those early Methodist preachers, without great scholarship, without social position, without the aids of ornate services or beautiful churches, preached to the people with power at which I marvel. They stood on village greens, in public squares, or within their humble meeting-houses, and preached a great salvation. I cannot understand the results, and I am glad I cannot. If I could they would become poorer ; but this I find : men's lives were changed, drunkards were made sober, impure men were ennobled, the vilest characters were changed. What was the meaning of it, Bernard ? You are cleverer than they, you have more scholarship than they, you have worked under more favourable conditions than they ; and yet, do the same results follow your preaching ? Should you not consider this ? Indeed, as I have read the lives of those early Methodist preachers, those words in the Psalms and in the Epistle to the Hebrews come to me, ‘He shall make His ministers a flame of fire.’

“Is not this the great secret of a successful ministry, Bernard ? and is not this where you have failed ? and as a consequence is it not good for you that you should be brought before the heads of your denomination ? ”

Bernard Hawthorne stopped reading here. The letter had expressed his own thoughts. It had

diagnosed the malady from which he was suffering ; but it had done more : it had told him of the remedy.

“ He shall make His ministers a flame of fire ! ” he kept on repeating. “ A flame of fire ! ”

Was not this the very genius of Christianity, and thus of Methodism ? He thought of the message of John the Baptist by Jordan's banks. He remembered that wondrous scene after Christ's resurrection, when cloven tongues like unto fire rested upon those Eastern peasants, and when they spoke with such strange power. His mind swept down through the ages, and he thought of those great events which had set Europe ablaze. He remembered Augustine, Savonarola, John Huss, Martin Luther, Wycliffe, Bilney, Ridley and Latimer, Bunyan, Wesley. Each man amongst them was an illustration of those great words, “ He shall make His ministers a flame of fire ! ”

The words, and, more, the thought behind the words, possessed him ! A flame of fire ! A flame of fire ! There in Lynford were drunkards, adulterers, and unclean men. Worldliness was rampant, scepticism was rife, hearts were weary and sinful. All longed for comfort, for life, for victory ; and he, a minister of Christ—what had he been doing ?

True, he had been earnest, and sincere ; but he had fancied that he would save men by proving that the Psalms were not written by David, and that there was more than one Isaiah ! He had appealed to the human, he had not remembered the divine.

“ Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts ! ” “ He shall make His ministers a flame of fire ! ”

“ Oh, God bless you, Paulina Milano ! ” he cried.

He read her letter over again, not only the parts

I have quoted, but the remainder; and as he read his heart went out to her. True, he had never seen her,—her very existence was shadowy and unreal at times; but with her letter before him, a letter breathing purity, faith, womanliness, love, he felt that surely God would never let them live their lives apart.

Again Mary Clitheroe became less real than the maiden he had never seen. Her scepticism, her cynicism, ceased to affect him. Indeed, he did not seem to know her at all. He had never seen her heart, he had never understood her thoughts.

True, she was beautiful, she was fascinating; but she did not appeal to his deepest nature, she never made him long for the truest and the best, as did Paulina Milano. At least he thought so then, for he was under the spell of this unknown woman's letter.

No thoughts of retiring to rest came to him. He was too much excited. He felt as though all his life's destiny was centred in that moment.

"A flame of fire! A flame of fire!" he kept on repeating, and the words stirred his nature to its deepest depths.

For a long time he paced the room in deep thought; then presently he turned to his bookshelves and saw a book containing biographies of epoch-making men. He took it down and turned over its leaves, until he came to the name of Dr. Chalmers, of Scotland. Then he sat down to read. He did not read long, but evidently his attention was arrested.

"The same truth," he cried. "First, simply a clever scholarly man, then a man absolutely convinced of the truths of Christianity, then a flame of fire! Am I absolutely convinced of the truth of Christianity? How have these books I have been reading affected

my faith—my real vital faith in the truths of Christianity?"

He thought of the books he had been reading, and of the arguments they had adduced. Renan's "Life of Christ," Strauss's "Life of Christ," some of the works of John Stuart Mill, John Morley, Driver, Martineau, Wersacker, Bruce, Smith—enemies as well as friends of Christianity—had they destroyed his faith?

"No, they had not! No, they had not! They had led him to reconstruct some of his ideas about revelation and inspiration, but they had not destroyed any essential of his faith. God was real, Christ was real, The great facts of Christ's Gospel were real! They were! they were!

This fact came to him almost like a revelation. It made everything new.

"I believe! I believe!" he cried. "Yes, I believe!"

The thought was overmastering in its power. For months the foundations of his faith had been tested, forces of which he was scarcely cognisant had been at work in his intellectual and spiritual life. But now he had been brought, as it were, to the climax of his being. In spite of all, he believed! Nay, his belief was more real, more strong, because of the experiences through which he had passed.

Then he read through Paulina Milano's letter again. He pondered long over what she said about those simple men preaching a message which changed the lives of the outcast, the habit-bound, the degraded, the fallen!

"Oh for that power!" he cried.

But how could he get it?

He felt that he must get out in the open air. The atmosphere of the room had become oppressive beyond words, and he longed for the freedom of the moors.

He looked at his watch. It was after three in the morning ; he had been alone with his thoughts for five hours. Silently he left the house, and presently struck into a footpath that led to the moors.

It was still dark. No moon was to be seen, but the stars were shining. Eastward, he thought he saw a faint glow. The air was cool and pure. A few hours later the sky would be darkened by the sulphurous fumes of hundreds of mill chimneys which belched out half-consumed coals, but now it was unpolluted.

He walked away towards the moors, and presently, when he reached them, it seemed as though the sky of his life began to brighten. As yet the outline of that great stretch of country which is to be seen around Lynford did not appear, for it was still obscured by the night, but he seemed to have a sense of freedom, life became larger, heaven became higher.

Presently the glow in the east became brighter, dawn was appearing. Looking steadfastly, he saw the rise and fall of hill and dale. Away in the distance he could see Pendle lifting its head in the sky, and standing like a sentinel to guard the great tract of moors around.

How great God was ! How much more than the little disputes of men ! How small were the thoughts of men !

The first ray of sunlight shot across the hills, and instantly all became new. That which before had been gloomy, forbidding, was now smiling in the dawn. The great rocky peaks in the far distance gleamed like burnished gold ! How the sunlight had changed everything !

A flame of fire ! a flame of fire ! The words haunted him, and for ever they possessed new meanings.

Not a soul was near. For an hour yet every one in the whole countryside would be asleep. No sound was heard, for singing birds are rare among the Lancashire moors. Not a tree was near. All around him was a great tract of moorland, dotted only here and there by a farmstead. For a moment he felt like the ancient mariner when he said :

"We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea."

Like him, too, he felt that he was alone,—all, all alone. Yet not alone, for God was there! Yes, he felt His presence. God!

He fell on his knees and began to pray. He poured out the longings of his soul. He pleaded that he might understand the secret of power—that he might possess it. He felt that God was listening, that the great heart of the Eternal was somehow beating with pity and compassion.

How long he prayed he could not tell. He knew that the whole countryside was flooded with light, that the new day was born in glory, but he was unconscious of time. And well he might be, for he too was born anew! God had spoken to him. God had answered his prayer.

When he rose from his knees it seemed to him as though the moors were glorified, as though that bleak district was converted into a very paradise.

He cast his mind forward, and thought of his work, thought of his hopes, thought of his fears.

"I can preach now," he said ; "I can proclaim good news."

He remembered that the President was deputed to come to Lynford to inquire into his case, to consider

whether it would be well for him to remain in the Methodist ministry. The fact did not trouble him as he considered it from one standpoint; but it did from another. Whether he were called upon to resign at the next Conference or no would not affect the future, in one sense. He would still preach, preach as he had never preached before. But he longed to be able to stay at Lynford. He felt that up to now he had only been beginning his work, and he longed to be able to continue it. He knew that I was still against him—knew that I should urge his unsoundness in the faith, and should tell the President that he still went out walking with Mary Clitheroe, the girl who scoffed not only at Methodism, but at religion.

“Even that meeting last night will not save me,” he reflected, “and even those people who expressed such faith in me would probably turn against me if Caleb Sutcliffe were to tell them the truth about that letter which I wrote to Paulina Milano. In one sense it is wrong. I, too, should be willing to condemn any young minister acting as I have acted if I did not know the whole truth. And I do not feel that I can tell the truth. It would seem like sacrilege. I could not tell a man like Caleb Sutcliffe of those letters from Paulina Milano.

“Who is she? I do not know. May God help me to find out. She has brought me to the light of God, she has shown me the kind of man I was.”

When Bernard Hawthorne found his way back to his lodgings again, the mill-hands were on their way to work; but the rattle of their clogs upon the pavements, and the roar of the machinery in the midst of which they had to pass their days, was not as real to the young minister as had been the voice of God

which he had heard that morning when the day had dawned.

I saw him twice through the week, but I did not see much difference in him. It is true, I thought his eyes burned with a new light, but I paid him but little heed. The truth was, I was beginning to be less sure of the righteousness of the attitude I had assumed. I reflected that the people had learned to love him, and that such numbers had gathered to hear him as had not been known for years in Wesley Chapel. I remembered, too, that I had accepted his help in my need. Through him I was able to retain not only my position as circuit steward, but the respect of my townsmen. Thus, when I reflected that I was doing my utmost to drive him out of the ministry, I seemed to be like the dog that was trying to bite the hand that had fed him.

But I was not a man easily turned aside from my purposes. I did not believe in the fitness of Bernard Hawthorne for a Methodist minister. I believed him to be unsound in the faith, disloyal to the traditions of the denomination, and I felt sure that he was acting an unworthy part in relation to these two young women. I believed that he was courting both of them at the same time, and was thus acting a part unworthy of a Methodist minister.

When Sunday came I noticed by the Preacher's Plan that Mr. Hawthorne was preaching at a country place in the morning and at Wesley at night. I was glad for this, because if he had been at Wesley in the morning it might have reached his ears that the President intended being at the service in the evening. However, there was no danger of this. The country place to which he had to go was a long distance from

Lynford, and as a consequence he had to leave early on the Sunday morning.

About half-past five on the Sunday evening the President called at my house, and presently we walked together towards the chapel.

"I do not think any one knows I intend being at the service to-night, Mr. Sutcliffe," he said.

"I think not," I replied. "Certainly I have mentioned the fact to no one except my wife, who is a woman who can keep her counsel. Neither do I think Mr. Jory has mentioned it. If he had, I should have heard about it this morning. Some one would have told me."

"I am glad for that," said Mr. Richardson. "I would rather he did not know I was among his listeners. Not that I think it would affect him in any way," he added.

"No," I said, "I don't think it would. He's not a young man who would alter, even for you."

"I suppose there was a very enthusiastic meeting on Tuesday night?" said the President.

"Oh, yes," I replied. "The people are like the Athenians of old, always on the look-out for some new thing."

Mr. Richardson smiled at this, but made no other answer. As we drew near Wesley Chapel, however, he said, "It might be school sermons, Mr. Sutcliffe: there seems a great crowd going in."

"Yes, last Tuesday's meeting was a great advertisement," I replied.

A few minutes later we entered the building together, little thinking what the result of the evening's service would be.

CHAPTER XVIII

A FLAME OF FIRE (*continued*)

I HAD not been in the chapel very long before I noticed that Mr. Richardson was evidently impressed by the congregation. The galleries, which will hold very nearly a thousand people, were all filled to overflowing, while several minutes before the service commenced the stewards were bringing chairs into the aisles.

"More than half the congregation are men," remarked the President. "The young man has a great hold upon the town."

"The people believe he is being made a martyr of," I replied. "It is only a storm in a teacup." This I said because I wanted the President to see things as I thought they really were. I noticed, however, that my words had but little effect on him, and I believed that he hoped all my charges would have to be regarded as of no value.

In the pew in front of us I saw old Abel Bowyer sitting. His face was lit up by a look of eager excitement, as though he were deeply interested in the service.

He turned his head and whispered to me, as he looked towards the President, "Is that Mester Richardson?"

I nodded my head in reply, and then I noticed that he gave me a look which was full of anger.

“Yo’ll ‘ave yer work cut out, Caleb,” he said, looking around on the crowd, after which he turned his eyes towards the pulpit.

Old Abel Bowyer had always been a puzzle to me; but I never realised the strange mixture of the old man’s character as I did then. Every one knew of him as a confirmed drunkard, and yet, drunkard though he was, he never failed in his attendance at chapel. However drunk he might be on the Saturday night, he was always in his pew on Sunday morning. No one criticised preachers more freely than he, and yet no one heard them more regularly. As far as one could judge, the old man could have no sympathy with young Bernard Hawthorne, yet he loyally supported him during the time when I, the senior circuit steward, thought him unfit to be a minister. It was then that I wondered for the first time whether this confirmed old reprobate had not longings of which I had never dreamed, hours of sadness and remorse unthought of by me. I could not help asking myself, moreover, what I had done, save preach at him, to try and arouse within him a feeling of repentance. I was also possessed by a feeling that perhaps Bernard Hawthorne had accomplished what I had failed to accomplish.

I called to mind the drunken challenge he had made to the young minister: “Geet owd Caleb convarted, an’ aw’ll geet convarted and gi’ up th’ drink.” For the first time, I say, I seriously asked myself what his words meant. Did he not believe that I, Caleb Sutcliffe, senior circuit steward, class leader and local preacher, was a converted man? Surely he could not seriously think this. And yet I must confess that an uncomfortable feeling came into my heart, and I

asked myself whether there had been anything in my life to make the old man think unworthily of the religion in which I professed to believe.

But this was only for a minute or so. Of course I could not pay attention to the wild, irresponsible sayings of an old man who was a drunkard and a reprobate. I had often been misunderstood, and if I were misunderstood still, I must make the best of it. I determined to stand to my guns; and in spite of the fact that the whole town was moved to admiration for this young man and indignation towards me, I determined to carry out my plan, believing that I was true to Methodism by so doing.

"Suppose he is popular," I said to myself—"suppose he has got atheists and other outsiders to come and hear him preach? Many men have done that. Charles Bradlaugh did that. You can always find people with itching ears who are on the look-out for novelties. There has not been a single conversion during his ministry, while hundreds of people who never had a doubt about the Bible, now openly declare that they shall no longer regard the Book of Ecclesiastes, or Solomon's Song, as an infallible authority. He's only confirmed atheists in their atheism, and set other people doubting. Besides, he *is* courting two girls at the same time, and whatever the President may think of his preaching, that fact must be settled."

Thus it was that I set my teeth together and vowed that I would see my plans through, and get a young man in the circuit who would preach the old Methodist doctrines.

The moment the clock struck the hour announcing that the time had arrived for commencing the service, Bernard Hawthorne walked into the rostrum; and

presently, when he turned towards the congregation to announce the first hymn, I noticed that a sort of hush fell upon the congregation. He looked very pale, and appeared, as I thought, much thinner than when he first came amongst us. I glanced towards the President, who sat by me, and I saw that he was favourably impressed by the young man's appearance. I did not wonder at this, for, as I have always admitted, he was good-looking beyond the ordinary. That evening, moreover, he seemed to possess a new power. I saw his eyes sweep over the great congregation, and then I noticed that there was in them a look such as I had never seen before. They burned with a new light, and there was an expression of yearning and tenderness which, in spite of myself, made me feel kindly towards him. He gave out the opening hymn quietly, then sat down while the congregation sang it.

"That's a bit of affectation," I said to myself. "I don't like preachers to sit down during the singing of the opening hymn. It is not respectful—it's not becoming." As far as I could judge, however, the President paid no attention to this.

When he began to pray my heart softened again. Even I could not but feel how humble, how sincere, how real his prayer was; and when presently a great "Amen" rose from the congregation, in which the President joined, I began to see that, even although I might get Bernard Hawthorne out of Lynford, I should never get him expelled from Methodism. And, indeed, if the truth must be told, I at that moment forgot my dislike for him, forgot, even, that for months he had been preaching the vilest heresy. When we rose from our knees, there were hundreds of wet eyes in

the chapel, and I saw that tears were trickling down the President's face.

"God help the young man!" I heard him pray, as presently the young minister opened his Bible to give out the text.

When I sat down this morning to try to describe this service, I meant to have given an outline of what the young minister said; I thought, too, that I remembered nearly every word; but now I find that I am unable to repeat a sentence that he uttered. Perhaps it is best I cannot, for I could not thereby give life to his simple address. For it was simple. Not that it lacked that cleverness and that felicity of expression for which he was noted in the town. I do not say, moreover, that it was free from heretical opinion. Even then I could not help noticing statements which, had they been made by a young man when examined for full plan, would have led me to move that that young man be rejected.

I was in a very critical frame of mind when he commenced preaching. I remembered the purpose for which Mr. Richardson was there, and I felt that, to a certain extent, my position as a man of judgment and trustworthiness was at stake. I called to mind the fact that I had been in responsible office for many years, and I wished to impress the President with the fact that I was not a mere nobody in the circuit. I mention this that you may the more truly realise what followed.

I thought that during the first five minutes of his sermon he was having what we preachers call "a bad time." He spoke, as it appeared to me, with hesitation and with difficulty; all the same I could not help feeling that the young man seemed to be seeing

a vision, a vision which became more real as he proceeded.

I don't know how it was, neither do I pretend to give any explanation of the fact, but he had not been preaching more than a quarter of an hour before I was sobbing like a child. A few minutes later such a feeling came to me as I had never known before, and as I had never expected to know. For although the young man said no word about the punishment of sin, or the doom of sinners, I felt a great fear, and while he uttered not a word about Pharisees and hypocrites, I knew myself to be both.

I say it advisedly—I, Caleb Sutcliffe, circuit official, class-leader, and local preacher, felt convicted of sin. While the young man told the story of God's love, told it as surely never man told it before, I saw myself as self-righteous, proud, and sinful. I saw myself as one who had been for ever thinking of the externals and not of the heart. I felt that I, who had always been insisting on soundness of faith, had never felt the reality of faith. I, who had prided myself on preaching the great doctrine of the atonement for sin, saw that I had never understood the spirit or the life of Christ's great work. I felt myself abased, humiliated, vile. Outwardly I had been respectable and orthodox, inwardly I was full of spiritual conceit and of uncharitableness.

Why it was I cannot say, why the young man's words pierced me like a burning sword I am unable to tell ; but it was so. I had known him more eloquent ; I had heard him when, from an argumentative standpoint, he had been far more convincing. But his words had never cut their way into my inmost heart as they did then.

As he proceeded he seemed inspired. He spoke with authority and power. The simplest sentences were filled with new meanings; and presently, when I heard a great sob arise from the congregation, I knew that I was not the only one who felt the Spirit of God.

"Lord have mercy upon me!" I cried out in my heart, and no sooner had the prayer escaped me than I seemed to hear the words, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven!"

Yes, I, Caleb Sutcliffe, write this concerning myself: I, who had thought that Bernard Hawthorne was unfit to be a minister of the Gospel. I knew that I had been opposed to this young man—honestly opposed to him, as I imagined. I did not believe that he was sound in the faith. But I knew then that my real reason for opposing him was not so much because of his unsoundness as because he had not pandered to my pride, and to my poor little ideas of my dignity. I knew I had been angry with him because he had never paid homage to me, Caleb Sutcliffe, and because he had trampled upon my prejudices and my self-importance.

And still he held that great congregation as if by a spell, and his every word became a winged arrow of God. Without saying a word about the heinousness of sin, he made us feel its ghastliness and its terror: without mentioning hell, he made us feel that we were carrying a hell in our hearts.

I cannot describe in fulness what I felt. I cannot tell how the very foundations of my being were broken up. I saw that all the sermons of which I had been so proud had been made and preached, not altogether, but largely, with the idea of my own glorification.

I realised that when there were conversions I had attributed them to my eloquence and power. Oh, I had been a poor little creature! and, worse than poor, I had been narrow, unforgiving, unpitiful, uncharitable. I saw that I had drawn up a little plan of religion, and that those who could not live according to my plan, I had condemned. I had sought office for self, I had persecuted Bernard Hawthorne for self, and I felt myself to be a self-righteous sinner.

"O God, be merciful to me!" I cried, almost audibly; and then I remembered the exhortations I had been for years making. I had told people again and again that no repentance could be real unless they were willing to avow it, that no conversion could be real unless they would come out boldly and accept Christ with contrition of heart.

The thought pierced me like a sword, while every word which Bernard Hawthorne spoke seemed to burn its way into the inmost recesses of my being.

"Stand up," said a voice, "confess that you have never known the true spirit of Christ. Confess that you have only been a formalist, and that you humbly seek salvation."

"No, no, not that!" I said in my heart. "What! I, Caleb Sutcliffe, confess I am a sinner in the face of this great congregation? No, no, I cannot!"

Then I turned and looked at the President. His eyes were riveted on the young preacher, his lips were tremulous with emotion, his eyes were filled with tears.

"No, I cannot," I cried in my heart again; "God can never expect that of me."

But even as I said this I felt that this was my duty. I at least knew the meaning of the doctrine of

Repentance, and I knew that pride stood in the way of my peace. For I was in agony! Such remorse as I pray I may never know again, was mine,—the remorse which came from the memory of the fact that I had been a formalist, and that my heart and life had been filled with that which had been un-Christlike!

I saw now why I had not attracted men to Christ, I saw why many paid no heed to my words. I had had zeal, but it was not Christlike zeal; I had worked, but it was for the shadow and not the reality; and all the time the sense of my unworthiness, my un-Christlikeness, overwhelmed me with shame.

When Bernard Hawthorne made his appeal to the people, I trembled like a fallen leaf in the wind. I felt, as others felt, that it was not he alone who was speaking, but his Master also. It seemed as though the Almighty were in some way especially manifesting Himself. The little things of life, the little things such as I had striven for—place, position, praise of men—were all as worthless as thistledown. Truth, mercy, love, Christ, God, became everything!

I was as weak as a little child! I seemed to be controlled by a Power who for my soul's sake was humbling me to the dust, that He might say "Rise, stand upon thy feet."

"Lord, tell me what to do, and help me!" I said; and as I breathed my prayer Bernard Hawthorne ceased to speak.

"God hath spoken, Brother Sutcliffe. May He help us to obey His word," said the President to me.

"Yes, yes," I cried; but I scarcely knew what I was saying.

"Brethren," said the young minister, "let us remain together for prayer."

Those were the only words of invitation he gave, but I knew that the whole congregation would remain.

During the singing of the next hymn I was like unto one in a dream. I felt as though this life were slipping from me.

“Jesu, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,”

sang the great congregation, and as the music rose and fell, I could fancy that I heard the voices of angels joining those of sturdy Lancashire weavers and miners.

“O Lord, take away my pride, my vainglory, my love of self,” I prayed as the people sang: “save me, Caleb Sutcliffe; save me, Lord!”

And, as if in reply to my words, the people sang—sang with tears in their eyes and a sob in their throats—those great words of Charles Wesley which have brought the truth to untold millions of hearts:

“Just and holy is Thy Name,
I am all unrighteousness;
False and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.”

I could bear it no longer. “God help me!” I cried, “and I will do Thy will!”

“Plenteous grace with Thee is found
Grace to cover all my sin,”

sang nearly two thousand people, until the music of the great organ was lost in the vaster music of their voices.

I felt it was God’s message to me—felt it as truly as if He appeared in visible shape. How could it be

otherwise when the words of the grand old hymn expressed my deepest need?—

“Thou of Life the Fountain art,
Freely let me take of Thee ;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.”

The congregation sat down, and when all was quiet the young minister asked some one to pray. But there was such a solemn hush on the great crowd that it seemed as though all lips were sealed.

“Mr. Sutcliffe, will you pray?” said young Bernard Hawthorne.

I ask you, what could I do? I could not pray for the salvation of others while I felt the need of my own salvation so keenly, and I felt I could not pray for my own salvation until I had told the people what was in my heart.

While all heads were bowed in the attitude of prayer, therefore, I made my way along the crowded aisle towards the communion table, my heart filled with a great resolve.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CONVERSION OF TWO SINNERS

“BROTHERS and sisters,” I said, “our young minister has asked me to pray. I feel that I cannot without first speaking to you.”

The people lifted their heads, and looked towards me wonderingly.

“You will, perhaps, wonder at me for what I am going to say,” I went on. “I wonder at myself. Had any one told me an hour ago that I should be here for the purpose of saying what I am going to say, I should have told him that he was mad.

“You know me, brothers and sisters. I have lived in Lynford all my life. Years ago I was a weaver, and I stood side by side with some of you. When I was a youth I was converted. Yes, I was converted, I know I was. I felt the power of God enter my life, and I knew I was a child of God. As the years passed away I think the spirit of my conversion must have left me, although at the time I knew it not. I seemed to retain my ardour, but I know now that the ardour was for the form of the truth rather than for the truth itself. And yet, brothers and sisters, I believed that I was in earnest about the reality. No one was more particular about sound doctrine than I, and I believed that I was inspired by love for truth when

I made objections about those who I thought were unsound in the faith. Now I know that I deceived myself. The things I strove for were my own opinions and my own importance. As you know, I have been jealous for Methodism; but even in that I have been jealous for the form rather than for the truth. Oh, it is hard for me to have to say all this, but it is the truth.

“When Mr. Hawthorne came into the circuit I conceived a prejudice against him. I did not believe in him, or I thought I did not. He paid no attention to my opinions, or my desires; he acted independently of me. He broke away from what I thought were the essentials of our churches, and I honestly believed him to be doing harm. Even now I do not think he acted wisely; but I did not understand him as I think I understand him now. Well, you know what has happened. I sent information to our denominational authorities, which led to his being summoned before them, and even now the President of our churches is here to make inquiries concerning the truth of my charges.

“Mr. Hawthorne has rendered me a great service—none of you know how great; and yet, believing, as I did, that he was not fit for the ministry, I still persisted in my efforts to drive him out of our circuit. Even up to two hours ago I was full of this determination.

“To-night I came to chapel with a hard heart. I was not conscious of the fact, but I know now that I was determined to see no good in anything he might say. Well, brethren—and here comes my confession—the service to-night has convinced me of sin, and of righteousness, and of a judgment to come. His

sermon, and, still more, the spirit of the whole service, has led me to see myself as I really am, a man full of self-righteousness, but not full of the righteousness of God. I have seen myself as one bigoted, uncharitable, un-Christlike; I realise now that I have been striving for my own will and my own glory, and not for the glory of God.

“Oh, brethren and sisters, God only knows what it is costing me to say this to you; but I felt I could not, in such a service as this, pray as I have been wont to pray, without making this confession. Brethren, for years I have believed I have been true to Methodism; now I know I have misrepresented it. Methodism when it was born was a flame of fire; for years after it was still the same; it was living, practical Christianity. I say nothing concerning any one else, but for years I have lost the fire of Methodism, even while I thought I retained it. I became a formalist; and I know now the reason why I have failed to lead men to Christ.

“But to-night we have felt the old fire. This service has been nothing more nor less than a flame of fire—the fire of God’s love and God’s power. I could not resist it, and that is why I have told you all this. Brothers and sisters, will you pray with me, and pray for me?”

And then I fell on my knees by the communion rails: I opened my lips to pray, as had been my custom in past years; but all I could say was, “God be merciful to me a sinner!”

I am sure I do not know what the congregation thought of all this, but I do know that I felt as I think Moses must have felt when he heard the voice of God saying, “Take thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

And now I have to tell that concerning which the sceptic may sneer and the scoffer may laugh. All through the service I had been in agony. I felt a burden too grievous to be borne. I saw myself vile, worthless, condemned. I realised that all I had been doing and saying for years past had been so much filthy rags. But no sooner did I fall on my knees and cry for mercy, than it seemed to me as though the whole building were filled with the glory of God. My burden fell off, and my heart became as light as that of a boy. I could have shouted aloud—ay, and after a few seconds I did shout aloud.

I am told that there be those who to-day laugh at the doctrine of the new birth, but they know not what they do. I was born again that night. When I made confession of my sins, and repented before God, crying for mercy, my heart became as that of a little child. I knew that Christ had come into my life, old things had passed away, and lo! all things had become new.

“I'm saved, friends,” I said. “God hath pardoned me, and given me new life.”

I rose from my knees and looked over the great sea of faces, and I saw through my tears that hundreds were crying like children. But no man spoke aloud, and no man offered to sing or to pray. It seemed as though the silent Spirit of God brooded over us.

I looked towards the pulpit to see where Mr. Hawthorne was, and I saw him coming down the pulpit steps. As he came towards me I went towards him.

“Forgive me, my son,” I said to him, “even as God hath forgiven me.”

He did not speak a word—not a word. I do not

believe he could; but he gripped me by the hand, and I saw the tears rolling down his cheeks.

As you will see, the meeting was in utter disorder, that is, when judged by the standard of a regularly conducted meeting; but the order of the Almighty was there. His Spirit was working, subduing stubborn spirits and breaking rocky hearts.

Oh, it was wonderful! There must have been two thousand people present, and yet, save for the suppressed sobs of men as well as women, not a sound was made.

After this, a feeling, half of fear and half of mighty hope, entered my heart, for, coming up the aisle, I saw old Abel Bowyer.

"What will he do? what will he say?" I wondered as he came up; and, as many turned and saw him, I saw their faces lit up with great expectation.

He was, as I have said, an old man, and was looked upon as quite a character in the town. Even now I can see him as I saw him then, his head uncovered, save for a few wisps of silvery hair, and his eyes shining with a strange light. He had been a giant in his day, had old Abel. Stories had been told concerning his wondrous feats of strength and his great powers of endurance, and these had given him a kind of local reputation. But it was not this alone that made the old man stand out from the rest of his townsmen. It was the fact that he was a man of more than ordinary force of character. He had a keen mind, which saw into the heart of things, and he had a sharp tongue, which he used freely. He was known as a drunkard and a reprobate, and yet he never failed to attend the house of prayer. He had religious longings when he seemed farthest away from Christ. Even when he was brought home drunk, he would never go to sleep until he had

said his prayers. Moreover, no man was more anxious than he to see conversions at Wesley Chapel, and no man appear more grieved than he when the church seemed in a bad way.

It was no wonder, therefore, that I felt anxious as I saw him find his way along the crowded aisle ; and yet my heart was so full of faith and joy, because of the consciousness of my own forgiveness, that I felt sure that all would be well.

“ Mester Hawthorne, will yo' 'low me to say a few words? ” he said.

The young minister nodded his head, for, like me, he knew that the Spirit of God was working.

“ Caleb Sutcliffe said as 'ow yo' all on you knowed him,” commenced old Abel. “ Weel, yo' know me too. I needn't tell yo' what aw've been ; yo' know that too, for aw've noan been a bad 'un in saicret. But aw tell yo' this : all th' time I wur ashamed o' mysen, and aw wanted to be a good man. Ay, I did. Yo've called me names, but none o' yo' ha' called me as bad as aw've called mysen. Aw've wanted to be convertarted, I have for sure ; but then, when I watched Caleb 'ere, aw didn't want to be. Nobody 'ave looked to th' comin' of the new passons more nor me, and aw've allus 'oaped that they'd praich convertartin' sermons. Weel, when young Mester Hawthorne come to Wesley, aw said he'd mak' a change. I seed as 'ow the lad had grip in him, and grit, too. When aw seed that he wur noan goin' to be led by owd Caleb 'ere, aw wur reight glad. Ay, and I wur disappointed when he didn' praich convertartin' sermons, but gave us lectures on th' Bible i'steed. Weel, one day in th' town I see Caleb and Mester Hawthorne together, and both on 'em spok' to me about th' drink. And what do yo' think aw did? Aw towd

Mester Hawthorne that if he'd get owd Caleb converted, aw'd be converted, and gi' up th' drink.

"Weel, mony of yo' 'ave knowed me for mor' nor sixty year, and, bad as aw've been, yo've allus faand me a mon o' my word. What aw ses aw'll do, aw do. Whatever else owd Abel Bowyer 'ev been, he's allus kept his word, and he will now. Owd Caleb 'ere's converted, and aw want to be converted. Ay, and aw'm glad owd Caleb is converted, for he *is* converted. Aw knaw he'd never said what he has said ef he wern't sincere. And so, friends, what aw ses is this—aw want to keep my word, and aw want to be a better man, and aw want to gi' up the drink, and aw—aw—want—to—to——"

And then he couldn't say another word, for he was sobbing like a child, while the whole congregation sobbed with him.

"God be merciful to me, a miserable owd sinner!" he said presently, and from the hearts of more than a thousand people went up the response, "Amen!"

Oh! surely never such a sight was seen at Wesley Chapel as was seen that night. The Spirit of God moved upon the people, and melted them as the warm sun melts frost and snow.

I looked toward the young minister, and I saw a look on his face that I shall never forget. He was as pale as death, but his eyes burned with a joy that refuses to be described.

"God be merciful to me, a miserable owd sinner!" cried Abel again, who had fallen on his knees; and then I saw Bernard Hawthorne kneel by his side and put his arm around him.

"He will, Abel," he said—"He will." And then, while the congregation waited in solemn silence, this

youth of six or seven and twenty told the old man the story of God's love, and of the great salvation which Christ brought to the world. It was a sight never to be forgotten—the old man, more than seventy years of age, and the young man, who had not yet entered into the fulness of his manhood, kneeling side by side. But it was the young man who was guiding the steps of the old man, it was the boy who was leading the hoary-headed sinner into the way of peace.

“God's forgiven yo', ain't He, Calcb?” said old Abel presently, turning to me.

“Yes,” I said, “He has.”

“Then aw'll noan gi' up hope,” he cried; and while his words cut me deeply, I felt that he had a reason for speaking them. It is true I had for many years lived a regular, well-conducted life, as far as outward appearances go, while he had lived in open sin; and yet, in my heart of hearts, I felt we were equally guilty before God.

Then old Jonathan Giles came forward. His face, always full of kindness and love, now fairly beamed with joy.

“The Spirit of God is here, friends,” he said. “We see that our Heavenly Father has not forgotten us, and we realise that He is answering our prayers. Some of us have been praying for our old friend and neighbour, Abel Bowyer, for many a year, and the Lord is answering us. He has brought him to his knees as a humble penitent. He's seeking forgiveness, friends, and he's seeking salvation. Will as many of you as are praying men and women kneel with me, and ask God to send him light?”

I do not believe it would have mattered who had asked the people to pray at that moment. Such a spirit of

power and holy awe rested upon the congregation that none could refuse ; but when old Jonathan spoke there seemed to be added power. He, too, had lived in the town all his life, and for the last fifty years he had been a missionary in Lynford. Even in our darkest days old Jonathan's words of assurance and faith cheered the hearts of the people ; when bitterness and rancour reigned, his kindly presence and loving words brought peace and tender thoughts. But now his words were charged with new power, for the Spirit of God surely rested upon him.

And so the great congregation knelt and prayed—prayed as it had never prayed since I had known Wesley Chapel. Hard-handed, hard-headed men prayed ; old women, white-haired and feeble, sobbed out their petitions to God ; young lasses who had grown careless and flippant about religion became imbued with earnestness ; while those into whose hearts the spirit of formalism had come became quickened.

Perhaps people who know nothing about Lancashire Methodists will smile incredulously as they read this, and if some worldling should come across this history he will perchance think that I, Caleb Sutcliffe, am a thoughtless fanatic. Perhaps he will say that what I am describing was simply the result of unhealthy excitement, and that educated, cultured men and women would never have been moved as were these simple Lancashire operatives. I wish such could have been present that night. I would that they could have breathed the atmosphere of that wondrous meeting, and have heard the prayers that were offered up for poor old Abel Bowyer, the reprobate and the drunkard.

And all the time the people prayed, Abel knelt by the communion-rail, sobbing like a child, while the

young minister knelt by his side, with one arm around the old man's body.

"Ay, Mester Hawthorne, I canna feel as 'ow God has forgien me," he said.

"If you repent of your sins, and accept Him as your Lord, He has forgiven you. You do repent, don't you?"

"Aw'm ashamed o' mysen, and aw want to be a better mon," he said.

"And you're willing to give up the wrong, and to make restitution, Abel, aren't you?"

"Ay, aw'm willin' to gi' up th' drink, ay, aw be. But aw feel a snaik, aw feel such a miserable owd sinner. Aw've just a bin livin' for mysen and my own pleasure all my life, and now aw've nothin' to offer but this owd worn-out carcass. Aw can do nout for th' Lord now. Aw'm too owd. Ef aw wer twenty year younger aw could do summat. Ay, aw can ne'er be like owd Jonathan!"

"But you can become like a little child, Abel."

"Ay, I wish I could. But aw'll tell thee what aw'll do: aw'll pay off the debt on Wesley Chapel, aw will for sure."

"Perhaps God may not wish that. That is, there may be other things He would like you to do first. It may be you've wronged people."

"Ay, in a way I have. O Lord, ha' pity on me!"

"Well, will you do all you can? Are you willing to be led by God? Are you willing to let Him do by you as He will?"

"What! gi' up everything to God?"

"Yes, and let Him lead you as He thinks best."

I saw the look of indecision on the old man's face. I knew that he was thinking of the past, that long,

weary past, stained with passion, uncurbed passion; I knew that the memory of that past hung like a millstone around his neck. I was sure, too, that the word restitution meant a great deal to him, and I felt that the habits and customs of more than half a century would be hard to break.

"You cannot feel the forgiveness of God, you cannot be His child, if you still wish to serve the devil," said Mr. Hawthorne. "God asks nothing that is too hard, He asks nothing but what will be for your good. All He does He does in love. Trust Him, Abel, and give yourself wholly to Him."

"Aw didn' think it would be so hard to geet converted," said Abel; "aw didn', for surc."

Mr. Hawthorne did not speak, but I saw his lips moving in prayer.

"Aw corn'd do it," said Abel. "My God! it's too 'ard."

And still the young minister prayed, and still he kept his arm around the aged form of Abel Bowyer.

"Ther's a lot of debts in my life that I cannot pay, mester," said Abel: "not monecy debts, aw've allus paid them, but theer's others, mester, others."

"God only expects you to do what you are able," said the young man.

"Ay, and ef I can only pay five shillin' in th' pound, I ought to pay 'em, didn' I? It's honest," said the old man.

"Yes, it's honest."

"Ay, and I'd feel mean to go abaat makkin' aat as 'ow aw wur converted, while aw'd noan done oal aw could do for them as aw've wronged!"

"Yes, I think you would."

"Weel"—and then I knew he'd made up his mind.

“Aw weel, aw towd owd Caleb Sutcliffe aw would, and aw will. Aw never brok’ my word yet, and aw’m noan goan to begin naa. Lord, aw’ll do anything that Tha wants.”

People talk about the old Methodist doctrines being worn out. I’ve heard of wise men saying that we must give up the old doctrine of salvation! Oh, but they little know!

No sooner was old Abel Bowyer willing to give up all for God than he jumped to his feet like a lad. “Aw’ve got it, mester!” he said again and again; “aw’ve got it!”

And then old Jonathan Giles commenced singing the Old Hundredth, in which the congregation joined, until it seemed as though the very roof must be lifted.

What happened after that I cannot describe. No man could describe it. Whenever I think of it, I am always reminded of those first chapters in the Acts of the Apostles, while in my heart there burns a great fire—a fire of faith, and hope, and love.

Presently I heard the young minister say: “We shall meet here for prayer to-morrow night at half-past seven.” And then the congregation began slowly to disperse.

A week before, had he done such a thing I should have felt like bringing him to task. I should have asked by what right he had announced a special meeting before calling a meeting and having the matter duly voted upon. In my zeal for order and rule, I should have protested strongly against any young minister on probation taking so much on himself; but that night I had seen myself as I really was.

When the chapel was nearly empty, I saw the President come towards the pulpit.

"Thank you, my young friend," he said, grasping Mr. Hawthorne's hand.

"Have you been present all the time?" asked the young minister.

"Did you not know it?"

"No, I did not know it. Why did you come?" For Bernard Hawthorne did not fully understand the resolution that was passed concerning him.

"But Mr. Sutcliffe mentioned something about it when he——"

"I did not notice it; I was thinking of other things."

"God hath mightily blessed us all," said the President solemnly. "He has used you as His ambassador."

"Mr. Richardson," said the young man, "will you come with me to my lodgings to-night? There are some things I would like to tell you."

"Not to-night: you are too tired, too exhausted."

"Yes, to-night, to-night. And I wish Mr. Sutcliffe to come also. There are things it is right you should know, right that Mr. Sutcliffe should know."

"We will not trouble about them, my young friend. I think I know what is in your mind, and I say there is no need for you to tell me anything to-night."

"No, Mr. Hawthorne," I said. "I see now, I understand now. Forgive me; I have been hard, and unkind. I pray you to——"

"Please come with me," he said. "You, Mr. Richardson, are President, and you, Mr. Sutcliffe, are my circuit steward. You can both understand me now, and I wish to tell you what is in my heart, and what you ought to know."

And then neither of us could refuse him any longer; and a little later we were walking towards his lodgings,

the young man very quietly and humbly, the President uttering words of kindness and love, and I with my heart beating with such a joy as I had never known before.

All the same, I wondered greatly what the young man wished to say.

CHAPTER XX

HOW I LEARNT TO LOVE BERNARD HAWTHORNE

"MR. RICHARDSON," said the young man, "I was asked certain questions when I was brought before you which I refused to answer. I did not feel then that you had any right to know; neither did I feel that many members of the Committee could have understood me if I had told them what was in my mind."

Mr. Richardson looked at the young man's pale, eager face, and nodded his head. It was easy to see that he was favourably impressed by him, and that anything he might tell him would be heard with a sympathetic ear.

"I did not think a few days ago that I should ever be inclined to tell any one what is in my heart to tell you now," he went on. "Kind as you were to me when I was brought before you, I could not help believing that you regarded me with disfavour; moreover, I would a thousand times rather be expelled than submit to what I regarded as a species of inquisition."

"I assure you there was no thought of inquisition in my mind, my young friend," said the President.

"Not in yours, perhaps; but what of others?"

"The others?—well, yes, I think we all regarded you with a friendly eye."

"No," I interrupted; "not all. I did not. I am ashamed to confess it now, but I was prejudiced against him. Forgive me for speaking in this way," I went on, "but I cannot help it. To-night God has opened my eyes, and I feel it my duty to speak the truth."

The President turned towards me, and I felt that if there had been a shadow of insincerity in my heart he would have detected it. But there was none; if ever a man was desirous of making atonement it was I.

"I think," said the young minister, "that my eyes have been opened too. I feel now that when I appeared before you I was lacking in courtesy, lacking in due deference to my seniors. I ought to have spoken differently; and while I could have told you nothing, I should at least have recognised the fact that you were acting in the interests of Methodism. I am very sorry for this, and take this opportunity of telling you so."

"Mr. Hawthorne," broke in the President, "do you think you are wise in referring to this matter to-night? You must be much wrought upon. As an old minister, I know how one feels at the close of a Sunday's work. Besides, the service you have conducted to-night has been no ordinary one. You need rest and quiet. Let me call and see you to-morrow morning, when you are rested."

"No, Mr. Richardson, I would rather speak to you freely now, if I may. It is true that the service to-night has not been an ordinary one, and I should like to tell you why. I feel I can speak frankly, too, for the barrier which has stood between Mr. Sutcliffe and myself is broken down."

"It is, thank God!" I said earnestly. "I feel like

a boy, Mr. Richardson, and my heart is as light as a feather. Shake hands with me again, Mr. Hawthorne, and tell me again that you forgive me," and I caught his hands in mine, and my heart went out to him in a great love.

"Mr. Hawthorne," I went on, "I have been unjust and unkind to you, but my eyes are opened. I—I don't know how or what I feel, except that I love you. Yes, if I had a son I could not love him more than I love you. God bless you, my lad, God bless you!" And then lapsing into Lancashire, as I always do when I am excited, I continued, "Ay, and tha' shalt be blessed. Aw'll pray for tha' every day, and aw'll stand by thee, too. Aw've been thy enemy, but, God helpin' me, there sh'll be noan in Lynford as'll do for thee as aw'll do. Aw'll—Aw'll——" And then I burst out sobbing as though I were a lad of ten.

Oh, it is wondrous, the power of love! During all the times we had met before he seemed to be always a long way off from me: I could never break through his pride or his reserve; but now, as he saw the tears trickling down my face, and felt that the love of my heart was expressed in the grip of my hand, I saw through my tear-dimmed eyes that his lips trembled, and that he too was touched.

"I love thee, lad, I love thee," I sobbed; "dost a' think tha' can ever love an owd sinner like me? Dost a' think tha' can ever trust me? Ay, but tha' must. Aw'll want nowt i' life then; my cup of joy 'll be runnin' over."

He didn't speak for some time. Once or twice he tried, but he failed. Perhaps it was because he was overwrought by the events of the evening; perhaps

the very strangeness of the situation had something to do with it. I do not know, but this I do know, he and I were like father and son from that time.

As I shall have to tell presently, Mr. Hawthorne did a wonderful work in Lynford, but people still stand to it that the most wonderful conversion that ever took place in the town was my own, and that not one life amongst the many hundreds that were turned to Christ, was so transformed as mine. They maintain that, great as is the work to change the life of a drunkard, it is still greater to lead a fossilised formalist to become a new man.

After a while Mr. Hawthorne related at length the story of his coming to Lynford, and of his experiences in our midst. It was in this way that I first came to know of the letters of Paulina Milano, and how the influence of her letters counteracted the cynicism and the scepticism of Miss Mary Clitheroc. He did not show us the letters of this unknown girl that night, neither did he tell us many of the details which I have related here. It was during the after days, when Bernard Hawthorne and I were together almost as father and son, that he opened his heart to me fully. I know it may seem strange to some that he should tell me of his hopes, and struggles, and loves, and fears; but they do not know the power of love. We Methodists are noted the wide world over for the affection we bestow upon our ministers, but never was minister loved as I loved him, and never did father and son learn to trust each other more than we. Besides, the young man came to be sore distracted. As I shall have to tell presently, his heart hungered more and more for a sight of his unknown correspondent; and perhaps it was the very hopelessness of his love

which led him to turn to me, his one-time enemy, for sympathy and advice.

Oh, but the President did grow interested as he unfolded his story. Mr. Richardson was a man who had read widely, and was acquainted with the writings of those who had sought to undermine the authority of the Bible, and to cast doubts upon the sinlessness of Jesus. Because of this, he listened eagerly to the history of the young minister's mental struggles. He became excited, almost beyond words, as Mr. Hawthorne related the conversations he had had with Squire Clitheroe, neither could he help breaking in with a reply to what he conceived to be a weakness in the arguments on either side. Concerning these things I have not written at length, because I have discovered that my knowledge of such matters is too limited to give anything like a correct description.

Neither was Mr. Richardson a whit the less interested as the young minister described the influence which Paulina Milano's letters had upon him; especially was this the case when he told us concerning the last letter.

"She touched the heart of everything there," he cried—"the heart of everything. A flame of fire! a flame of fire! Yes, that is it. She must be a fine woman, Mr. Hawthorne—a woman of faith, of intellectual insight, and of a pure heart."

"Yes, of that I am sure," replied the young man. "Every line that she has written me breathes the spirit of reverence, of faith, and purity."

"And this, you say, was only a few days ago?"

"That is all: only last Tuesday night, after I had come home from the meeting which the people held in order to show their confidence in me. You see,

that meeting made me ashamed of myself. It made me feel that I was unworthy either of their love or their confidence. I seemed to see myself as an echo, a parrot saying things simply because others had said them. I had been sincere, and I believe I was earnest, but I had never possessed that fire which made the early Methodists set the English-speaking world in a blaze. As I have told you, there had been no single case in my ministry where a drunkard had been reformed, or an unbeliever led to faith. It was this that troubled me, and made me ashamed. Thus, when I read this letter reminding me of the very genius of Methodism, it made me realise that it was also the very genius of Christianity."

"I see—I see."

"It was this that led me to go out alone among the moors, it was this that led me into the light."

"There will be conversions now," said the President.

"There have been," I cried.

"Yes, there have been," repeated the President.

"And do you not know who Paulina Milano is?" he continued, after there had been a silence for some moments.

"No."

"You have never seen her?"

"Never."

"Is there any one in the town who has any knowledge of her?"

"No one, as far as I know."

"And you have made inquiries?"

"Yes, all that I dared to make. But no one knows of her."

"She is evidently a—a lady of education and good social position."

"Of education, certainly ; but of social position, I do not know."

"Do you know of any one in the town who would be likely to entertain such a—a lady?"

"No."

"Miss Mary Clitheroe, for example?"

"No ; they are as far removed as the poles. Besides, I asked Miss Clitheroe whether she knew of such a person, and she told me that she did not."

"And you have tried to see her?"

"I have written her again and again, asking her to meet me. I have been to London to try and find her, but in vain."

"Did she give an address?"

"Yes, but when I went to the address I found nothing but a post-office."

"And she declines to reveal her identity, to let you see her?"

"Yes."

"Has she told you her reasons for her refusal to do this?"

"Yes."

The President looked as though he would have liked to pursue his questions further, but as he noticed the expression on the young man's face he refrained. All the same, I am sure he knew what Paulina Milano's reason was. Clever man as he was, he read between the lines of the story, and he knew what Bernard Hawthorne told me afterwards, that she had confessed her love to him without being asked for it, and that now she was ashamed to look into his face.

"As you will have guessed," said the President presently, "I came to Lynford on a somewhat unusual mission. I may tell you that, although many of the

Committee you met judged you severely, I did not. I thought, moreover, that I should be able to understand the position of matters more truly if I saw you, if I may so put it, at work. I hoped also that you might be led to tell me, what you would not tell the Committee as a whole. I never hoped for—for such results as I have seen, but I may tell you that I believed in you.”

“Thank you, Mr. Richardson.”

“Of course, you will remember the charges brought against you,” he continued, “and——”

“I withdraw everything,” I cried, “everything.”

“That may be, Mr. Sutcliffe; but you see, certain statements have been made against Mr. Hawthorne, and as the representative of the Committee I shall have to deal with them.”

“Yes, I can see that,” replied Mr. Hawthorne.

“With regard to the first,” went on Mr. Richardson with a smile, “I think they will fall to the ground easily. Mr. Sutcliffe no longer objects to the way you treat your circuit steward, or to your methods of conducting your services.”

“Let him begin with the sermon and end with the notices if he thinks it right,” I cried. “The Spirit of God is upon him, and the Holy One of Israel must not be limited to our poor little rules.”

“As for consorting with atheists, drunkards, and outcasts?”

“It is what our Lord did Himself,” I cried. “Oh, what a miserable, hypocritical, narrow-minded old sinner I have been!”

I saw the merry twinkle in Mr. Richardson’s eyes. Doubtless he remembered what I had said only a few hours before, and wondered at the change. But

he knew what it meant. He knew that when a man allows Christ to enter his heart, old things pass away, and all things become new.

"With regard to the question of your heretical opinions," he went on, "I think I can speak with confidence. I heard you preach to-night, and I think I understood the meaning of your message. All I shall say about it is, that if your views are heretical, I wish we had more heresy."

"Yes," I cried, "Mr. Hawthorne's heresy is the heresy of a great salvation, the heresy of telling men how they can become the sons of God!"

"Well, then," went on the President, "there seems only one other charge against you—the charge which, I fancy, created the greatest interest among the members of the Committee."

"You mean the charge of——"

"Of being engaged to two ladies at the same time. Well, personally, I do not think we need trouble about that."

"But," said Bernard Hawthorne anxiously, "you will of course remember that I have told you these things in confidence. I—I could not consent to a repetition of what I have told you before the members of that Committee. Dearly as I hold my position as a Methodist minister, I would rather sacrifice it, than that the two names I have mentioned should be discussed by them."

"Your feelings shall be respected, Mr. Hawthorne," said the President kindly.

"That is——" and the young man hesitated, as though he did not know how to complete the sentence.

"That is," repeated the President, "I shall tell the Committee that I am perfectly satisfied."

"But will they not expect details?"

"I think every one will trust me," said the old man quietly; and there the matter ended.

It was very late when we left Bernard Hawthorne's lodgings that Sunday night, but I felt no more weariness than if I had been a boy of eighteen. As we walked down the street I found myself singing snatches of the old revival hymns which were common in my boyish days, and once or twice I shouted with very joy.

"You seem to be very happy, my friend," said the President.

"Happy!" I cried. "The world has become new. I never saw the stars so bright as they are to-night; I never felt the air so pure. My heart is as light as a feather, and I could jump for very joy."

The President said nothing, but when he and my wife and I knelt down to pray presently, he offered such a prayer as I think I never heard before. A few hours before I should have resented it; I should have grown angry at his allusion to "one who had grown cold and formal, but who had been saved by the grace of God." Now, however, I said "Thank God!" for no one felt the truth of his words as I did.

"Thou'lt be th' talk o' th' town to-morrow, Caleb," said my wife, when we were alone.

"Ay, I shall be, and I'm glad on't. I am willing to be talked about if I can thereby point sinners to the Saviour."

"Who'd a' thought it?" she said, like one musing.

"No one," I replied, "least of all myself. But what could I do? The hand of the Lord was upon me, and I could no more resist than I could fly."

"Nay, tha' couldn't," she replied. "Ay, Caleb, I've prayed for this night for mony a long year."

"Did you feel I'd lost the reality?" I asked.

"Aw felt as 'ow summat was wrong," she replied. "I wur longing for th' owd fire. I'd got cowl myself, lad, and I ne'er got no help fro' thee. Aw've bin thinkin' about it to-night while thou hast been wi' Hawthorne; and while one time I felt as 'ow I wished tha could a' got converted over again wi'out anybody knawin' anything about it, I'm reight glad tha' did the thing reight. It'll be better. Ay, lad, aw wur praad o' thee, I wer for sure. It must a' bin a terrible cross for thee to tak' up, but aw'm glad tha' did tak' it up."

"You don't know how I had to fight against it, lass," I cried. "I was tempted to wait till I got home, and so got converted quietly; but it could not be, it could not be. The Lord's hand was upon me."

"Ay, and to think that owd Abel Bowyer should ha' come out! Dost 'a think he'll stand it, Caleb?"

"God's grace is sufficient for anything," I answered.

"Ay, ay," she replied; "it is. I 'ad it in my mind for sayin' summat nasty to Mrs. Beswick for not invitin' me to tay t'other day, seein' as 'ow she'd invited Mrs. Scott, and Mrs. Dixon, and Emily Maria Shawcross; but I'll 'owd my gab now. Ay, an' I'll ax 'er to coom 'ere i'steed—I will for sure."

When I made my way into the town the next day, I found that the one subject of conversation was the service of the previous evening. People in the reading-room, in the shops, and in the street talked of nothing else. I noticed, too, that nearly every one turned to look at me as I passed by; but I was neither angry nor ashamed.

“ Ay, Caleb,” said Moses Sykes, the atheist, “ I heard thou’st bin’ an’ got converted.”

“ Yes, Moses,” I replied, “ I have.”

“ What an owd hypocrite thou hast been for all these years ! ” he said.

His words cut me deeply, as may be imagined, but I felt their truth.

“ I am afraid I have,” I replied.

He was silent for a few seconds, and then he said, “ If thou stands it, Caleb, I shall begin to think there’s summat in religion myself.”

“ There’s everything in it, Moses,” I said—“ everything.”

As I spoke two weavers came up who had been at Wesley the previous night.

“ ‘ The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,’ ” said one.

“ Ay, and nowt but a foil,” said the other.

“ Ay,” said Moses, and there was a look of yearning in his eyes. “ Ay, lads, I oap tha’ may be right.”

“ They are right,” I cried, “ and you’ll find it out before many days are over, Moses.”

“ I’d gi’e a goodish bit to find it out, Caleb,” said Moses ; “ but us’ll see, us’ll see.”

“ Come to the prayer-meeting to-night,” I said.

“ Ay, I mean to an’ all,” he made answer ; but neither he nor I expected to see what we did see at that prayer-meeting.

CHAPTER XXI

THE GREAT REVIVAL

“WEEL, Caleb, and 'ow are yo'?”

It was old Jonathan Giles who spoke. Jonathan was on his usual round of mercy. For many years he had, as town missionary, been visiting the homes of the sick and needy, and thus had brought sunshine and gladness into darkened lives. As I think I have said before, no man was so much beloved as he—at least this was so before Bernard Hawthorne came—and no man was so much trusted. People have said that when they wanted their doubts about religion settled they went to Jonathan. Not that he was clever or scholarly; nor had he spent much time in studying Christian evidences. Neither was it because he tried to answer their doubts. He simply spoke to them kindly and lovingly, and let the benediction of his unselfish life rest upon them.

One day an atheist was lecturing in our market-place, and as usual he was saying that all Christians were hypocrites.

“Show me a real Christian, and I'll become Christian too,” he cried. “I tell you there's not one in Lynford!”

“Thou'rt a liar!” cried some one from the crowd; “ther's owd Jonathan Giles.”

“Ay,” cried the crowd, “and he is, too, he is for sure,”

and it is said that the atheist proceeded no further with his lecture that night.

It may be imagined, therefore, that I met old Jonathan with joy that morning, for there was no man I would rather have met.

"I was never so well in my life, Jonathan," I made answer.

"Ay, it wer wonderful," said the old man.

"It was more than wonderful," I answered.

"I never saw the place like it afore," said Jonathan. "Everybody seems to be prayin'."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Weel, I wer walkin' along Brunford Road, and I heard somebody saying, 'The Lord help us, the Lord bless us to-neet.' I looked around, and I saw Kneepad. He didn' see me; in fact I doan't believe he seed onybody, though his eyes were wide open. But I heerd him keep on sayin', 'The Lord bless us all, espccially to-neet.' Just after that I saw Cornelius Tinklin.

"'Eh, Jonathan,' he said, 'I've been up nearly all night prayin', and we arranged jist afore we went to breakfast to have a prayer-meetin' at Hudson's mill at dinner-time to-day.'

"'Yo' doan't main it!' I said.

"'But I do,' ses he: 'will yo' come?'

"'Ay, I will for sure,' said I.

"But do you know, I'd barely left Cornelius when I saw Mester Herbert Stanley.

"'Eh, Mr. Giles,' he said, 'I want to speak to you.'

"'That's your soarts, Mester Herbert,' says I, 'what is it?'

"'Why,' he says, 'a lot of hands in our mill have arranged for a prayer-meeting this dinner-time, just

for half an hour, you know, and they would like you to come and lead it.'

" 'Ay, I can't,' I ses; ' I've just promised to go up to Hudson's mill; they're goin' to have one there.'

" 'You don't mean it!' he said, and then he continued: ' I hardly know what to do. I don't like to ask Mr. Hawthorne; he must be fairly worn out after the service last night.'

" 'I'll tell yo' what to do,' I ses.

" 'What?' he asked.

" 'Take it yourself,' I said. ' You be the leader.'

" 'I never led a prayer-meeting in my life, Jonathan,' he answered.

" 'Then begin, Herbert my lad, begin to-day, and may the Lord bless you.'

" 'And is he going to do it?' I asked.

" 'Ay, he is and all. Herbert's a grand lad, and he fairly caught afire last night. But that's not all. There's to be several other prayer-mectin's throughout the day. I never seed owt like it. Why, the very town seems to be moved. Ay, Caleb, I'm rare and glad thou didn't resist the Spirit of God laast neet!'

" 'I couldn't, Jonathan,' I replied.

I don't know how many people I met and spoke to that morning, I'm sure. This I know, the same topic was on every one's lips. That morning, manufacturers seemed to be less interested in the rise of cotton than in religion, and shopkeepers appeared to care less about selling their goods than about the service on the previous evening.

And yet, what was it that moved the town so? There was a crowded congregation, it is true; but that is the case at nearly every chapel in the town, at least once a year, when charity sermons come around. Besides,

on these occasions very little has been said, even when we've had great preachers from London. What was it that so moved the people, then? Was it Mr. Hawthorne's sermon? Perhaps it was; but it was not because of its learning or eloquence, for I never heard him preach a more simple discourse in my life.

The truth was, there was a Divine power in the service, and so greatly was it felt that two aged sinners were converted. One was myself, a man whose religion had become a form, and the other was old Abel Bowyer, the well-known drunkard and reprobate.

Towards twelve o'clock, as I was making my way homeward, I saw old Abel coming towards me.

"Weel, Caleb," was his greeting; "thou sceest as 'aa I kept my word."

"Yes, Abel, thank God you did."

"Aw reckon aw've took on a tough job; and aw reckon God A'mighty 'll find me a rare 'ard 'un to keep straight; but I mean to do it. Ay, I do."

"It's wonderful!" was all I could say.

"Ay it wur, it wur. Ay, Caleb, I wur glad to see and hear thee laast neet. Aw've wanted to geet converted for years, but I ne'er could mak' up my mind. Somehow when I've heerd thee spaikin' so fine and prayin' so grandly, and then when I've seed thee stickin' a knife into Mester Hawthorne whenever tha' could, I wanted never to go to chapel agean. Ay, but thou'st been a rare thorn in the flesh to a lot on us!"

"May the Lord forgive me," I said.

"Ay, weel, tha' praiched the grandest sarmon o' thee life laast neet, Caleb. I didn' think it wur in thee, I didn' for sure."

"I never thought I should have done it myself, but I couldn't help it, Abel."

“Ay, weel, aw’ve kept my word. Aw’m rare feared that the Lord ’ll be ’shamed o’ me. I’ve ’ad a rare feight this morn. Afore I knowed what I was about I was on my way to the Blue Cow, and just as I got to the door I minded as ’ow I got converted laast neet, and then aw stopped. Ay, but I have been thirsty.”

“The Lord help you,” I said, “and save you from the drink.”

“It’ll tak’ a bit o’ doin’,” said Abel; “I’m thinkin’ the A’mighty ’ll ’ave a tough job wi’ me.”

When I left Abel I felt that the old man would have a terrible battle. I knew that his drinking habit had entered into every fibre of his being, and that long years of godless behaviour must have made it very hard for him to live a Christian life. But when I reflected on my own conversion I was comforted.

“The God that has changed me can save old Abel,” I meditated. Of course I realised that this old man could never become like those who have given their lives to God in childhood, and I smiled as I thought of the experiences he would give at class-meetings; nevertheless, I was filled with a great hope, for I knew that the power of God was not confined to the ways of men.

In past years, whenever we wanted to get the people to come to chapel we had depended mainly on two things: first, a renowned preacher, and second, a great deal of advertisement. Thus it came about that we spent a great deal of time in considering how to get preachers who would “draw.” I have known us, both at teachers’ meetings and at trustee meetings, spend practically a whole evening in discussing the merits and demerits of certain ministers, and then work

ourselves up into a state of excitement as to the order in which they should be invited. After this, when one of them had accepted our invitation, we had the services, which these men were to conduct, announced by means of big posters all over the town. Sometimes, even after this had been done, we were disappointed in the size of the congregations. As far as prayer-meetings were concerned we never expected large numbers. Just a few of the old members met for prayer; but the congregation as a whole never thought of coming. So much was this the case that the fact was often mentioned at quarterly meetings.

"People will come to sewing teas and entertainments, but they'll not come to prayer-meetings!" was the constant remark; and although we grieved exceedingly, we could not deny the truth of the words.

That prayer-meeting of which I am going to speak, however, had no other advertisement than the words which Bernard Hawthorne had spoken the previous evening.

"Brethren," he had said, "we will meet to-morrow night at 7.30 for prayer," and that was all. No special preacher had been announced, not one penny had we spent in advertising; and yet, when I made my way towards Wesley Chapel at seven o'clock, I saw a great number of people also making their way thitherward. It is true that the chapel was not so crowded as it had been on the previous night; nevertheless, when the clock pointed to the hour the building was filled. No one spoke to any other, but I noticed that a hush of expectation was upon the people. As I looked around I saw many who had been acknowledged enemies to religion. Atheists were there, scoffers were there, fellows who loafed at street corners were there,

but no unseemly behaviour was to be seen. Every one was quiet, orderly, reverent.

“What is the meaning of it?” I asked myself; for, truth to tell, I was even yet like the Apostles in the time when our Lord was upon the earth,—I knew not the full meaning of the promises of God. So it was that to see many hundreds of people who had come to a prayer-meeting, surprised me beyond measure.

Precisely at half-past seven Bernard Hawthorne left the vestry, and came and stood behind the communion-rail. I saw him give a start like one who had received a blow. Doubtless he too wondered at the great multitude who gathered for prayer. I noticed that his face was very pale, and I felt sure that unless some change in his life took place, his health would break down. Looking as I now did through the eyes of love, I saw that his hands were thin almost to transparency, and that his clothes hung almost loosely around his tall form. I realised then what I had never realised before, that I must have caused him many anxious hours, and perhaps many sleepless nights. Doubtless it was no light thing for him to be brought before the denominational authorities and to be accused of heresy and misbehaviour, and as a consequence he had suffered greatly.

“Lord have mercy upon me!” I said to myself; and then, as he knelt to pray, I prayed that the Lord would sustain him and give him strength to carry on his work.

“No mother can watch over her baby with more tenderness than I will watch over him,” I thought, as he presently rose to his feet again and looked around upon the sea of faces.

He could not see all the people from the communion-

rail, so he mounted the pulpit, and gave out that soul-inspiring hymn—

“O Thou who camest from above
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart.”

There was no organ played that night, and no one felt the need of it. It is true the singing seemed to drag a little at first, because old Jonathan Giles, who raised the tune, didn't seem sure about the right key; but this was only for a minute. In a few minutes the building was again filled with a great volume of music, and the words of this old hymn, so long associated with Methodism, were sung by many hundreds of voices to an old familiar tune.

After Mr. Hawthorne had offered a short prayer he read the story of Pentecost, and then we sang again.

“What will he do next?” I thought to myself. “Will he give an address and ask the people to give their hearts to Christ's keeping, or shall we continue our singing and prayer?”

“I am not going to give you an address to-night,” he said when we sat down, “because I do not think there is need for it. This is no time for much speech, but for thought, for communion with our own souls, for communion with God, and for great and holy resolves. Perhaps there are here, men and women who are tired of sin, others who are without faith, and yet who long for it. It may be, too, that there [are young men and maidens here, as I believe there are, who long to dedicate themselves to God, and who perhaps desire to meet us in prayer. It must be so, for God's power is manifest here to-night,

and therefore I give you an invitation. Those who desire advice and prayer—nay more, those who wish to live the life of God—will you come into the vestries behind? You will notice that the doors are open, and there are those who will join me in the vestry to speak to you, and to pray with you.”

And this was all he said, much to my disappointment. For, although I had learnt to love him, I felt that this was not the way to conduct a revival service; but like the others I knelt in prayer and waited.

We were very quiet, I remember, and the only prayers which were offered were offered silently. I wondered at this, for I had always regarded a prayer-meeting as tame when there were not half a dozen wanting to lead in prayer at the same time. Presently, however, I heard a rustle in the congregation, and then, looking up, I saw going into the vestry, a steady stream of men and women. Some of them I knew, others were strangers to me. What did it mean? Apparently there was no excitement, and no man spoke a word. And yet from the galleries, as well as from the body of the church, old men and young men, women with grey hair as well as those with the dew of youth on their brows, found their way into the vestries for prayer and for conversation about the deepest and holiest things in life.

I had seen many revivals in my life, but never one like this. I cannot describe it, for no words can tell of the great solemn hush that rested upon the congregation, nor give the faintest conception of the power under which strong men became as helpless as children.

I do not think that Bernard Hawthorne realised what was happening all around him. He had descended

from the pulpit and was kneeling at the communion-rails, while on his face was a look which made me think of the great lawgiver of long ages ago who talked with God as a man talketh with his friend.

After a while, however, he seemed to realise what was happening, for he started up like one who was overcome with wonder. Then he asked Jonathan Giles, and me, and others, to go into the vestries.

I am told that some of the great scholars of our times assure us that the foundations of our faith are being undermined ; that what is called the higher criticism has destroyed all possibility of belief in miracles, in the power of Christ to save, in the resurrection, and all that we regard as the great fundamentals of Christianity. Personally I know nothing about these great writers ; indeed, until I talked with Bernard Hawthorne I never heard their names ; but a man might as well try to prove to me that the sun gives no warmth, or that the living trees do not put forth their leaves in the spring-time, as to try and prove these things. I cannot explain what happened on that and on other nights ; I cannot tell by what processes unbelievers were led to faith, base cruel men were changed, and scoffers led to cry for mercy. This was the Lord's doing, and it was marvellous in our eyes. What I know are the simple facts, which can be proved by any who will come to Lynford. There are holy, pure-living men and women in our town to-day, who before that night were vile and impure ; there are humble believers in our midst to-day, who before then were blatant blasphemers and drunkards. Ask them to what and to whom they owe this great change, and they will tell you. Bernard Hawthorne has told me that the Christian Church owes a great deal to these scholars ;

he has said that they have helped to make the Bible a more living book, that they have helped to place many dark sayings in a new light, and that through them the thought of the world has been enriched. All this may be true; but this I know, the power that is to change men's lives to-day is the same power which changed them on the day of Pentecost. Even as it was true in that day that there was no other name given under heaven whereby a man might be saved, so is it true to-day. This was what our young minister discovered, ay, and what we all discovered, and so we have no more doubt about the great truths of our religion than we have about the shining of the sun.

The meeting came to an end about nine o'clock. I and many others would have liked to have continued it much longer, but Bernard Hawthorne would not have it so. "It was God's work, not man's," he said, and so closed the meeting, much to our disappointment.

There was another matter, also, concerning which we were sorely grieved. We expected that he would have announced another prayer-meeting for the following night, but he did not. Instead, he told the people that if any wished to come to the church for prayer and advice he would be there to meet them from eight to nine o'clock.

"Do you mean to say you are not going to have another meeting to-morrow night?" I said to him.

"Not as you understand it," he replied.

"But, my dear Mr. Hawthorne," I said, "are you sure that you are wise? Will you not be stopping the work of God?"

"The work of God cannot be stopped in such a way," he replied. "It is because I so strongly believe this to be the work of God that I am anxious that we shall

do nothing to hinder it. If it is the hand of God which is upon men they will come for prayer. If it is not, no perfunctory or artificial acts of ours will do good."

As I have said, it is no use arguing with him when he has made up his mind, and I, because I had learnt to believe in him, said no more. As events proved, too, he was right. Not only did a great number of people come the next evening, but for many other evenings after that, until our chapel-keeper complained that the chapel was never closed, and the people never ceased to come. As it was in the olden time, so it was in Lynford; there were added to the Church daily such as should be saved.

That time is still spoken of in Lynford as the "Great Revival." And truly it was great. It was not a mere spasmodic feeling, the result of special services, but it was a work which continued for many months. It spread from church to church, and from home to home, until the whole town was ablaze. Nay, for that matter it continues until this day; not, indeed, as it was then, but it does continue in living churches and uplifted lives.

But I am anticipating my story, and this I must not do, for although it begins to draw to an end, I wish to tell of the other things which happened just as they occurred.

Just after Bernard Hawthorne concluded the service that night, I saw him look around the building as if in search of some one. Presently I saw him start, and change colour. And well he might, for sitting in the back pew he saw Miss Mary Clitheroe, and by her side was a young girl, little of stature, with golden hair and violet eyes.

"Can it be?" he thought; "surely no. She told

me she did not know of any one by the name of Paulina Milano."

With fast-beating heart he looked again. Yes, there could be no doubt about it. Sitting by Mary Clitheroe's side was a maiden whose face corresponded with that of his dreams. She looked eagerly towards him, too, as though she were interested in him. Could it be that at last he should meet his unknown correspondent face to face?

Presently both the young girls stood up and moved towards the crowded aisle, and then the young man saw that the stranger was neither so tall nor so stately as Miss Clitheroe, but to him she seemed none the less charming. Her face was *spirituelle* and beautiful, and no one could look at her a second time without realising that she was a lady by birth and association.

"It must be she," he said to himself. "I will not lose her now I have found her. I will go and speak to Miss Clitheroe, and then perhaps she will introduce me."

Without realising that many eyes were upon him, he made his way along the aisle; and presently, when he came within a few feet of the pew where the young girls sat, Mary Clitheroe turned towards him and their eyes met.

He saw that a bright colour came to her cheek as she took a step towards him. He thought, moreover, that he saw a look of gladness in her eyes as he came nearer to her, and then he was not sure whether he any longer hoped that the stranger in the pew was Paulina Milano.

"It must be she, though," he said, as he took Miss Clitheroe's outstretched hand.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DREAM AND THE REALITY

"YOU have been here during the whole meeting?" he stammered.

"Yes, from the very beginning."

"I—I suppose that such a—a gathering is somewhat strange to you?"

"It is, very. I think it must be strange to every one."

"I am afraid it is—because it ought not to be strange," he replied; and his eyes rested again upon the golden-haired maiden, who, seeing that a crowd still remained in the aisle, and that Miss Clitheroe desired to talk with the young minister, resumed her seat.

"I am afraid I came out of pure curiosity," she said, looking at him steadily. "I heard of the meeting held here last Tuesday, then of the service last night—indeed, it has been the talk of the town through the day—and I yielded to my desire to come to-night."

"Yes," he said; and then he added, like one musing, "it has been very wonderful."

"Very."

He hesitated awkwardly, for he knew not what to say further. He was longing to speak to the young girl who sat only a few yards away from him, but did not dare to ask for an introduction.

"I hope you have not forgotten your promise to visit Rough Leigh to-morrow evening," she said presently.

"No, I had not forgotten; but—but I am afraid I cannot come. You see, I must be here to-morrow night."

"I am so sorry; but you could perhaps come in the afternoon? You remember you told me you had something you wished to say to me." She spoke in a low voice, so that no one could hear but the young man, who now stood in the pew immediately in front of her.

"Yes, I remember."

"Besides, there is some one to whom I should like to introduce you."

"You are very kind—but, you see——"

"You have not promised to be here until eight o'clock. Oh, you really must come; besides, my friend whom I wish you to know is here. I must introduce you at once, and ask her to join me in persuading you."

She was turning towards her, and Bernard Hawthorne was expecting to hear the name of Paulina Milano, when old Jonathan Giles came to him, and touched him on the arm.

"Mr. Hawthorne," he said, "old Dicky Scott, the infidel, wants to spaik to yo'."

The young man was much excited. Much as he desired to speak to Paulina Milano, he could not turn a deaf ear to Jonathan's request.

"I see you are engaged now," said Miss Clitheroe, noticing the position in which he was placed; "but you must really come to Rough Leigh to-morrow afternoon. I shall tell my father to expect you at three o'clock."

He gave a hasty promise, and then went away with Jonathan Giles to see Dicky Scott, who for years had been one of the secretaries of the Secularist Society.

With that the two girls left their seat, and found their way to the vestibule.

"The carriage is waiting," I heard Miss Clitheroe say, for by this time I had gone to the main entrance of the chapel in order to speak to some of the people.

"Yes, I see it is," said a sweet, girlish voice, and then I noticed that a carriage and a pair of horses stood in the street outside.

I watched them as they entered the carriage, and wondered who the stranger could be, for at that time I did not dream that Bernard Hawthorne believed her to be the girl who had been writing him the letters which had such a marked influence on his life.

"Yon's Clitheroe's lass," I heard some one say.

"Ay," said another. "I wonder what she's doin' here?"

"Mebbe the hand of the Lord is upon her, as it is upon so many others," was the reply.

"Ay, let's 'oap soa. It 'ud be a grand thing if 'oo wur converted. I hear as 'ow Mester Hawthorne 'ave noan been to Rough Leigh for a goodish bit."

"Ay, 'ave yo' then? Well, we mun pray for her, as we pray for others. Do yo' think she cam' to mak' game o' th' revival?"

"Nay, aw doan't think soa. She looked fair and solemn."

"Did she then? Ef Hugh Clitheroe wur converted it 'ud be a grand job."

"It would an' all. Weel, all things are possible with God."

"Ay, that's truc. What we've seen to-neet has been

wonderful, wonderful. The arm o' the Lord has been made bare."

"Ay, it has, and who do yo' think is in th' vestry now?"

"Ay, I doan' knaw."

"Owd Dicky Scott."

"Tha never ses!"

"Ay, but I do. But we shall see grand doin's. I never see a revival like it afore. No shaatin', varry little singin', and no praichin'. The Lord's hand is upo' Mester Hawthorne."

"His hand is upon us all. Ay, but who'd a' thought that Caleb Sutcliffe shud a' begun the work?"

"It wur wonderful, more wonderful than owd Abel Bowyer."

"I doan' knaw. It's all wonderful. Ther's been a lot converted at th' mills through the dinner-time, too. I believe my Joshua is under conviction."

And thus they talked. Not loudly, but quietly, reverently. Even their gossip took a kindlier tone, and although I found out afterwards that many had noticed Bernard Hawthorne speaking to Miss Mary Clitheroe, no one said an uncharitable word. The very subjects which a few days before would have made what the women-folk called "good pic"—good gossip—were now spoken of kindly, and without a suggestion of bitterness.

I noticed, too, that the people seemed loath to leave the chapel. A kind of spell appeared to rest on the place, and the spirit of expectancy prevailed.

Presently, as I was preparing to go home, I saw old Dicky Scott coming towards me.

"Weel, Caleb," he said, gripping me by the hand.

"Well, Richard," I said; "I'm glad to see you here."

"Ay, and I'm glad to coom."

"And can you say with the lad in the Scriptures, 'One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see?' " I said.

"Just a little bit, Caleb. I'm like the man who said, 'I see men as trees,' that's all. But I'm noan goin' to gi' up."

"No, that's right."

"Yo' see, I'm fair stalled wi' the infidel tack. There's nowt in it. Everything is 'I doan't believe,' and that'll ne'er do onybody good. Ay, I've been weary on it for years, Caleb, for years; but I've been too praad to say I wur mistook. I've kipt on shaatin' when our spaikers have pretended to find a new proof that there wur no God, as though it wur summat to be glad of. And then when I've got home I've secd what a foil I've been."

"Yes, I don't wonder."

"The truth is—weel, aw've never fair understood what religion meant till to-nect. I've read the Bible through more nor once, just to find aat the mistakes o' Moses, and to laugh at they curious stories in the Books o' th' Chronicles, but naa——"

"Yes, what now, Richard?"

"Ay, it's a weary business, this tryin' to pick hoils in th' Bible. Yo' geet nowt for it all; and when three weeks sin' I went to see owd Micah Bently what wur dyin' o' th' asthma, weel, I just felt like a foil."

"How is that, Richard?"

"Why, I ses to him, I ses, 'Weel, Micah, we've got rid o' hell for yo'.'

"'Ay,' he ses, 'and thou'st got rid o' heaven too.'

"'Weel,' I ses, 'superstition can noan do good.'

"'How dost 'a know it's superstition?' ses he.

“‘How do I knaw?’ I ses; ‘‘ave yo’ been comin’ to our meetin’s all these years and don’t knaw that?’”

“‘Dicky,’ ses he, ‘yo’ reckon to be a man o’ larnin’, and one as is a laider among the Secularists.’”

“‘Ay,’ ses I, ‘perhaps I am.’”

“‘Then, Dicky,’ ses he, ‘gie us a bit o’ comfort,’ he ses. ‘I lost my little lass Rosey ten year ago, and I’ve never been the same man sin’; and then two year ago I lost th’ owd woman. I would like to see ‘em agean,’ he ses. ‘Gi’ us a bit o’ comfort, Dicky.’”

“Well, and what did you say?” I asked.

“I could say nowt, Caleb. I wur just like a ninny, I wur for sure. Ay, ther’s a lot o’ truth in th’ owd book, Caleb.”

“It’s the word of God,” I said.

“Ther’s one verse that’s true, ‘t ony rate.”

“And which is that?”

“‘The foil hath said in his heart, There is no God,’” he replied. “I’ve got as far as that.”

“I pray that you may have sight in its fulness, Richard,” I said.

“I’m goin’ to pray, and live for ‘t, Caleb. Now that thou’rt converted, one of my chief stumbling-blocks is gone. Ay, Caleb, doan’t go backslidin’; ef yo’ did it ‘ud be an awful blow for me.”

“May God help us all!” I answered.

I have written down this conversation not because it is of particular interest, but because it is suggestive of many hundreds of others that took place all over Lynford. Indeed, I may say here, that ever since that night the Lynford Secularist Society has ceased to exist, and most of its members are now members of Wesley Chapel. And yet there are some who say that Christianity is played out!

As I walked home that night I felt a hand upon my arm.

"Mr. Hawthorne," I said, as I caught his hand, "I was just thinking I would go up to your lodgings. It's wonderful, wonderful!"

"A flame of fire!" he said, and he spoke like a man in a dream.

"Yes, a flame of fire," I repeated. "He shall make His ministers a flame of fire."

We walked on a few minutes in silence.

"The reason I did not announce a special prayer-meeting for to-morrow was because I was afraid there might be an element of perfunctoriness," he said presently. "I was afraid lest people should come simply because they wanted to see something unusual. It is so easy for unhealthy excitement to creep into such meetings, so easy for such occasions to be regarded as the work of man and not of God. So far everything has been natural, spontaneous. There has been little or nothing of man in it. The people have a chance to come, and if the hand of God is upon them they will come. Moreover, there is no reason why we cannot all pray; I believe we shall. At our homes, in the mills, in the offices, and behind the counters."

"Perhaps you are right," I said, for even yet his method of doing things was strange to me.

"Good-night, Mr. Sutcliffe," he said presently. "I am very tired, and I want to be alone."

When he reached his lodgings he had, as may be imagined, much to think about. The whole evening had been a wonderful revelation to him. Nearly two hundred men and women had that night expressed a desire to become Christians, many of whom had for years been regarded as beyond hope of salvation.

This fact alone had filled him with strange joy, and much heart-searching. But this was not all. Strange as it may seem to some, the thought of the great work which had begun at Wesley Chapel was closely associated with those two young women he had seen that night. After all, there was nothing wonderful that his mind should turn to them. Through Miss Mary Clitheroe his faith had been tested, his very religious life had been shaken to the foundations. Through her he had been led to undertake a hard course of reading, and to consider questions to which hitherto he had been a stranger. His love for her had become associated with his religious faith, and she had had a marked influence on his work. As for the other, it was through her that he had been led to understand more truly the very genius of Christianity. Her letters had been a kind of antidote against the sceptical influences of Miss Mary Clitheroe. She had aroused within him some of the purest longings, the holiest aspirations of his life.

He took her last letter, and read it through. He had written an answer to it, but not a line had he received in response. Would she ever write again? he wondered. Nay, more, was that maiden with the beautiful face the one who had penned these lines? Here was a confession of love, tender, pure love. Every word breathed the atmosphere of womanly modesty, in spite of the fact that she, unasked, had confessed her love for him.

Did he love her? He thought of her as she sat by Mary Clitheroe that night, and failed to answer the question he had asked himself. He believed that this was Paulina Milano, and although she corresponded with the dreams he had had concerning her, the spell

of her presence was less powerful than that of Mary Clitheroe. Even when he remembered this last letter, so full of tender words and noble thoughts, she was less to him than the maid who had laughed both at him and his religion.

"It cannot be Paulina Milano," he said again and again, and then as often he tried to assure himself that it must be she.

To me, whose love affairs had been associated with no romance, save that which must come to every man's life when he realises that there is but one woman in the world to him, Bernard Hawthorne's experiences were strange beyond measure. For, as I discovered in those after-days, when we became to each other almost like father and son, he was in love with two women at the same time, and yet his love for neither was complete. One woman he knew. He had spoken with her, walked with her, and at times had almost been led to confess his love for her. The other he knew not: save through her letters she was a stranger to him; and yet she had been a more potent influence in his life than Mary Clitheroe. The one appealed to his admiration for cleverness, for stately, womanly beauty, while the other had aroused longings unknown to him before.

"But I'll know to-morrow," he said again and again. "This mystery shall be a mystery no longer then."

The next morning, as he went into the town, he was met by many people, who stopped him to talk about the great work at Wesley. On every hand they crowded around him, and each seemed more eager than the other to tell him of their great joy.

"And I had thought that these Lancashire Methodists had lost the old religious fervour," he said to himself

again and again, "while all the time they were longing for truths which I failed to give them! I feel ashamed of myself when they speak so kindly. They make me realise that I have been wasting much precious time."

And yet perhaps he was wrong in this ; for the work he had been doing during that time when I failed to understand him, had been a great preparation for that glad time which has been the joy of the town.

"Oh, but I will work, I will work," he repeated to himself, as one after another came to him and gave him cheering messages ; "I will give my life for these people. And yet I feel my life is not complete. I wonder, now, I wonder——" and again he pondered on the matter which lay near to his heart.

In the afternoon he made his way up to Rough Leigh with a fast-beating heart. It was now the height of summer, and when he got away from the smoke of the town the country-side became very beautiful. There was something restful, too, in the great sweep of hill and dale, and the quietness helped to soothe his excited nerves. In the town there was a constant noise of the clash of steel against granite, but here there was no traffic and no roar of machinery.

"I will go by way of the footpath," he said at length ; and he called to mind that night when Miss Mary Clitheroe pointed out the path to him.

Away in the distance he could see Rough Leigh, almost hidden by overshadowing trees ; and presently, when he heard the sound of laughter, he felt sure that soon he should be face to face with the woman of whom he had dreamed for many long months. How she came to be with Mary Clitheroe he did not stop to inquire ; it was enough that she was with her, and he should soon speak to her.

A few minutes later he saw two women coming towards him. Yes, there could be no doubt about it. The one was Miss Clitheroe, and the other the maiden whose face had so impressed him the previous night.

"I am glad you have come," said the former as she came up to him. "My father is expecting you, and he would have been awfully disappointed if you had failed to put in an appearance."

"You are very kind," stammered the young man; and then he turned and looked at her companion.

"This is my friend, Miss ——"

He did not catch the name. Perhaps this was because he was so excited, or perhaps it was because Miss Clitheroe did not speak plainly. Nevertheless, he was sure the name she uttered was Milano, and for the moment he had no doubt that it was she for whom he had searched so diligently.

He thought she did not look so beautiful in the daylight as in the gaslight. Her eyes seemed rather small, and the mouth appeared somewhat weak. Moreover, she looked little and insignificant by the side of Mary Clitheroe; and the lack of decision in her movements presented a strong contrast to the quick and decided demeanour of the Lancashire maiden.

Still, he held out his hand to her, and as she placed her gloved fingers in his palm a great disappointment came into his heart.

"You are not a stranger to Lynford, I think?" he stammered.

"Oh no; I have been here several times."

The voice was weak and childish.

"The country around here is very fine, isn't it?"

"Yes, perfectly lovely."

"You like these wild moors, I daresay?"

"I don't know—I really never thought about them."

A few minutes later he realised that this golden-haired, blue-eyed girl was a feather-brained and uninteresting creature. He was perfectly sure that she never wrote the letters which had moved him so strangely. There must be a mistake somewhere.

"Pardon me," he said presently, "I did not catch your name just now. I know it was awfully stupid of me, and I am very sorry."

"It is I who ought to apologise for not speaking plainly," said Miss Clitheroe. "Miss Melford."

The young man heaved a sigh of relief. He was thankful that this colourless creature did not bear the name which had become almost sacred to him. He was able to speak freely now. It is true his hopes had been dashed to the ground; but better that than that his ideal should be shattered. Afterwards he wondered why he could have been so foolish as to think that Paulina Milano could be a friend of Mary Clitheroe. Only the last time they had met she had told him that she knew no one who bore that name; but in his excitement he had forgotten what under other circumstances he would have remembered.

Presently they were joined by Mr. Clitheroe, who after a few minutes led the way across the moors with Miss Melford by his side, leaving Mary Clitheroe and the young minister behind.

"I told you when last we were together that I had something to tell you, Miss Clitheroe," he said presently.

"Yes, I remember. It is nothing very terrible, I hope."

" I don't know. Perhaps it may be—to me."

" You frighten me."

" At any rate, I hope you will listen patiently."

" Yes, I will do that."

" And you will promise to try and not be offended ?"

" Does it concern me, then ?"

" Yes, it concerns you."

" This becomes interesting," she said, with a nervous laugh. " Well, I will promise you that also."

Bernard Hawthorne hesitated a few seconds, thinking how he could best begin the story he had to tell.

CHAPTER XXIII

A STRANGE LOVE-MAKING

"I ASKED you when I saw you last if you knew any one by the name of Paulina Milano," he said presently.

"Yes, I remember ; and I told you that I knew no one who bore that name."

"Yes, you did ;" and then he became silent again, while Mary Clitheroe walked slowly by his side, her eyes turned towards the grass that grew at their feet.

"I am afraid to tell you what is in my heart," he said, after a long silence.

"Why ?"

"I fear you will not understand—because—because I do not understand myself. But—but you have promised to be patient with me ; you have told me you will not be offended."

"You make me quite nervous, Mr. Hawthorne," she said, with a laugh ; "you will make me believe that I have something to do with what you have to confess."

"You have a great deal to do with it," he said earnestly. "You are the only one to whom I could make it."

"But—but what has this Paulina Milano to do with me ?"

"I do not know," he replied. "I am afraid you will think I have taken leave of my senses when I have

told you what is in my heart. But, believe me, I want to speak honestly to you. Humanly speaking, the whole future of my life may depend on the way you will regard my confession."

Mary Clitheroe looked at him impatiently. Perhaps it was because he had aroused her curiosity, and yet delayed to make his confession.

"You remember my first meeting with you?" he went on presently.

"Yes, perfectly well. I think we were both rather rude."

"I rude?"

"Yes. You insisted on accompanying me when I told you I did not desire your company. That was rude, wasn't it? I was rude, too. How, I scarcely remember; but I know I was."

"I think you tried to snub me," he replied. "Perhaps I deserved it. And yet I do not think I did. My intention was to serve you. I accompanied you because I could not do otherwise, and I would do it again."

She laughed lightly. "You see I confess my faults," she said, "while you will not even admit that you were a little bit in the wrong."

"No, not in that," he answered. "But be that as it may, from the very first hour I saw you I have never ceased to think of you.

As he said this he looked steadily at her, and noticed that a deep flush mounted her dark, clear skin.

"Don't be angry. I could not help it; how could I? You see you came as a kind of revelation to me. I had never seen any one like you before. You were the only lady of refined associations and education I had ever met who was an enemy to Christianity, and who took a delight, not only in laughing at Christian

ministers, but in criticising Christianity itself. You, and your father together, led me to test, as I had never tested them before, the fundamentals of my faith. But that is not altogether what I mean. Let me tell you something about my early life, and then you will, I hope, understand me better.

“My home was in the heart of the country, seven miles from the nearest market town. My father and mother lived, and still live, in an old manor-house, surrounded by loamy fields and rural farmsteads—altogether different,” he added, “from the farmsteads which one sees in this part of the country. My father was what is called ‘the principal man’ in the little Methodist chapel to which, as a child, I was taken. At the chapel there was no one of the same social status as ourselves. All the congregation consisted of my father’s tenants and the workpeople on his farms. Both my father and mother, moreover, were rather strict in their notions, and, as a consequence, I was not much thrown into the society of those who might have tastes and education similar to my own.

“I am afraid you will regard me as a good deal of a snob and a prig in saying all this, but I am saying it so that you may know something of my early life.

“I became a bookish boy, and presently expressed my desire to become a Methodist minister. My father, although an ardent Methodist, did not favour this idea of mine, but my mother supported me. The upshot of it was that I began to study for the ministry, and as a consequence I was constantly with my books at an age when most other fellows are meeting with young people of their own age.

“When I went to College I worked hard, rarely ever went into society, and as a consequence, when

I came to Lynford, I had never had any love affairs ; indeed, I knew little of young women at all. That, in brief outline, is the history of my boyhood and youth up to the time I came here. My life was utterly uneventful, being made up of study and preaching. I imagine I did fairly well as a student ; I stood high in my theological examinations, in addition to having taken a degree in arts. I suppose my theological training was on somewhat narrow lines, for I was utterly ignorant of the intellectual attitude taken by your father and yourself.

“ My first visit to your house affected me strangely. It did a great deal to knock the sawdust out of my theological dolls, but it did more : it made me feel that you were the one woman in the world for me. You are listening, aren't you ? ”

“ Yes.” Her voice was hard. The word she spoke was uttered curtly, as though she were offended.

“ I admired you more than I can say. Your beauty—for you are beautiful, Miss Clitheroe, more beautiful than any one I have ever seen—fascinated me. Your cleverness attracted me ; even your scepticism and your cynicism charmed me. You were not the maiden of my boyish dreams. But almost from the very first I loved you—loved you so that life without you would be a blank. And yet you did not satisfy me.”

She turned towards him with an impatient look in her eyes. Her lips became tremulous, her whole appearance suggested anger. This Bernard Hawthorne was quick to note.

“ Do not be angry,” he said humbly. “ I know I am taking a great liberty in speaking to you at all, and I do not deserve that you should listen to me. But be kind to me, and bear with me.

"You see," he went on presently, "I want to be perfectly honest with you. I want to tell you just what is in my mind. My heart has for many a long day been hungering for this hour, and——"

"But surely there is no need for you to make such a confession as this," she interrupted.

"Yes," he answered; "yes, there is much need. I am afraid your interest in me is very slight, still you have sometimes been kind to me, and through you life has become nobler, faith has become larger. Besides, I must tell you, I cannot keep back what I wish to say any longer. My heart is full of wild longings, and I must tell you about them. Besides, you promised you would listen."

She did not answer, but looked towards her father and Miss Melford, as though she contemplated overtaking them.

"I loved you," he went on, "and yet you did not satisfy me. My love seemed to bring completeness to my life, and yet it did not. You appealed to my love for beauty; you satisfied all my desires from the standpoint of intellect and culture; your presence so fascinated me that when I was in your company I could think of nothing else, and longed for nothing else. And yet I was afraid of you.

"Thank you, I am sure. And excuse me, Mr. Hawthorne, this is very interesting, but——"

"I was afraid of you," he interrupted, and his words silenced her, "because you made my faith less real; you made me care less about my work. When I was with you I thought only of you, and the material side of life. I loved you; but my love for you did not make me love God more. And yet I loved you, loved you with my whole mind, loved you also in a deeper

and more fervent way ; and yet all the time my heart was heavy, and I was in many ways unhappy."

"Excuse me, Mr. Hawthorne, but——"

"You must hear the rest," he went on, and she was powerless to resist him. "I have asked you more than once if you knew any one who bore the name of Paulina Milano, and you have replied in the negative. Well, I have a story to tell you about Paulina Milano."

"Don't, Mr. Hawthorne."

"But I must. Why, I hardly know ; but I must tell you about her. Shortly after I came to Lynford I received a letter signed 'Paulina Milano.' It was sent from London, and it told me that she, the writer, had heard me preach, and that she was terribly disappointed in what I said. She told me that the people who came longed for food, and that I had given them chaff ; that I had dealt with the debateable subjects which lay outside Christianity, but that I had never touched the great heart of the gospel I came to preach. The letter revealed a beautiful pure spirit, a tender implicit faith, and a noble nature.

"Of course the letter struck me as curious. I wondered that a lady of whom I knew nothing should write me as she wrote me. She told me things which I cannot repeat even to you."

"This is most interesting, Mr. Hawthorne," said Mary Clitheroe. "Now we are getting quite romantic. Did you answer her letter?"

"Yes, I answered it ; and then a correspondence sprang up between us. I suppose it would be regarded as a strange correspondence. I never saw her, at least to my knowledge ; certainly I have never spoken to her, and yet she has become the greatest influence in my life.

“I would not tell you this, did I not know that you have only the most distant feeling towards me, in spite of the fact that you have become so much to me. And yet I do not know: I am telling you because I cannot help myself, because a power which I cannot understand, and over which I have no control, is compelling me.

“As I said, she became the greatest influence in life. Her letters aroused all that was pure and holy in my nature, she made me long for reality, she made me feel the truth of those things which you and your father did so much to make unreal to me. Humanly speaking, I believe the wondrous scenes we have seen at Wesley Chapel are due to her.”

“To her! How?”

“In a letter she wrote only a week or so ago, she made me realise more than ever, not only the real genius of Methodism, but of Christianity; she made me feel wherein my work had been a comparative failure, she led me to pray as I had never prayed before. It was this that, humanly speaking, led to the reconversion of Caleb Sutcliffe, who now, instead of being a formalist, straining after mere shadow, has become an earnest, living man. It was this that led to the realisation of a Power which is moving the whole town.

“I cannot explain these things in so many words—it is not possible; but this is what I cannot help saying to you. Paulina Milano has appealed to that side of my life which you have left untouched. She has led me nearer to God, she has made me understand more of the meaning of faith, and in a true, deep sense I have learned to love her.”

“Are you not rather prodigal in your love?”

"No, no. Please do not speak like that. I sometimes think my love for her is simply a love for an ideal, a vision of the mind. And yet when I read her letters, I know that she must be in the world somewhere. I know that the lines I read are penned by a human hand; I know that somewhere amidst the whirl of the London streets, and perhaps sometimes here in our very midst, is the noblest woman in the world."

"Have you ever seen her?"

Mary Clitheroe appeared by this time to have become more deeply interested. Her eyes burned with a strange light, and she no longer regarded her father and the young golden-haired girl, who were constantly increasing the distance between them.

"No, I have never seen her. I went to London some time ago determined to find her. I imagined this would be easy, because she had given me an address to which I could write. But when I got to London and found the house, I saw that it was only a post-office."

"And have you no idea who she is?"

"Not the slightest."

"She told you that she had come to Lynford to hear you preach, did she not?"

"Yes."

"Then should it not be easy to find her? She must have friends here."

"I have thought of all that. Without betraying the fact of her existence, I have used all manner of means to find her; but I have discovered nothing."

"And you have no idea what she is like?"

"I have only my own fancies. When I have read her letters a picture of her has come before me."

“ Yes: what is it like ? ”

“ I have thought of her as little, and *spirituelle*. I have pictured her as a young girl with golden hair and blue eyes. When I saw Miss Melford at chapel, I forgot what you had told me some time ago, and thought I had found her. I came back to you in order to—well, I can hardly put my thoughts into words. All through last night, and this morning, I had a sort of feeling that it was she; and when a little while ago she came with you towards me, I felt sure that the mystery which has so long haunted me would be explained.”

“ By Miss Melford ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Does she correspond with your fancies, then ? ”

“ As much as a wax doll corresponds to a living child.”

“ Poor Miss Melford ! But she is thought to be very beautiful.”

“ Yes, I should suppose so. But she could no more write the letters which Paulina Milano has written to me, than a child of five could have written the six books of Euclid, or than our most popular woman novelists could write the plays of Shakespeare ! ”

“ Her letters, then, betray a woman of soul ? ”

“ Yes, a woman of noble nature—a deep, spiritual nature, of a great faith, and one who has a grand conception of life.”

“ And, excuse me, but do I understand you aright?—you, you love her ? ”

“ Yes, I think so, and yet I don't know. At times she is so unreal to me ! I cannot believe that she exists, save in my fancy. And yet her letters move me as nothing else does.”

"Do you think you would know her if you saw her?"

"Yes—I don't know."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, until to-day I thought I should. But you see I have been mistaken. If I could speak to her for five minutes I should be able to identify her."

"In what way?"

"By her very presence ; by the words she spoke ; by the very atmosphere of her thoughts."

Mary Clitheroe was silent.

"And yet," went on the young man, "I don't know if I should love her ; if I did, I could love her with only a part of my nature."

"Why?"

"Because I love you."

"Excuse me, Mr. Hawthorne ; but I am afraid I do not feel flattered, and I must say that it seems strange that you should——"

"Yes, yes—I know, I know. Perhaps I ought not to have told you all this, and yet I could not help it. But, Miss Clitheroe, you are an agnostic, you have no sympathy with me in my work. You know all about it, and I need not enlarge on it. And yet I love you. I suppose I ought not to say all this ; but I am only a child when I am with you, and somehow I cannot resist my longing to tell you everything. I love you with all my mind, I admire you in many respects beyond all words. I think I would give up almost every hope in life if I could thereby lead you to love me. Sometimes when—when you have grown earnest about the deeper truths of life, you have gone far to satisfy me altogether. You—you are so beautiful, so clever, so

truthful, so honest. You scorn sham, you love reality ; and I love you—I love you. And yet I am afraid of you.”

“Thank you. But you say you love this Paulina Milano? how can you love two women at the same time?”

“I do not know. But I think sometimes that there is nothing human about my love for her. I love her as an ardent Catholic loves a saint. Even when—when I have thought most tenderly about her, I have never thought of—of making her my wife.”

“But you say she satisfies you?”

“I—I do not know. She fills my mind with the purest, holiest thoughts ; she fulfils my dreams—but only partly.”

Mary Clitheroe laughed, and her voice was harsh and almost discordant. At that time Bernard Hawthorne felt that cold, repelling influence which in past days had led him to think of Paulina Milano, the woman he had never seen, rather than of Mary Clitheroe, beautiful, stately girl as she was.

“I am afraid I cannot understand why you should have told me all this, Mr. Hawthorne,” she said ; “but I promised to listen to you, and I have done so. From what I can judge, I am honoured with a part of your love. It seems that I appeal to the lower, poorer part of your nature, while this Paulina Milano appeals to your higher thoughts and hopes.”

“Forgive me, Miss Clitheroe ; I am a brute. No, it's not that. I have never associated you with anything low or poor. How could I? Besides, I love you, love you oh so dearly. But I am afraid. Somehow—well, I do not understand you. Perhaps it is because you have no faith, and thus, while I have been

under your influence, you have made God less real to me."

"And have you anything more to say to me?"

"I feel I have everything to say, and yet I cannot find words to express my feelings!"

"But you must have had a purpose in telling me all this?" She spoke almost harshly.

"Yes, yes, I have. But I could not tell you that purpose until—well, you see, I felt I must be honest. I love you so that I could not hide anything from you; I wanted to show you my heart."

They walked on side by side, she evidently waiting for him to say more, he apparently unable to put into words the thoughts and feelings which struggled for utterance.

"I am afraid I shall offend you," he said at length.

"Surely not, after what you have said."

He looked into her face as though he did not understand her.

"I am so lonely," he said presently; "I have wondrous joys, joys to which you are a stranger; but humanly speaking, I am very lonely. And I feel I can never be happy unless—unless you can love me. That is—well, I am afraid, I almost know you do not care anything about me now; but do you think you ever can? That is—will you be my wife?"

"No, Mr. Hawthorne, I would never be the wife of a man whose love is—is like yours."

"But I love you really, truly."

"You have told me that I only satisfy one part of your life—that I do not meet your deepest needs as a wife should."

"But, Miss Clitheroe, forgive me if I am persistent; sometimes you do satisfy my heart's greatest longings.

For I do love you, I do love you. You know that, don't you?"

Mary Clitheroe was silent.

"It would not have been honest on my part had I not told you everything; I want to be true to you, not only in deed, but in thought. Can't you give me some hope?"

"How could I?" replied Mary Clitheroe. "Should I not know all the time that you might meet this Paulina Milano? and then—well, you might grieve that you had ever spoken to me; if I married you, you might learn to hate me, instead of loving me."

"Never, never!"

"But would it not be likely? Besides, as I told you just now, I could never marry a man to whom I was not everything a wife could be. I should want to share his most sacred and most holy thoughts. I should want to be his *confidante* on all subjects; I should want to feel that I was the only woman in the world to him."

She spoke quietly, earnestly, reverently. Everything like cynicism and mockery was gone. If Bernard Hawthorne was deeply moved, so was she. For the first time in his life the young minister began to believe that she loved him, and the thought brought him untold joy, and he turned to her eagerly.

"Miss Clitheroe," he said, "am I more to you than a passing stranger? Can you ever, do you now care for me—I mean in the way I long for?"

"How can I, when you offer me only a part of your life?" she asked, almost passionately. "When I satisfy only a part, and that not the highest part of your nature?"

"But, but—forgive me—but if ever the time should

come when I should say to you 'Mary Clitheroe, you are everything to me—you satisfy me altogether—my mind, my heart, my spirit find their completion in you,' what then?"

For a few minutes she did not reply : she seemed to be thinking deeply before answering his question.

CHAPTER XXIV

PAULINA MILANO'S LAST LETTER

As Bernard Hawthorne realised afterwards, he had made a strange request. Had Mary Clitheroe been an ordinary woman, she would have answered him scornfully, angrily. He had told her he loved her, while confessing that another woman appealed to his heart in a higher, nobler way. He had asked her to give him hope that she would become his wife, while she knew that if she accepted him she would be always haunted by the thought of this other woman. And then he had asked her to give him a sort of conditional promise. Bernard Hawthorne knew that this was not the true way to win a woman, and that he could not wonder if she rejected him with scorn. And yet could he have acted otherwise? He did love Mary Clitheroe, and he did long to make her his wife; but he realised also that Paulina Milano, even although he knew her only through her letters, satisfied the higher longings of his nature in a way that Mary Clitheroe failed to satisfy him.

"Mr. Hawthorne, do you understand what you are asking?" she said presently.

"Yes, I do, fully. Ninety-nine out of a hundred would be insulted. But that would be because they failed to understand, and because their natures were too poor, too shallow to know what I feel. But you are

not like the ninety-and-nine. Besides, you know how I reverence you, know that I think of you as a pure, noble woman. I know, too, that I am making a strange request, and that under ordinary circumstances I could not expect a civil answer; I know all that, but—but—won't you answer me, Miss Clitheroe?"

"No," she said: "how can I answer?"

"No," he replied humbly, "I suppose you cannot."

"I would never think of becoming the wife of any man unless I was the only woman in the world to him," she said. "I could not have a rival; I should loathe the thought of—of such a thing."

"But if the time should come when——"

"If ever that time comes—but no, I cannot answer that either. You know I cannot."

She did not appear angry, although there was a ring of impatience in her voice.

"Perhaps the thought of being associated with a Methodist minister is distasteful to you?" he said, like one musing.

"I never thought of that."

"I am glad of that."

"I wonder at such a thought coming into your mind. I may have been led to believe other than you believe, but that does not keep me from regarding the work of trying to lead men to a purer life as something noble."

"You did not always speak like this."

She did not answer him; but kept looking away towards Pendle, which appeared more forbidding than usual, owing to the shadow of a cloud which rested upon it.

"I am not fit to be your wife," she said presently. "No, I know I am not," for she saw that he was about

to speak. "It is that other woman who is fitted for you, not I. That—that Paulina Milano. She loves you, or she would not have written to you in such a way. Has she told you that she loves you?"

"Yes."

The word was spoken before he realised what he was doing. He would have given a great deal to have recalled it; but it was impossible.

"And you love her—I know you do. It is not me you care for. I am nothing to you."

"You are everything to me," he cried fervently.

"I tell you I am nothing," she replied. "Even now you are thinking more of her than of me. She has been your hope, your inspiration, not I. I made spiritual things unreal to you; my influence, so you have told me, led you to think and care less for your work. No, it is she you must find; it is she you must marry."

The young man was silent; he knew not what to say.

"Perhaps," she went on, "I can help you to find her. You speak of her as coming to Lynford, as one who has heard you preach. She must have friends here: perhaps I shall be able to find out who they are; perhaps I shall be able to bring you together," and she laughed bitterly.

"You do not love me," cried the young man; "I am nothing to you."

She was silent a few seconds. Then she answered him in a firm, steady voice.

"No, I do not love you," she said; "you are nothing to me."

It seemed as though a cold hand was laid upon his heart. Up to that time he had not utterly despaired of Mary Clitheroe caring for him. It is true he had

thought of it in a vague sort of way ; neither had he ever dared to believe that he was anything to her, and yet her words sounded like a death knell to him. At that moment Paulina Milano was nothing ; all the letters she had written to him were but vague imaginings, while the girl by his side was all the world to him.

“ You mean this ? ” he said hoarsely ; “ you really mean this ? ”

“ Yes, ” she replied, and her voice was hard and unmusical—“ I mean it. ”

He felt his head whirl, and for a moment he thought he should have taken leave of his senses. He mastered his weakness, however, and continued to walk by her side.

“ You must find this Paulina Milano, ” she went on presently, laughing bitterly. “ She is the one who satisfies your higher nature, she it is who appeals to all that is high and noble in you. You must find her and be happy. ”

“ I think I must get back, Miss Clitheroc, ” he said presently. “ I—I must get back. ”

She did not speak.

“ Good afternoon. ”

“ Good-bye. ”

He caught the significance of her words, and he felt that, in speaking to him thus, she had told him that they must be strangers from henceforth. He lifted his hat, and walked away ; while she, without speaking another word, followed the footpath her father and Miss Melford had taken, keeping her eyes all the time on the shadow which rested on Pendle.

Bernard Hawthorne went straight to his lodgings ; arrived there, he locked the door and fell upon his knees. For hours he prayed that God would give



"GOOD AFTERNOON."

"GOOD-BYE."

him strength and fortitude, and that he might be able to bear the burden which had been placed upon him.

When he went to Wesley Chapel that night, no one dreamed of the battle he had been fighting, or of the terrible blight which had fallen upon his life. Never until now did he realise what Mary Clitheroe had become to him; never until that day did he understand fully that life without her would, humanly speaking, be a great darkness. Of course he blamed himself for it all. What woman, he had asked himself again and again, would, even although she cared for him, listen kindly to such a confession as he had made? And yet he could not help telling his whole story; he could not ask Mary Clitheroe to be his wife while he kept from her that which she ought to know.

As I have said, however, no one guessed that he had for hours been passing through the deep waters of disappointment and blighted hopes, as he entered what is called the "Great Vestry" of Wesley Chapel. Rather, many believed that he had experienced some new joy. His eyes burned with a light that no one had ever seen in them before. It was the light of conquest, and of a great faith in God.

Again a great crowd had come to the chapel; and this night, even although no prayer-meeting had been announced, Bernard Hawthorne could not keep it from becoming one of those great occasions which have been the secret of power ever since the Apostles met on the day of Pentecost. Indeed, he did nothing to hinder it. He saw that the hand of God was upon the people, and that we must be led according to His will. Thus it was that we sang the old revival hymns, and we prayed to the great God of battles and of victory, even as our fathers had prayed.

It was old Abel Bowyer who commenced it. As I have said, Bernard Hawthorne had announced that he would be in the vestry to meet any who cared to see him ; but there was such a number present that we had met in the chapel, as on the night previous.

"Let us spend a few minutes in private prayer," the young minister had said, and we all knelt down, realising that in some mysterious way the Spirit of God was working in our midst. We had not been kneeling long, however, when old Abel commenced praying aloud.

"O God Almighty," he said, "thank Yo' for keepin' me fro' the drink to-day. I've 'ad a rare feight, but Tha' 'ast gi'en me the victory. Keep on 'elpin' me, Lord. Keep on 'elpin' me, for I doan't want to be a backslider. The thirst 'ev bin strong on me ; but Thou hast been true to Thy word, and Thou'st kept me fro' slippin'. An', Lord, ther's mony more like me i' Lynford. Do for them what Thou'rt doin' for me! And ther's summat else, Lord. Bless Mester Hawthorne. He looks varry pale, and thin, and I've been fair and troubled about him. He's a rare nice lad, and now we've gotten to know him, we love him, ay, we do an' all. Bless him, Lord, bless him, for it ud break wur hearts if onything wer to 'appen to him."

"Ay, Lord, it would an' all," cried a hundred voices, whereupon old Abel Bowyer broke down entirely, while there was scarcely a dry eye in the chapel.

And after that we could not keep the people from praying aloud ; neither did we desire it, for God's hand was upon us. In truth, wonderful as had been what we had seen the two previous nights, it was more wonderful that Tuesday night. At least I felt it so. On the Sunday, and on the Monday, God had been convincing men of sin, and had been leading them to

Himself ; but on that Tuesday night we felt the meaning of the words, "He hath come to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bound." We all felt that there was the cry of the King in the camp, and that that King was a conqueror.

Oh, it was wonderful, wonderful ! Every prayer was a cry of victory, every hymn was a song of triumph ! What wonder, when we saw men and women, vile, corrupt, drunken, consecrating their lives to God, and confessing with a great joy that old things had passed away and that all things had become new.

On Wednesday, and Thursday, and Friday, it was the same. Still the people thronged the great building ; not to hear some renowned preacher, or to behold some spectacular display, but simply to spend an hour in communion with God, and still the same wonderful manifestations.

Yet, great as was my joy in seeing such a revelation of the Spirit of God, I could not help feeling anxious for Bernard Hawthorne. I fancied that he became thinner and paler each day. When he lifted his hand to his head it looked almost transparent, his cheek-bones became more and more prominent, while his eyes appeared more and more unnaturally large.

"Zeal for the Lord's House is eating him up," I said to myself again and again, and I prayed that he might be kept for us, and for the great work in our midst.

He made no complaint to me, however ; for while he had told me many of the things I have here written down, he had not yet confided in me fully, so that I did not, at that time, know all through which he had been passing.

On the Friday night, however, I felt that I must speak to him.

"Mr. Hawthorne," I said, "you need rest. Can I not prevail upon you to go away for a little holiday? You have passed through much lately, and you look very tired."

"No," he replied, "I do not feel that I can go away."

"A few days up among the lakes would help you wonderfully," I said.

"There is no need," he replied. "I am all right, and even if I were not, there is no place where I should be so well as here amidst my work. Besides, I feel as though God needs me here."

I saw it was no use persuading him, for I recognised that tone in his voice which told me that nothing that I could say would move him. All the same, I could not help beseeching him not to work too hard, and to take all the rest and recreation possible.

When he arrived at his lodgings that night, he again saw a letter in the handwriting which had now become familiar to him, and in spite of himself his heart began to beat faster than was its wont. Much as he loved Mary Clitheroe, the thought of Paulina Milano exercised an influence over him which he could not explain.

He broke the seal eagerly and began to read.

"I think I am writing you my last letter, Bernard," it ran. "That which I have hoped for you has come to pass, that which I have dreamed about you has been realised. You have been through the bitter waters of Marah, but you have reached your Canaan. Although you knew it not, I was in your congregation last Sunday night; I heard the address you gave, and I realised that Power without which all preaching is vain. You were no longer a lecturer on Christian Evidence, no

longer a professor at his desk, nor a popular preacher who had compiled a clever sermon ; you were a prophet sent from God, a preacher of glad tidings, an evangelist of a great Gospel. You forgot yourself in your message, you became nothing that your Master might become all and in all, and thus God crowned all you did.

“I heard what that man Caleb Sutcliffe said, and I heard, too, the confession of that other old man, Abel Bowyer. The former will be your enemy no longer now ; rather he will be your friend, a true, loyal friend, loving you unto death. That man's conversion will, I think, move the whole town.

“I cannot help rejoicing in all this, even although you need my help no longer. For, perhaps I am unduly vain, but I cannot help believing that I had something to do with what I saw. I was used as an instrument in leading you to realise God's power. You have become a flame of fire, Bernard ; you have become the mouthpiece of God.

“I cannot yield to your desire, and see you. No, even although I love you more than life itself, I cannot. It is no use your seeking me ; you will not find me. I myself have shut the door against you and bolted it, even while my heart is yearning for you. For it does yearn for you, and no man was loved as I love you. Even now nothing would give me so much joy as to go to you and tell you all that is in my heart. But I cannot do this—I cannot—I cannot. I have tried to make up my mind to sweep aside all barriers, but I am not able. I wonder if you will ever know why ? I wonder if we shall have to live our lives without you ever seeing me and looking into my heart ? But if we do, what then ? This life is only a fragment, only a promise. Of that I am sure. I have learnt this

truth in ways of which I cannot speak even to you. Good-bye, Bernard. I dare not write you again ; if I did I should have to tell you where you might find me. I should not have the strength to keep from writing the words which I long to write, and that I must not do. I burn with shame even as I think of it, much as I love you."

After reading this letter many times Bernard Hawthorne spent hours in thought. Again he realised that he loved two women—in different ways perhaps, but still he loved them. But his love for both was hopeless. Mary Clitheroe had told him that she did not love him, and that he was nothing to her ; while Paulina Milano had again declared that while she loved him he could never see her. Well, perhaps it was best that it should be so. Perhaps it was God's will that no human love should stand between him and his work, that it was for him to give himself completely to the ministry of the Gospel, without having a thought for any other happiness than could be found in that.

On the following Sunday night he again found many people awaiting him at Wesley Chapel. As on the previous Sunday, he had to go to one of the country places in the morning, and Mr. Jory had preached at Wesley. I was glad of this, for I reflected that this arrangement would save him the necessity of having to prepare two sermons. I got into the vestry early, so that I might assure him that I, with many others, had been praying for him throughout the day ; but I found that he had arrived.

"The chapel is full already," I said.

"Is it?" was all the reply he made ; and then I noticed how weary he looked.

"You are not well, my dear son," I said, laying my hand upon his head.

"I am only tired, Mr. Sutcliffe."

"I've been praying for you, even as hundreds of others have," I said.

"Yes, I'm sure you have. Thank you very much."

"What a change has taken place in a week!" I said, more to myself than to him, for it seemed to me almost impossible that on the previous Sunday I had come to Wesley Chapel only to seek to find something in his sermons whereby I might be able to substantiate the charges I had made against him.

"Yes," he replied; "we know each other better now, don't we?"

"God bless you, my dear, dear son!" I said again and again; "ay, and He will bless you!"

There was no room for me in the body of the chapel, so I went into the rostrum with Bernard Hawthorne, and, old man as I was, I was almost overwhelmed as I saw the sea of faces.

"Lord, help him!" I said in my heart, for I felt what a wondrous work there was to do.

At first he seemed unable to make his voice heard throughout the building, and I saw his knees tremble under him; but he seemed to gain strength presently, and his voice again rang out clear and strong as was its wont.

"The Lord has answered our prayers," I said to myself. "He will give him strength for the task He has set him."

We stood side by side and held the same hymn-book during the singing of the hymn, and as we sang I saw how the hymn was moving the great congregation. It was scarcely any wonder, for never,

surely, was a hymn written so tenderly and so beautifully. I am told that the writer was a Roman Catholic, but whatever his creed, I know his heart was near to Christ as he penned those lines :

“Have you sinned as none else in the world have before you?
Are you blacker than all other creatures in guilt?
Oh, fear not, and doubt not! The mother who bore you
Loves you less than the Saviour whose blood you have
spilt.”

I could not keep the tears from coming to my eyes as we sang, but through my tears I saw Bernard Hawthorne give a start, as though he saw some one whose presence excited him. I looked towards the spot where his eyes were directed, and then I did not wonder at his emotion, for I saw not only Mary Clitheroe, but Hugh Clitheroe, her father, standing by her side.

“God help him!” I cried again.

Again Bernard Hawthorne's address was so simple that a child could understand it. I was almost sorry because of this, especially when I thought of the man who was listening to him. In my foolishness I wished that he would preach one of his carefully thought-out and finished discourses; but this feeling lasted only a few seconds. “‘Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts,’” I said to myself; and surely the Spirit of God was with him that night. For half an hour the congregation listened, while a great hush rested upon us all; but presently the silence was broken by a cry of dismay that came from hundreds of men and women all over the building, for no sooner had Bernard Hawthorne finished his sermon than he fell on the floor of the rostrum like one dead.

CHAPTER XXV

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

To say that there was a consternation in Wesley Chapel would be only to hint at the truth. The sympathy and love of the whole congregation went out to him in a way such as had never been known in the town before. There was not, I believe, a dry eye in the chapel; there was scarcely one in the great crowd who did not offer up an earnest prayer for his welfare. But what was stranger still, the wondrous influence which all felt during the time he was preaching did not pass away. A great solemn hush rested upon us all, as though the angels of God brooded over the building, and breathed the peace of heaven into our souls. Consternation there was, but there was no panic; sorrow, overwhelming sorrow, filled the hearts of hundreds, and yet the very sorrow of the people led them nearer to God, and to trust more fully in Him.

I have often thought about it since. I have imagined what would have happened if there had been a similar crowd in the chapel, say on the day of our Sunday-school sermons, and some great London preacher had fallen down like one dead at the close of his sermon. That there would have been much kindly sympathy there is no doubt, but I am afraid that the impression made by his sermon would all have passed away in the

excitement of the moment. There would have been confusion too, and much useless rushing to and fro.

But nothing of this took place that night. Two men went quickly into the rostrum, and then I helped them to take him into the vestry ; but I heard no sound, save low murmurs of "God bless the lad !" and suppressed sobbing.

By the time we brought him into the vestry, Herbert Stanley had wheeled the vestry sofa into a convenient place, and, without a word, went to fetch Dr. White, who is the cleverest man in our town, and who, although not a member of Wesley, had always shown a great friendship for Mr. Hawthorne.

"Is it failure of the heart?" said Mr. Wilson, one of the largest manufacturers in Lynford, who was a member of Wesley, but who had never taken any interest in the church until within the last few weeks.

"It seems like it," I said. "I hope the doctor will be in his surgery."

"The Lord 'll ne'er let him dee," said Ebenezer Astick. "It wouldn't be like Him."

"I hope and pray that he may live," said Mr. Wilson; "but Mr. Hawthorne has made us feel lately that whatever God does will be right. Oh, but it will be a terrible blow to lose him!" And this proud, self-contained man trembled like one in fear.

"But we shall noan lose him, I tell yo'!" said Moreso almost savagely, and he fell on his knees beside the couch and began to pray.

"Listen," I said: "what is that?"

It was the voice of old Jonathan Giles that we heard. It was low and tremulous, but in the great hush we heard plainly. He had evidently gone to the Com-

munion-table, and was repeating a passage from the Psalms ; for old Jonathan knew the Psalms so well that he had no need of a book.

“ I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

“ My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

“ He will not suffer thy foot to be moved ; He that keepeth thee will not slumber.

“ Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

“ The Lord is thy keeper : the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.

“ The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

“ The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil : He shall preserve thy soul.

“ The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth even for evermore.’ ”

After this he gave out a hymn, and I heard the people singing—

“ Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round ?
On Jesus’ bosom nought but calm is found.

“ Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown ?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.”

Oh, I have heard singing in Wesley Chapel which has made cold shivers pass through me. I have heard the “ Hallelujah Chorus ” there ; I have heard music there which has made me think of the victorious return of the armies of the Lord. I have heard more than two thousand people singing the last verse of “ Abide with me ” in such a way that I have thought I could see “ Heaven’s morning break ” ; but I never

heard anything that moved me like the singing of that hymn.

It was as though the angels of God were singing a lullaby to the tired, sorrowing children of earth. Only the vestry door stood between me and the multitude, and yet it seemed far away. Now the music was low and plaintive, and again it was louder and triumphant. At one time it was a sob, and at another it was a great shout of victory.

"The Lord is still in His Temple," I said to Mr. Wilson; and at that moment Herbert Stanley entered with Dr. White.

A few minutes later Bernard Hawthorne opened his eyes, and then he looked around as if in wonder.

"Have I been ill?" he asked.

"You've been working too hard, my friend," said Dr. White, "and now you are paying the penalty."

"I'm better now," he said, rising to his feet. "Thank you, White, for coming to me like this. How long have I been unconscious?"

"I hardly know. Some time."

"Have the people left the chapel?"

"Not a single person has left, I believe," I said.

"Then I will go in and speak to them."

"No, Hawthorne, you must not go," said Dr. White.

"But they will be anxious about me," he said.

"They can do very well without you."

"Oh yes, I know; but I only want to let them know I am all right. I'll not be a minute. I really must, my friend." And, without more ado, he went into the rostrum again.

The people were just finishing the verse of a hymn as he entered, and when they saw him a deep silence fell upon them.

He only spoke a few words, and his voice was so weak that he could scarcely make himself heard, but they were not without effect. It cheered and comforted the people to see him, and he made us all feel that the great work which was begun was not man's, but God's. Then, after saying that the leaders would remain in the vestry to converse with those who desired their help, he pronounced the Benediction, and went back to his lodgings in the doctor's carriage.

Had the work been of human origin, or if it had been brought about solely by human means, it would have died away when Bernard Hawthorne was laid aside; but it was not. All the time he was ill it went forward, and while all wished him back, not one of us relaxed our faith, or ceased to work because he could not be with us.

Nevertheless, it was an anxious time for us all, and if ever a minister was prayed for, that minister was Bernard Hawthorne; and if ever a people was bereaved, it was the people of Lynford, especially those at Wesley Chapel.

His illness was a mystery to us, too. Again and again I asked Dr. White concerning him, but he only shook his head, like one in doubt. On the night on which he broke down I had little fear for him. I believed that his collapse was simply due to overwork and anxiety, and I hoped that a few weeks' holiday would completely restore his strength. But it was not so. On the Monday morning he was too ill to get up, and by Wednesday we all felt that his case was very critical indeed.

And yet there seemed nothing the matter with him. He suffered no pain, neither did he appear to have any disease, but still he grew paler and paler each day.

Indeed, when, on the Friday following his breakdown, I went into his bedroom, I could not help crying for very pity. His hands seemed transparent, his face and lips were bloodless, while his eyes were unnaturally bright.

"Oh, my dear, dear lad!" I said; "I do love you."

"Ay, Mr. Sutcliffe, you are very kind to me."

"I've been a thorn in your side," I replied. "I am responsible for a good deal of your illness; but I love you now as much as if you were my own son."

"Thank you," he said cheerfully.

Of course I said all I could to comfort him, as did the two or three others who were allowed to see him. Neither did he want for care and attention. There was scarcely a woman in Wesley but came and offered help; indeed, people vied with each other for the privilege of rendering him service. Everything that money could buy in the way of delicacies was brought to him, and what could not be got at Lynford was brought from Manchester. Of this I am sure: if the doctor had said that he needed fish from the river Volga, many in the church would have gone to Russia for them.

We got a famous doctor from Manchester, too, who came to consult with Dr. White, but all seemed in vain. He grew thinner and weaker every day, until the most hopeful of us began to give up.

"I'm afraid the Lord is going to take him from us," I said one night.

"I tell thee noa!" cried Moreso savagely. "Noa, he's noan goin' to dee! The Lord 'll noan be so cruel to us!"

"The Lord's ways are not our ways," said old Jonathan Giles, "He is wiser than we, more loving than we."

"Ay, I knaw," cried Moreso; "but he mun geet better—I tell thee he MUN!"

"But what can we do?" I asked. "Not an hour in the day passes but we are praying for him. Every night the chapel is full of people who pray for him. We've had the best medical advice that can be obtained, and yet he grows weaker and weaker. As for Dr. White, he will give us no hope."

"Our help cometh from the Lord," cried Moreso. "I tell thee he'll geet better. How, aw doan' knaw; which way, I doan' knaw, but he'll geet better."

We were in the vestry, I remember, after one of our nightly prayer-meetings, and, spite of the fact that God's arm had been made bare in the conversion of many sinners, our hearts were very sad. While we were talking, old Abel Bowyer came in.

"I canna stond it! I canna stond it!" he cried.

"What's the matter, Abel?" I said.

"Aw'm noan properly convarted!" he cried. "I've got th' thirst upo' me agean, and I mun have some drink."

"Nay, nay, Abel!"

"But aw mun, I tell yo'. Ef Hawthorne wur gectin' well, aw—aw—think—— But theer, aw've just seed Doctor White, and he ses as aa Mester Hawthorne may go off ony time! Think on it, lads, think on it!"

"But he will noan dee!" cried Moreso.

"He will dee!" cried old Abel. "God's noan 'cerd wur prayers, and I—I—theer, aw canna stond it. I mun ha' a sup o' drink!"

"Nay, Abel; think of the harm thoul't do!"

"Ef God doan't care, why should I care?" he cried.

"I'll geet druffen to-neet—I will," and before any one could stop him he rushed out of the vestry.

I went out after him, but I could not see him. Truth to tell, I went to several public-houses, and inquired after him, but no one had seen him; but there are many public-houses in Lynford, and I could not visit them all. When presently I called at his house, and his housekeeper told me he had not yet come home, my heart became as heavy as lead, for I feared lest in this hour of weakness old Abel had yielded to his besetting sin.

The next day I saw him, but he would say nothing to me concerning what he had done on the previous night, and I could not help believing that what I had feared had come to pass. When I went to chapel in the evening, however, I noticed that he sat in his pew as usual; and this comforted me much, for I saw that his faith was not altogether gone.

"I am sorry to say that our minister is no better," I said to the congregation which had gathered. "The physician from Manchester has been again to-day, and from what I can gather he gives no brighter report. All that human means can accomplish is being done. But let us not lose heart: what is man's extremity is God's opportunity. Let us pray!"

And we did pray—prayed with sobs in our throats and tears in our eyes. Our hearts were almost breaking, for they had gone out in a great love to the young man who, we could not help believing, was near that dark river which divides time from eternity.

Presently, I saw old Abel Bowyer rise from his seat and come up to the front of the chapel, where I was standing.

"I want to say a few words to yo' all," he said.

“Ther's mony of yo' 'ere as 'ave been 'ard drinkers like I have, and you've gotten convarted, but yo' find it varry hard to keep away fro' the drink, just as aw do. And ther's mony more on yo' as is noan convarted yet. Weel, I want to tell yo' summat. Last neet, the devil got owd o' me. Ay, he did for sure. Aw wur just in despair, for the Loard had noan answered wur prayers, and although Mester Hawthorne have been i' bed for a fortnight and more, ce's waiker insteed o' stronger, and worse insteed o' better. And the devil said to me, 'It's oal a pack o' nonsense, Abel; go and enjoy thesen.' I tell yo,' aw wur fair maazed. I comed to th' vestry and aw tow'd Caleb Sutcliffe and owd Jonathan and th' rest on 'em that aw wur baan to geet druffen. And I mained it an' all. Well, aw got over to the 'Spotted Dog,' an' aw wur just goin' in, when aw thought what ud Mester Hawthorne say if he seed me? Ay, an' I wur fair capped, for do yo' knaw I could just picture him lyin' on his bed all weak, and white, an' dccin'. And aw ses to mysen, 'Abel,' aw ses, 'yon lad's dccin',' aw ses, 'dccin' for the likes o' thee: he's worked 'isself to death, tryin' to mak' a man o' yo' and others jist like yo'. Can yo' go and geet druffen,' aw ses, 'when he's dccin' to keep yo' fro' geetin' druffen?' And then aw seemed to see a vision, aw seemed to see Christ upo' th' cross, and summat seemed to say to me, 'Ay, and Christ died for us all.' Ay, lads, it wur so. When aw thowt o' Mester Hawthorne, it made me think o' Christ dccin' for us all. Think on it, lads, the Son o' God dccin' for us all! And after that I didn't want th' drink. It ud a' choked me if I'd tried to drink; and all to-day I've noan wanted it! Weel, I've been thinkin' and prayin' all th'day, and aw've come

to say this: 'Loard, ef it be Thy will, mak' Mester Hawthorne weel and strong agean!'"

"Amen! Amen!" cried a thousand voices.

"But ef he doan't geet weel," went on Abel, "he'll 'ave deed for us. And soa, whenever we think o' Mester Hawthorne, we shall oal be baan to think o' th' Son o' God who deed for us all. And that's what we need, friends. And now I want to pray wi' yo'."

It was very wonderful that this man, who had been a drunkard and a reprobate, should teach us in this way, while his words, rough and uncouth as they were, melted us all to tears.

It was a strange prayer he offered—so strange that I dare not write it all down; but those who heard it never thought of his almost blasphemous expressions, because we knew that his heart was becoming as the heart of a little child.

"Taich us, Lord," he concluded; "tell us what to do. Doctors' physic 'ave failed, and the doctors theirselves seem like two ninnies, but Thou dost love us so that Tha' didst die to make us men. Tell me what to do, Lord, an' aw'll do it!"

At these words he stopped suddenly; and then, without waiting a second, he left the chapel, like a man suddenly inspired with an idea.

The next day he told me why he left in such a hurry, and where he went; and, as his experiences that night form a part of this history, I will write them down here.

No sooner had he uttered the words, "Tell me what to do, Lord, an' aw'll do it," than he remembered a maid that he had courted nearly fifty years before, and who had died before he had been able to wed her.

"Ay," he said to himself, "if aw wur ill in them days,

the sight o' my lass would mak' me better." And in a second it flashed into his mind that Bernard Hawthorne loved Mary Clitheroe, and that if he could see her she would do for him what all the doctors had failed to do.

"That's it," he thought, as he hurried away; "I've seed the lovelight shinin' in his een, I 'ave for sure. I'll go to her, and I'll tell her oo must come and mak' him better."

He walked towards Rough Leigh with all the eagerness and sprightliness of a young man, pondering in his mind the words he ought to say.

"She's ne'er been to see him," he said again and again. "If oo had, everybody would ha' knowed; but oo's noan been near him. Why is it? I've 'cerd, too, as 'ow he's noan been so mich to Rough Leigh lately. That's it. Summat must ha' coom between 'em, and he's dyin' of love as weel as overwark. Ay, but aw'll let her know! Aw'll see ef a lad like Hawthorne is to be flouted by ony lass."

He became almost angry as he trudged along, and he thought of many things to say whereby he might make her humble, and willing to do his bidding.

"Ay, but oo'll go," he said to himself, as presently he drew near her home—"oo'll go. Aw've got it all plain and shapely, and when aw've tow'd 'er what's in my mind, oo'll go straight off."

When he got close to the house, however, his heart almost failed him. He began to doubt whether, after all, Bernard Hawthorne loved Mary Clitheroe, and whether, if he did, he had any right to speak to her. He remembered that he was scarcely the man to speak to a gently-nurtured maid, and began to fear that he would do more harm than good.

He was on the point of turning back, when he thought of the young minister as he had seen him a day or so before, and he called to mind the sad report which Dr. White had given.

"Nay, aw'll go," he cried; "it was the call o' God. The thought was g'iven to me in answer to prayer. Ay, but aw mun behave in a reight way; aw mun remember as 'ow oo's a lady born and bred."

He went up and tremblingly knocked at the door.

"Aw've come to see yar miss," he said to the servant.

"Miss Clitheroe?"

"Yi. Aw've coom fro' Lynford. They ca' me Abel Bowyer."

"It's late. I'm afraid she'll not see you to-night."

"Yi, oo will. Yo' go and tell her: aw'in an owd man, more nor seventy, and aw've walked all th' way fro' Lynford to see her; and tell her, too, as aa my business is varry important."

The servant left him, and returned a few minutes later, saying her mistress would see him.

As the old man said to me, when telling his experiences, "Aw wur fair capped when aw geet inside the door. All that aw'd been thinkin' o' sayin' was gone in a jiffy, and aw wur as mich afeared as if aw wur a lad o' twenty."

The servant showed Abel into the drawing-room, and left the old man waiting amidst surroundings which were altogether strange to him.

Presently he heard a rustling noise. He looked up, and saw Mary Clitheroe coming towards him.

"Ay, but oo is bonnie!" he said to himself; "ay, oo is a gradely lass!"

"I've been told that you wish to see me," she said to him kindly.

Abel looked at her steadily, and then he said : " Ay, I want to see yo' varry petikler, miss."

" Won't you sit down ? " she asked.

" No," he replied ; " aw'll noan sit me daan till aw've told yo' what's in my mind."

CHAPTER XXVI

LOVELIGHT

"YO'VE eerd, I reckon, as aa Mester Hawthorne is varry bad?"

"Yes, I've heard that," and the old man thought he saw her lips tremble.

"Us 'ave 'ad a varry clever physician fro' Manchester to consult wi' Dr. White."

"I'm very glad for that."

"Yi, us 'ave done all us can do. Everybody that has been allowed to see him 'ave been, and mony a hundred have called to know how the lad's gectin' on. Have yo' been?"

"No, I've not been."

"I thowt as much."

"I did not think there was any need. I heard that he had simply broken down with overwork, and that a few weeks' rest would restore him."

"Nowt ut sort."

"What do you mean?"

"Aw main that he's deein'! Aw main that unless summat's done rare 'n soon, he'll go aat like the snuff o' a candle."

The girl paled to the lips.

"Aw secd Dr. White to-neet," went on Abel, "and I axed him to tell me ef theer wur ony hope."

"What did he say?" she asked eagerly.

"He would say nowt to cheer me," replied Abel.
"He said he might go off ony minute."

"That he might die any minute?—die?"

"Ay, dee."

"But—but——"

"I thowt yo' didn' knaw. Ef yo' ded yo'd a' gone and axed 'ow he wur. Ay, he's varry bad, and the worst on it is that the doctors can noan find aat what's the matter wi' him. But aw've faand aat."

"What is it, then?"

"They say," went on Abel, "that he's noa disease, that he's noa pain, but that he's just decin'. They say they canna' rouse him—if they could there might be a chance. Aw know what 'ud rouse him."

"What?" asked the girl.

"Yo' knaw who I am, I reckon?" said Abel, without appearing to heed her question.

"Yes."

"Yo've heard nothin' good abaat me, I s'poase?"

"No, not until a few days ago."

"Noa, I've been a bad 'un. I've wanted to be religious, I've wanted to be convarted, but I ne'er could. Weel, I have bin convarted. I've noan touched th' drink for nearly a month."

"I'm very glad."

"I've come here to-nect in answer to prayer."

"How?"

"Us ev bin prayin' for him ever sin' he wur stricken daan. But to-nect I said, 'Lord, tell me what to do, and aw'll do it.' And no sooner did I say it than I thowt o' a lass I coorted fifty year agone. 'Oo wur called Mary. She deed, did my Mary, and then I went straight to the devil. If oo'd lived I should a' bin

a better man. 'Ay,' I thowt, 'ef I wur bad like Mester Hawthorne, and my Mary had coom to see me, oo'd mak' me better.' And then I minded me o' summat. Can yo' guess what it wur?"

The girl was silent.

"I minded me of a time when I see yo' and Mester Hawthorne aat walkin' together, and I minded me as 'ow I seed the loveleet in his cen. Then I sed to mysen, 'Ef oo'll go and see him, oo'll mak' him better.' That'll be the Loard's way o' makkin' him better. That's why I've come up. I say, lass, yo' -mun forgi'e an owd man, owd eno' to be your granfeyther, but aw reckon ther's loveleet in yar cen too."

Still the girl did not speak ; but she seemed to be thinking deeply.

"How do I know that what you say is true?" she said presently.

"How do yo' know? Ay, lass, aw've bin young mysen ; I know what it is to fair worship the ground on which my lass walked. Yo' would'n' think it on me naa ; but I did. When aw left her, I caanted the hours what 'ud 'ave to pass afore I could see her agean, and when I wur wi' 'er, I wur i' heaven. Ef oo'd lived, oo'd 'ave done what Mester Hawthorne 'ave done sin', oo'd a' led me to Christ. But oo deed, and then it seemed as though ther wer nowt to live for. And then the devil got howd on me, and aw just made a becast o' mysen. Weel, Mester Hawthorne loves yo' just as aw loved my Mary, and aw reckon as aa 'ee thinks yo' don't love him. And soa, weel, he's been warkin' varry 'ard, he's been givin' hissself for us until all his strength have gone, and then thinkin' as 'ow yo' don't care for him—weel, he's decin'."

"But what can I do?"

“Do!”

Abel looked straight into Mary Clitheroe's face, and kept his old fierce-looking eyes on hers for nearly a minute; then he said, “Tha' know'st what to do, lass, better than I can tell thee.”

“You don't know, Abel, you really don't. You never can know—no one ever can.” She seemed to have forgotten that this was the first time she had ever spoken to Abel Bowyer.

“Thou know'st what to do, lass,” he repeated: “aw've noan looked into *my* Mary's een for nowt. It's more nor fifty year gone sin' I seed 'em. They were as bright and as bonnie as thine, lass, and the saame loveleet was in them. Thou know'st what to do.”

“Must I go to-night?” she asked presently.

“Nay, aw reckon not,” said Abel. “It's gott'n laate naa, an' th' doctor says as aa he's very feverish at neet; but early in th' morn, lass, early in th' morn thou mun go.”

She sat looking at the wall opposite her, but seeing nothing. Her face looked troubled, and in her eyes was an expression of haunting fear; but Abel seemed perfectly satisfied.

“Good-neet, miss,” he said, holding out his hand. “May God bless yo'!”

“Good-night, Abel.”

“Yo' are noan vexed wi' me?”

“No.”

“Aw knaw I'm noan fit to talk wi' yo', and aw reckon yo' think me very bad-mannered to come to yo' i' this way; but the Lord have convarted my soul, and—and—ay, but I did love my Mary, I did.”

Tears began to course down the girl's face.

“I'm just agoin' to call to-neet afore I go to bed,” he

said. "Is there ony message yo'd like me to 'liver—not for onybody else to hear?" he added quickly.

She hesitated a minute before replying, then she said, "You know what to do better than I can tell you."

She had repeated his own words, and Abel understood.

I have wondered since whether a better messenger could not have been sent to Mary Clitheroe. What, I have asked myself, could a man like old Abel Bowyer have in common with Mary Clitheroe? But when I remember that he was young once, and that he loved a maid, as truly and as tenderly as Bernard Hawthorne loved Mary Clitheroe, I realise the meaning of those words about one touch of nature making the world akin. For once, at all events, Mary Clitheroe, tenderly reared, and surrounded by every circumstance of refinement and culture, and Abel Bowyer, old and gnarled, were placed on the same level.

"Ay, oo's a bonnie lass, oo is for sure," Abel kept on repeating, as he found his way back to Lynford, "and oo'll mak' him better an' all."

But the old man did not know that Bernard Hawthorne had asked Mary Clitheroe to be his wife, and that she had told him she did not love him. Neither did he know of the strange influence which the unknown maid, Paulina Milano, had had over his life.

"I do hope I shall be able to see him," he said, as he drew near to the house. "Ay, there's a bright light in his room. Aw reckon Dr. White 'll be theer just to mak' a laate visit."

"He's about the saame," replied Mr. Hawthorne's landlady, in answer to Abel's query. "Dr. White is wi' him naa."

"I wonder if aw could see him?"

"Aw reckon not. Tha' know'st the doctor 'll noan allow callers after dark."

"Onyrooid aw'll wait till th' doctor cooms daan," said Abel, and he sat down upon the edge of a chair in the young minister's study.

"Doctor," said the old man a few minutes later, "would yo' 'low me to see the dear lad for a minute?"

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Bowyer."

"Aw reckon yo' will," said the old man.

"What?"

"Weel, it's this way. Yo' doan' know what's the matter wi' 'im—aw do. And aw've come to say a few words wot'll do more good than all th' stuff in yar surgery."

"How do you know what's the matter with him?"

"'Cause I loved a lass more nor fifty year ago," replied Abel.

Dr. White was a wise man. He asked no further question, but after thinking a few seconds, he said, "Yes, Abel, you may go up. Stay, though, I'll call the nurse out of the room while you go to him. But you mustn't stay more than a minute."

"A minute 'll be eno' for me," said Abel.

A little later Abel stood by Bernard Hawthorne's bedside, and as he looked on the young man's pale, wasted cheeks, he could scarcely speak.

"You are good to call and see me, Abel," said Bernard Hawthorne.

"Nay, aw would gladly be wi' you all th' time of aw could do ony good, aw would for sure. 'Ow are yo' to-nect?"

"Oh, just the same, only I'm very tired."

"Yo'll be better to-morrow nect."

"Shall I? Perhaps I shall: the doctor has insisted on my mother and father coming to see me to-morrow night."

"Ay, and thou'lt ha' a visitor as'll do yo' more good nor feyther or mother i' th' morn."

"Who?"

"I'm noan goin' to tell thee her naame, but oo'll mak' thee better."

"But, but——"

"I'm noan goin' to tell thee ony more to-neet, for the doctor said I mun only stay a minute; but tha'll be better i' th' morn."

"But tell me, Abel, tell me what you mean!" There was a new light in his eyes as he spoke—a light of interest, of hope.

"No, nowt more. But aw knaw. The lass I loved, and sud a' wed, wur called Mary. Good-neet, mester, and may God bless yo'!" And then Abel left the room.

"He'll geet better, he'll geet better," said the old man again and again, as he wended his way homewards. "Ay, bless the Lord. The lad's bin the mains o' my convarasion, an' naa I'll be the mains o' geetin' him better," and Abel laughed like a boy.

Early the next morning Abel stationed himself close to Bernard Hawthorne's lodgings, and waited. The people who passed to and fro wondered what he was doing there; but no one asked him any questions. The truth was, that many were afraid that Bernard Hawthorne was worse, and thought he might be waiting for news of his death. No noise was made, because for some distance a thick layer of cocoanut fibre had been placed, and there was not a man or woman who drove conveyances past the house, but slackened

speed, and did everything in their power to make the passing noiseless. Many there were, too, who looked up at the window, and offered a prayer for his recovery.

Presently I came up to make my usual morning call, and seeing Abel, I asked him why he waited.

"I'll tell thee later on," he said, looking at his watch.

So then I went to the house and asked how he was.

"He's asleep," was the reply; "he's had the most restful night since he was taken ill."

"Thank God," I said, as I went away; "I'll call again during the forenoon."

When I told Abel what I had heard, he laughed aloud, but he did not tell me what was in his mind.

A little later the doctor came, and the old man again looked anxiously at his watch.

"I wonder ef oo'll come in a carriage or walk?" he said to himself, and then he almost shouted with joy, for, coming towards him, he saw Mary Clitheroe.

"Ay, oo's kept her word," he said joyfully; "oo's kept her word. Oo mak's me think o' my own Mary."

"Ax to see the doctor, miss," he said: "he's in theer. Aw wur jist agoin' to geet a cab, and go for thee," and then old Abel went towards his factory, singing in his quavering, cracked voice,

"Oh come to the merciful Saviour who calls you,
Oh come to the Lord who forgives and forgets."

As for Mary Clitheroc, she went to the door of Bernard Hawthorne's lodgings, and timidly knocked at the door.

"Is Dr. White here?" she asked of the woman.

"Yi, miss, he's here."

“I should like to see him.”

“Ay, weel, he’s just coming downstairs. Here he is.”

Dr. White held out his hand to her, just as if he expected her, and then they passed into the young man’s study together.

“I want to make a strange request, Dr. White,” she said, a blush mantling her cheeks.

“It’s granted before you ask it,” he replied. “I’ll make arrangements for you to go up at once.”

“But, but”—and she stammered painfully—“has Abel——”

“No, he’s told me nothing, Miss Clitheroe, and I know nothing ; but I want you to see my patient. Be kind and gentle to him, for he’s very weak.”

Then the doctor left her, and went up to the sick man’s room ; but he did not stay long.

“Come,” he said, a few seconds later ; and opening the door, Mary Clitheroe entered, and she was alone with the man who lay at the point of death.

For a moment neither spoke ; I do not think either of them had the power to utter a word, and it was not wonderful that this should be so. To him it was passing strange, in spite of the hope old Abel had inspired within him, that she should come to him. Only a few days before, she had told him she did not love him. She had spoken coldly, almost scornfully ; she had bidden him good-bye, as though she never expected to see him again, and the memory of her words had been like a cold weight on his heart.

She, on the other hand, had never expected to see such a change in him. She had heard him preach on the night he was stricken down ; she had seen him return to the pulpit afterwards, and had heard him tell the people not to be anxious for him. It is true he



"YOU MUSTN'T DIE, MY LOVE."

looked thin, but from the distance he did not appear to be very ill. Now he was wasted to a shadow. His face was as white as wax; the hand which lay on the coverlet looked smaller than that of a woman.

All they did for some moments was to look at each other. To him she seemed more beautiful than ever. Even then he thought the cold, haughty look, which he remembered so well, had given place to an expression of gentleness and tenderness, and there was a light in her eyes which he had never seen before.

"It is good of you to come to see me," he said presently: "thank you so much."

The words, simple as they were, broke her down completely. This proud, self-contained girl could no longer hide the secret of her heart. All the past was forgotten; all the barriers which her own words, which convention, and which the differences between their associations had raised between them, were as nothing.

She knelt down beside the bed and took his poor thin wasted hand in hers.

"Bernard," she said, "I love you—I love you."

"What!" he cried, for he could not believe his ears.

"Surely you knew," she sobbed, "you knew all the time. You didn't believe me when I said what I did? I love you—I love you!"

"Oh, thank God!" he said: "thank God!"

"You mustn't die, my love: you won't, will you?" she sobbed, for her love made her as simple as a little child.

"No, I didn't know; but I know now—now. Before last night I do not think I wanted to live, but—but oh, Mary, say it again."

And she repeated the words again, while tears rolled down her cheeks.

After that neither of them wanted to talk. She knelt by the bedside, holding his hand in hers, and looking at him tenderly. He, with a new light burning in his eyes, repeated the words she had uttered over and over again, as though they were the watchwords which opened the gates of heaven.

He did not say one word about Paulina Milano; he did not even think of her. Mary Clitheroe satisfied him utterly, completely. He lay there, weak as a child, but as contented and as happy as a sleeping babe when lying on its mother's bosom.

"You knew, didn't you?" she asked presently.

"No, I didn't know; but I know now. I know now."

Presently the doctor knocked at the door. "May I come in?" he said.

"In a second," she replied. "Bernard," she went on, "there is something more I have to tell you."

"Yes," he said, with a smile. "What is it?"

"I am afraid it would take too long to tell you now," she said; "but when I come again you'll be stronger, won't you?"

"Yes, I shall be stronger; but come quickly—do not stay long from me."

She opened the door, and the doctor came in. He looked first at his patient, and then at the face of Mary Clitheroe. He, too, knew what it was to love, and so he had no need to ask any questions.

"You are much better than you were yesterday, my friend," he said to Bernard Hawthorne.

"Yes, I shall be quite well soon."

Again the doctor looked at the young girl's face, and noted her tear-dimmed eyes.

"I believe you will," he said. Then he turned to

Mary Clitheroe. "Would you care to call again this evening?" he asked, with a smile.

"Yes," said Bernard Hawthorne, answering for her. "I want her to come again this evening."

"Then she must go now," said Dr. White. "Forgive my rudness, won't you, Miss Clitheroe?"

She spoke no word of reply, but looked towards the door, and then towards the doctor.

"I wish to speak to the nurse," said Dr. White; "I'll be back in a second."

Mary Clitheroe bent over Bernard Hawthorne, and their lips met.

"Until this evening, my love," she said; "and may God bless you."

That was their betrothal kiss; and after it was given Mary Clitheroe left the house, speaking to no one; she was thinking of their meeting a few hours later.

CHAPTER XXVII

“SO LONG THY POWER HATH BLEST ME”

MARY CLITHEROE had not left Bernard Hawthorne's side more than half an hour, before the young man fell into a quiet sleep, from which he did not awake for several hours.

“You'll do now, Hawthorne,” said Dr. White, when he visited him again.

“Yes, I shall do now.”

“Ay, but such as you laugh at all the doctors.”

Over the young man's face came a glad smile. He knew what was in the doctor's mind.

“I've arranged for your new nurse to stay one hour,” went on Dr. White.

“Only one hour?”

“Only an hour. I must still retain some sort of control over you. Of course, I imagine that the visits may lengthen as time goes on.”

“Thank you.”

“This same nurse is a mystery to me,” went on the doctor presently.

“But not to me,” said the young minister.

That night Mary Clitheroe went to see him again. All the town knew she was going, but no one thought of saying an unkind or ungracious word. The people

could not understand, but they felt sure that all would be right.

As may be imagined, the young man awaited her visit eagerly, and although no one told him, he knew when she had entered the house.

“Bernard,” she said, when they were alone together, “I told you this morning I had something to tell you.”

“Yes, I remember.”

“I am awfully afraid to tell you.”

“Why?”

“Because, because—well, I am afraid I shall disappoint you.”

“No, you will not disappoint me.”

She was silent for a few seconds, while he lay and feasted his eyes upon her. On his face was a look of utter satisfaction, utter contentment.

“Bernard?”

“Yes.”

“I am Paulina Milano.”

“Yes, I know.”

“Aren’t you—that is, surprised?”

“No; I knew it.”

Again he saw the lovelight in her eyes, and he was content.

“But I must tell you,” she went on. “I must tell you everything. You remember when you came here, don’t you? and you remember that first day on which we met?”

“Yes, I remember.”

“It seems such a long time ago, and yet—well, but Bernard, some time ago you told me about your childhood’s days. I want to tell you something about mine. You know my father, you know his beliefs, his prejudices, his antagonism to the accepted religious

beliefs. Well, my mother died when I was a baby, so my father and I became everything to each other. Naturally I became influenced by his opinions, until I looked upon religious beliefs as so much superstition. And yet I was not satisfied. All that was best in my nature seemed to be lying dormant. Then you came, and you awoke within me a great hunger, a great longing for faith."

"Yes."

"Not that you satisfied me. You did not. But you made me feel how great a thing faith was, and what a wondrous power Christianity had been in the world. I thought a good deal about it, until I was filled with an unutterable desire to understand it. And yet, when I talked with my father, I continued to regard it all as so much childish superstition. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, presently I seemed to live two lives. When I was alone I was filled with a great yearning to find Christ, and when I was with people, well, I continued to be as I was before. I can't explain it properly—somehow I can find no words that will fully describe it—but I think you can see it all, can't you?"

"I think so."

"I seemed to be living two lives. Alone, I became more and more filled with religious longings and faith; outwardly, I continued as I had been. You see the religious part of my nature was continuously crying out for food, for help, for comfort; but I was afraid to say anything to my father about it.

"It was during one of these lonely hours that I wrote to you. At first I had no thought of sending the letter, and of course I would not have you think

I had written you for any consideration. And yet I could not help writing. Somehow my letters to you became a kind of outlet for my hopes and longings, and before long my other being became a sort of second personality.

“You will guess now how you got the letters. An old nurse of mine lives in London, and I wrote to her, asking her to forward anything I might send addressed to you, and to call at a post-office in the Strand and ask for any letters that might come for me.”

“I see—I see.”

“After I got to know you, I was terribly afraid that you should know who it was that sent them. You see, I—I opened my heart freely to you, I told you things which——”

“Yes, yes, Mary.”

“I think it was that which often made me cold and harsh when I saw you. I don’t know how to tell you about it. You see, my—my better life went out to you, and almost from the first time I saw you I loved you; and yet when I was under my father’s influence, I was angry with myself for thinking about you, and for yielding to my religious nature.

“Presently my longings began to be realised. I felt what a great reality Christianity was. I—I found Christ; I did, Bernard. I cannot explain it, but I did, and yet the Mary Clitheroe you knew still remained. I—I—oh, I cannot find words to tell you all the truth.”

But Bernard Hawthorne had no need of further words. He saw the young girl’s heart.

“I became angry with myself for writing, and yet I could not help myself. I felt that I had done an unwomanly thing, and I was afraid to meet you; and yet you had become so much to me that—that——”

"Yes, yes. God bless you, Mary!"

"I wanted to counteract my sceptical influence over you. When I laughed at your hopes and your beliefs I longed to tell you that I was a believer too. And so I wrote again and again.

"By-and-by, not only the woman who wrote you those letters loved you, but all my life went out to you; and then—don't laugh at me, Bernard, but I began to grow jealous of myself. I was possessed with two feelings. I longed to let you know everything, and yet, on the other hand, I think I would rather have died than have told you the truth. You understand, don't you?"

"Yes, my love, I understand."

"When I heard you were brought up before your denominational authorities, I was so indignant, so angry, that I very nearly told you the truth. That night when we walked home together, after having seen that dying man, I had it in my heart to make a full confession. And yet, do you know, I felt that your President and the rest of them were right. You had not really preached the Christ I had learnt to know and to love. That was why I sent that letter—you know?"

"You know you asked me whether I had ever seen Paulina Milano? What could I say? In reality, she had no existence—and yet—you see my difficulty, don't you? And again, when you asked me to marry you—oh, Bernard, I am afraid I told you what was not true—and yet I don't know. I did love you, and yet I did not. I was confused. I was jealous of myself. This character I had assumed seemed to be a reality, and I was afraid to tell you all. I was afraid you would never be satisfied with me, because, because—well, you know what you told me!"

"I am not tiring you, am I?" she went on.

“No, no. I feel quite strong. Go on, Mary.”

“You see I was afraid, and I was proud, and I would not yield to myself, until last night old Abel Bowyer came up to me, and told me you would die if I did not come to you. And after that nothing mattered. I felt I must tell you everything—everything. Are you sure you—you are not—disappointed—Bernard?”

What need have I to tell what he said? If I have told his story truly, every one will know, even though I do not write another word. When Mary Clitheroe made her confession to him, he saw her as she really was. She was still the stately lady whom the people called the Queen of Lynford Valley; she still fascinated him by her beauty and the charm of her life; but she was more. She was a tender-hearted maiden, modest, and loving, and pure; one who was not only of noble nature, but saintly in life.

And this he realised more and more as they talked together, and as she told him of the change which came over her during the days when he thought her cold and harsh.

“You are sure you are not disappointed in me?” she asked again presently: “sure, Bernard? tell me.”

He put his thin white arm around her neck and drew her face close to his, and kissed her again and again.

“You told me that you knew I was Paulina Milano,” she said presently; “how did you find out?”

“I knew because the moment you told me you loved me there was no Paulina Milano. She simply ceased to exist. You were everything.”

After that there was not a cloud in their sky.

I thought when I wrote the last page that I had

finished my story; but after reading the whole of this history through from beginning to end, I find I have not. Truth to tell, I feel that I could fill many, many pages in describing what took place after the knowledge of Mary Clitheroe's love brought Bernard Hawthorne back to life. I could write for hours on what people said when the story of the young minister's betrothal was made known, and of the joy of the whole town, when after a few weeks we saw the two walking through the fields together. Perhaps I ought also to describe the occasion when Mary Clitheroe was received into church membership at Wesley Chapel, and when she received the Communion from the hands of the young man whose wife she had promised to be. But I must not make the attempt. After all, it would add but little to this history, for those who have read it in the spirit in which I have written it will understand.

Of course many stories were rife concerning what Hugh Clitheroe said when his daughter told him her secret; but I do not believe in them. I have seen Hugh Clitheroe walking arm in arm with Bernard Hawthorne, and although he seldom comes to chapel, I believe he has more faith in his heart than many people imagine.

Of course we made a special appeal to Conference whereby we were enabled to keep Mr. Hawthorne with us. There was no difficulty about this, for after Mr. Richardson had stated the case, every one saw that no one could do the good in Lynford that he was able to do.

You see, the revival which begun on the night when I was converted did not die out as most revivals do. It became a permanent condition of the church.

Years have passed away since then, but the work is still going on, and scarcely a Sunday passes without our hearts being gladdened by the sight of men and women consecrating themselves to God.

As the years have passed we have lost some of our best workers. Old Jonathan Giles was the first to go after Bernard Hawthorne's recovery.

“Ay, Mester Hawthorne,” he said, as the young minister stood by his bedside. “The river is neither dark nor deep. I feel the bottom, and it is good. What I've been telling folk for fifty year, is true to me now. There's not a cloud in my sky.”

“You'll enter into your reward now, Jonathan.”

“Ay, I shall. It's not much I have done—not much. But I've done my best, Mester Hawthorne; ay, I've done my best!”

“Yes, you have.”

“Ay, I have, and I tell you it's beautiful to die in the arms of Jesus.”

And with those words old Jonathan passed away.

Old Abel Bowyer is also gone. He did not stay long after Jonathan. Many of us thought he would have lived for years, he was so hale and strong; but one day he took cold, and then the end came quickly. At one time I should not have been satisfied with his end, but I know better now.

“How is yar lass, Mester Hawthorne?” said the old man when the young minister visited him.

“She's very well, thank you.”

“Yo'll geet wed as soon as yo're in full connexion, I reckon?”

“The day after, if I can.”

“I thowt soa. I wud a' like to a' lived to be at th' weddin', but I shall noan be able.”

"Don't say so."

"Nay, I'm goin' to my lass i'steed. Ay, mester, I've summat to thank yo' for; and yo've summat to thank me for."

"Yes, I have."

"It wur me as fetched oo for yo'. The Lord towed me what yo' wanted, and off I went. Ay, but I seed the loveleet in her ecn the moment I spok'."

"Did you?"

"Ay, I did. I tell yo' I noan loved my Mary for nowt. I shall see her soon! She's i' heaven, is Mary, and at one time I never thowt I sud see her agean: but I sall. The Loard's varry good, mester, varry good. God bless thee, lad!"

His housekeeper says that when his parting came he just opened his eyes and said: "Mary! Ay, lass, but I do love thee!"

I needn't say that Bernard Hawthorne came into full connexion with flying colours. We all knew he would, and when he came back from Conference, with the knowledge that he was to continue with us as our minister, the whole town rejoiced.

Naturally, he was married in Wesley Chapel, and the Rev. Robert Richardson performed the ceremony. Such a wedding was never seen in Wesley Chapel before or since. All the manufacturers who belonged to Wesley closed their mills, and the place was crowded. In fact, the whole town seemed to have a holiday. There were bands of music, and flags, and banners in abundance. All along the streets the people stood, and when the carriage which bore Bernard Hawthorne and his wife passed them, they fairly shouted themselves hoarse.

And what wonder? Through him hundreds of them

had been led from darkness into light, through him homes had been changed, through him the whole town had been uplifted.

We have had people of note married at Lynford. Duncan Rutland was married to Miss Alizon Neville in our town, and the wedding created a great sensation; but it was altogether different from that caused by the marriage of Bernard Hawthorne. We have had titled gentry married at Lynford, too; but the editor of the *Observer* says that never in the memory of the town did a bride and bridegroom have so many presents. Lads and lasses vied with each other in giving him things, and each tried to keep the kind of present he meant to give a secret. As a consequence, Mr. Hawthorne had no less than seven bicycles and three writing-desks given to him. Mrs. Beswick gave them a warming-pan, and Kneepads' wife presented them with a pair of bellows. But what did it matter? Bernard Hawthorne knew all the presents were prompted by hearts full of love; and although at one time these same people doubted him, he knew now that all their hearts had gone out towards him in a great tenderness.

He is with us still, for no Conference would dare to take him away from us. His children are growing up around him now, and he looks far older than when he first came to Lynford. But he grows no older in heart. He is still the same broad-minded, healthful-living man that he was then; only more so, for he received the gift of Power.

I am still senior circuit steward, and shall be, I suppose, until I die. Mary Ellen tells me it would kill me if I were turned out of office, and it may be she is right. Herbert Stanley works with me as my junior steward, and a better or more loyal worker the world

does not hold. What a world of difference a little love makes!

Bernard Hawthorne, who now calls me his dearest friend, is coming in to tea with his wife presently, so I must soon drop my pen. I must confess that it is hard to do so, for in writing this history I have seen, more plainly than ever before, the hand of God in my life; ay, and in the life of the man whom I love more than any other man in the world. The shadows are lengthening around me now, and many things tell me that I shall soon have to follow old Jonathan Giles and Abel Bowyer, and others, who have been called away from this world. But I am not afraid. I know in Whom I have believed. Day by day I understand more the meaning of the lines Bernard Hawthorne loves to quote:

"So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone!"

THE END.