

# **Clay Hanger**

## **Vol.I**

**By**

**Arnold Bennett**

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## **Chapter one His Vocation**

The Last of A School boy.

Edwin Clayhanger stood on the steep sloping, red bricked Canal Bridge, in the valley between Bursley and its suburb Hillport. In that neighbourhood the Knype and Mersey canal formed the western boundary of the industrialism of the Five Towns. To the east rose pitheads, chimneys, and kilns, tier above tier, dim in their own mists. To the west, Hillport Fields, grimed but possessing authentic hedgerows and winding paths, mounted broadly up to the sharp ridge on which stood Hillport Church, a landmark. Beyond the ridge, and partly protected by it from the driving smoke of the Five Towns, lay the fine and ancient Tory borough of Oldcastle, from whose historic Middle School Edwin Clayhanger was now walking home. The fine and ancient Tory borough provided education for the whole of the Five Towns, but the relentless ignorance of its prejudices had blighted the district. A hundred years earlier the canal had only been obtained after a vicious Parliamentary fight between industry and the fine and ancient borough, which saw in canals a menace to its importance as a centre of traffic. Fifty years earlier the fine and ancient borough had succeeded in forcing the greatest railway line in England to run through unpopulated country five miles off instead of through the Five Towns, because it loathed the mere conception of a railway. And now, people are inquiring why the Five Towns, with a railway system special to itself, is characterised by a perhaps excessive provincialism. These interesting details have everything to do with the history of Edwin Clayhanger, as they have everything to do with the history of each of the two hundred thousand souls in the Five Towns. Oldcastle guessed not the vast influences of its sublime stupidity.

It was a breezy Friday in July 1872. The canal, which ran north and south, reflected a blue and white sky. Towards the bridge, from the north came a long narrow canalboat roofed with tarpaulins; and towards the bridge, from the south came a similar craft, sluggishly creeping. The towingpath was a morass of sticky brown mud, for, in the way of rain, that year was breaking the records of a century and a half. Thirty yards in front of each boat an unhappy skeleton of a horse floundered its best in the quagmire. The honest endeavour of one of the animals received a frequent tonic from a barelegged girl of seven who heartily curled a whip about its crooked largejointed legs. The ragged and filthy child danced in the rich mud round the horse's flanks with the simple joy of one

who had been rewarded for good behaviour by the unrestricted use of a whip for the first time.

## **Two.**

Edwin, with his elbows on the stone parapet of the bridge, stared uninterested at the spectacle of the child, the whip, and the skeleton. He was not insensible to the piquancy of the pageant of life, but his mind was preoccupied with grave and heavy matters. He had left school that day, and what his eyes saw as he leaned on the bridge was not a willing beast and a gladdened infant, but the puzzling world and the advance guard of its problems bearing down on him. Slim, gawky, untidy, fair, with his worn blackbraided clothes, and slung over his shoulders in a bursting satchel the last load of his schoolbooks, and on his bright, rough hair a shapeless cap whose lining protruded behind, he had the extraordinary wistful look of innocence and simplicity which marks most boys of sixteen. It seemed rather a shame, it seemed even tragic, that this naïve, simple creature, with his straightforward and friendly eyes so eager to believe appearances, this creature immaculate of worldly experience, must soon be transformed into a man, wary, incredulous, detracting. Older eyes might have wept at the simplicity of those eyes.

This picture of Edwin as a wistful innocent would have made Edwin laugh. He had been seven years at school, and considered himself a hardened sort of brute, free of illusions. And he sometimes thought that he could judge the world better than most neighbouring mortals.

“Hello! The Sunday!” he murmured, without turning his eyes.

Another boy, a little younger and shorter, and clothed in a superior untidiness, had somehow got on to the bridge, and was leaning with his back against the parapet which supported Edwin’s elbows. His eyes were franker and simpler even than the eyes of Edwin, and his lips seemed to be permanently parted in a goodhumoured smile. His name was Charlie Orgreave, but at school he was invariably called “the Sunday” not “Sunday,” but “the Sunday” and nobody could authoritatively explain how he had come by the nickname. Its origin was lost in the prehistoric ages of his childhood. He and Edwin had been chums for several years. They had not sworn fearful oaths of loyalty; they did not constitute a secret society; they had not even pricked forearms and written certain words in blood; for these rites are only performed at Harrow, and possibly at the Oldcastle High School, which imitates Harrow. Their fellowship meant chiefly that they spent a great deal of time together, instinctively and unconsciously enjoying each other’s mere presence, and that in public arguments they always reinforced each other, whatever the degree of intellectual dishonesty thereby necessitated.

“I’ll bet you mine gets to the bridge first,” said the Sunday. With an ingenious movement of the shoulders he arranged himself so that the parapet should bear the weight of his satchel.

Edwin Clayhanger slowly turned round, and perceived that the object which the Sunday had appropriated as “his” was the other canalboat, advancing from the south.

“Horse or boat?” asked Edwin.

“Boat’s nose, of course,” said the Sunday.

“Well,” said Edwin, having surveyed the unconscious competitors, and counting on the aid of the whipping child, “I don’t mind laying you five.”

“That be damned for a tale!” protested the Sunday. “We said we’d never bet less than ten you know that.”

“Yes, but” Edwin hesitatingly drawled.

“But what?”

“All right. Ten,” Edwin agreed. “But it’s not fair. You’ve got a rare start on me.”

“Rats!” said the Sunday, with finality. In the pronunciation of this word the difference between his accent and Edwin’s came out clear. The Sunday’s accent was less local; there was a hint of a short “e” sound in the “a,” and a briskness about the consonants, that Edwin could never have compassed. The Sunday’s accent was as carelessly superior as his clothes. Evidently the Sunday had some one at home who had not learnt the art of speech in the Five Towns.

### **Three.**

He began to outline a scheme, in which perpendicular expectionation figured, for accurately deciding the winner, and a complicated argument might have ensued about this, had it not soon become apparent that Edwin’s boat was going to be handsomely beaten, despite the joyous efforts of the little child. The horse that would die but would not give up, was only saved from total subsidence at every step by his indomitable if aged spirit. Edwin handed over the ten marbles even before the other boat had arrived at the bridge.

“Here,” he said. “And you may as well have these, too,” adding five more to the ten, all he possessed. They were not the paltry marble of today, plaything of infants, but the majestic “rinker,” black with white spots, the king of marbles in an era when whole populations practised the game. Edwin looked at them half regretfully as they lay in the Sunday’s hands. They seemed prodigious wealth in those hands, and he felt somewhat as a condemned man might feel who bequeaths his jewels on the scaffold. Then there was a rattle, and a tumour grew out larger on the Sunday’s thigh.

The winning boat, long preceded by its horse, crawled under the bridge and passed northwards to the sea, laden with crates of earthenware. And then the loser, with the little girl’s father and mother and her brothers and sisters, and her kitchen, drawingroom, and bedroom, and her smoking chimney and her memories and all that was hers, in the stern of it, slid beneath the boys’ downturned faces while the whip cracked away beyond the bridge. They could see, between the whitened tarpaulins, that the deep belly of the craft was filled with clay.

“Where does that there clay come from?” asked Edwin. For not merely was he honestly struck by a sudden new curiosity, but it was meet for him to behave like a man now, and to ask manly questions.

“Runcorn,” said the Sunday scornfully. “Can’t you see it painted all over the boat?”

“Why do they bring clay all the way from Runcorn?”

“They don’t bring it from Runcorn. They bring it from Cornwall. It comes round by seasee?” He laughed.

“Who told you?” Edwin roughly demanded.

“Anybody knows that!” said the Sunday grandly, but always maintaining his gay smile.

“Seems devilish funny to me,” Edwin murmured, after reflection, “that they should bring clay all that roundabout way just to make crocks of it here. Why should they choose just this place to make crocks in? I always understood”

“Oh! Come on!” the Sunday cut him short. “It’s blessed well one o’clock and after!”

#### **Four.**

They climbed the long bank from the canal up to the Manor Farm, at which high point their roads diverged, one path leading direct to Bleakridge where Orgreave lived, and the other zigzagging down through neglected pasturage into Bursley proper. Usually they parted here without a word, taking pride in such Spartan taciturnity, and they would doubtless have done the same this morning also, though it were fiftyfold their last walk together as two schoolboys. But an incident intervened.

“Hold on!” cried the Sunday.

To the south of them, a mile and a half off, in the wreathing mist of the Cauldon Bar Ironworks, there was a yellow gleam that even the capricious sunlight could not kill, and then two rivers of fire sprang from the gleam and ran in a thousand delicate and lovely hues down the side of a mountain of refuse. They were emptying a few tons of molten slag at the Cauldon Bar Ironworks. The two rivers hung slowly dying in the mists of smoke. They reddened and faded, and you thought they had vanished, and you could see them yet, and then they escaped the baffled eye, unless a cloud aided them for a moment against the sun; and their ephemeral but enchanting beauty had expired for ever.

“Now!” said Edwin sharply.

“One minute ten seconds,” said the Sunday, who had snatched out his watch, an inestimable contrivance with a centreseconds hand. “By Jove! That was a good ’un.”

A moment later two smaller boys, both laden with satchels, appeared over the brow from the canal.

“Let’s wait a jiff,” said the Sunday to Edwin, and as the smaller boys showed no hurry he bawled out to them across the intervening cinderwaste: “Run!” They ran. They were his younger brothers, Johnnie and Jimmie. “Take this and hook it!” he commanded, passing the strap of his satchel over his head as they came up. In fatalistic silence they obeyed the smiling tyrant.

“What are you going to do?” Edwin asked.

“I’m coming down your way a bit.”

“But I thought you said you were peckish.”

“I shall eat three slices of beef instead of my usual brace,” said the Sunday carelessly.

Edwin was touched. And the Sunday was touched, because he knew he had touched Edwin. After all, this was a solemn occasion. But neither would overtly admit that its solemnity had affected him. Hence, first one and then the other began to skim stones with vicious force over the surface of the largest of the three ponds that gave interest to the Manor Farm. When they had thus proved to themselves that the day differed in no manner from any other breakingup day, they went forward.

On their left were two pitheads whose double wheels revolved rapidly in smooth silence, and the puffing enginehouse and all the trucks and gear of a large ironstone mine. On their right was the astonishing farm, with barns and ricks and cornfields complete, seemingly quite unaware of its forlorn oddness in that foul arena of manufacture. In front, on a little hill in the vast valley, was spread out the Indianred architecture of Bursleytall chimneys and rounded ovens, schools, the new scarlet market, the grey tower of the old church, the high spire of the evangelical church, the low spire of the church of genuflexions, and the crimson chapels, and rows of little red houses with amber chimneypots, and the gold angel of the blackened Town Hall topping the whole. The sedate reddish browns and reds of the composition, all netted in flowing scarves of smoke, harmonised exquisitely with the chill blues of the chequered sky. Beauty was achieved, and none saw it.

The boys descended without a word through the brickstrewn pastures, where a horse or two cropped the short grass. At the railway bridge, which carried a branch mineral line over the path, they exchanged a brief volley of words with the workinglads who always played pitchand toss there in the dinnerhour; and the Sunday added to the collection of shawds and stones lodged on the under ledges of the low iron girders. A strange boy, he had sworn to put ten thousand stones on those ledges before he died, or perish in the attempt. Hence Edwin sometimes called him “Old Perishintheattempt.” A little farther on the open gates of a manufactory disclosed six men playing the noble game of rinkers on a smooth patch of ground near the weighing machine. These six men were Messieurs Ford, Carter, and Udall, the three partners owning the works, and three of their employees. They were celebrated marbleplayers, and the boys stayed to watch them as, bending with one knee almost touching the earth, they shot the rinkers from their stubby thumbs with a canonlike force and precision that no boy could ever hope to equal. “By gum!” mumbled Edwin involuntarily, when an impossible shot was accomplished; and the bearded shooter, pleased by this tribute from youth, twisted his white apron into a still narrower ring round his waist. Yet Edwin was not thinking about the game. He was thinking about a battle that lay before him, and how he would be weakened in the fight by the fact that in the last school examination, Charlie Orgreave, younger than himself by a year, had ousted him from the second place in the school. The report in his pocket said: “Position in class next term: third;” whereas he had been

second since the beginning of the year. There would of course be no “next term” for him, but the report remained. A youth who has come to grips with that powerful enemy, his father, cannot afford to be handicapped by even such a trifle as a report entirely irrelevant to the struggle.

Suddenly Charlie Orgreave gave a curt nod, and departed, in nonchalant goodhumour, doubtless considering that to accompany his chum any farther would be to be guilty of girlish sentimentality. And Edwin nodded with equal curtness and made off slowly into the maze of Bursley. The thought in his heart was: “I’m on my own, now. I’ve got to face it now, by myself.” And he felt that not merely his father, but the leagued universe, was against him.



## **Chapter Two.**

### **The Flame.**

The various agencies which society has placed at the disposal of a parent had been at work on Edwin in one way or another for at least a decade, in order to equip him for just this very day when he should step into the world. The moment must therefore be regarded as dramatic, the first crucial moment of an experiment long and elaborately prepared. Knowledge was admittedly the armour and the weapon of one about to try conclusions with the world, and many people for many years had been engaged in providing Edwin with knowledge. He had received, in fact, “a good education” or even, as some said, “a thoroughly sound education;” assuredly as complete an equipment of knowledge as could be obtained in the county, for the curriculum of the Oldcastle High School was less in accord with common sense than that of the Middle School.

He knew, however, nothing of natural history, and in particular of himself, of the mechanism of the body and mind, through which his soul had to express and fulfil itself. Not one word of information about either physiology or psychology had ever been breathed to him, nor had it ever occurred to any one around him that such information was needful. And as no one had tried to explain to him the mysteries which he carried about with him inside that fair skin of his, so no one had tried to explain to him the mysteries by which he was hemmed in, either mystically through religion, or rationally through philosophy. Never in chapel or at Sunday school had a difficulty been genuinely faced. And as for philosophy, he had not the slightest conception of what it meant. He imagined that a philosopher was one who made the best of a bad job, and he had never heard the word used in any other sense. He had great potential intellectual curiosity, but nobody had thought to stimulate it by even casually telling him that the finest minds of humanity had been trying to systematise the mysteries for quite twentyfive centuries. Of physical science he had been taught nothing, save a grotesque perversion to the effect that gravity was a force which drew things towards the centre of the earth. In the matter of chemistry it had been practically demonstrated to him scores of times, so that he should never forget this grand basic truth, that sodium and potassium may be relied upon to fizz flamingly about on a surface of water. Of geology he was perfectly ignorant, though he lived in a district whose whole livelihood depended on the scientific use of geological knowledge, and though the existence of Oldcastle itself was due to a freak of the earth’s crust which geologists call a “fault.”

## Two.

Geography had been one of his strong points. He was aware of the rivers of Asia in their order, and of the principal products of Uruguay; and he could name the capitals of nearly all the United States. But he had never been instructed for five minutes in the geography of his native county, of which he knew neither the boundaries nor the rivers nor the terrene characteristics. He could have drawn a map of the Orinoco, but he could not have found the Trent in a day's march; he did not even know where his drinkingwater came from. That geographical considerations are the cause of all history had never been hinted to him, nor that history bears immediately upon modern life and bore on his own life. For him history hung unsupported and unsupporting in the air. In the course of his school career he had several times approached the nineteenth century, but it seemed to him that for administrative reasons he was always being dragged back again to the Middle Ages. Once his form had "got" as far as the infancy of his own father, and concerning this period he had learnt that "great dissatisfaction prevailed among the labouring classes, who were led to believe by mischievous demagogues," etcetera. But the next term he was recoiling round Henry the Eighth, who "was a skilful warrior and politician," but "unfortunate in his domestic relations;" and so to Elizabeth, than whom "few sovereigns have been so much belied, but her character comes out unscathed after the closest examination." History indeed resolved itself into a series of more or less sanguinary events arbitrarily grouped under the names of persons who had to be identified with the assistance of numbers. Neither of the development of national life, nor of the clash of nations, did he really know anything that was not inessential and anecdotic. He could not remember the clauses of Magna Charta, but he knew eternally that it was signed at a place amusingly called Runnymede. And the one fact engraved on his memory about the battle of Waterloo was that it was fought on a Sunday.

And as he had acquired absolutely nothing about political economy or about logic, and was therefore at the mercy of the first agreeable sophistry that might take his fancy by storm, his unfitness to commence the business of being a citizen almost reached perfection.

### **Three.**

For his personal enjoyment of the earth and air and sun and stars, and of society and solitude, no preparation had been made, or dreamt of. The sentiment of nature had never been encouraged in him, or even mentioned. He knew not how to look at a landscape nor at a sky. Of plants and trees he was as exquisitely ignorant as of astronomy. It had not occurred to him to wonder why the days are longer in summer, and he vaguely supposed that the cold of winter was due to an increased distance of the earth from the sun. Still, he had learnt that Saturn had a ring, and sometimes he unconsciously looked for it in the firmament, as for a teatray.

Of art, and the arts, he had been taught nothing. He had never seen a great picture or statue, nor heard great orchestral or solo music; and he had no idea that architecture was an art and emotional, though it moved him in a very peculiar fashion. Of the art of English literature, or of any other literature, he had likewise been taught nothing. But he knew the meaning of a few obsolete words in a few plays of Shakespeare. He had not learnt how to express himself orally in any language, but through hard drilling he was so genuinely erudite in accident and syntax that he could parse and analyse with superb assurance the most magnificent sentences of Milton, Virgil, and Racine. This skill, together with an equal skill in utilising the elementary properties of numbers and geometrical figures, was the most brilliant achievement of his long apprenticeship.

And now his education was finished. It had cost his father twentyeight shillings a term, or four guineas a year, and no trouble. In younger days his father had spent more money and far more personal attention on the upbringing of a dog. His father had enjoyed success with dogs through treating them as individuals. But it had not happened to him, nor to anybody in authority, to treat Edwin as an individual. Nevertheless it must not be assumed that Edwin's father was a callous and conscienceless brute, and Edwin a martyr of neglect. Old Clayhanger was, on the contrary, an average upright and respectable parent who had given his son a thoroughly sound education, and Edwin had had the good fortune to receive that thoroughly sound education, as a preliminary to entering the world.

### **Four.**

He was very far from realising the imperfections of his equipment for the grand entry; but still he was not without uneasiness. In particular the conversation incident to the canalboat wager was disturbing him. It amazed him, as he reflected, that he should have remained, to such an advanced age, in a state of ignorance concerning the origin of the clay from which the crocks of his native district were manufactured. That the Sunday should have been able to inform him did not cause him any shame, for he guessed from

the peculiar eager tone of voice in which the facts had been delivered, that the Sunday was merely retailing some knowledge recently acquired by chance. He knew all the Sunday's tones of voice; and he also was well aware that the Sunday's brain was not on the whole better stored than his own. Further, the Sunday was satisfied with his bit of accidental knowledge. Edwin was not. Edwin wanted to know why, if the clay for making earthenware was not got in the Five Towns, the Five Towns had become the great seat of the manufacture. Why were not pots made in the South, where the clay came from? He could not think of any answer to this enigma, nor of any means of arriving by himself at an answer. The feeling was that he ought to have been able to arrive at the answer as at the answer to an equation.

He did not definitely blame his education; he did not think clearly about the thing at all. But, as a woman with a vague discomfort dimly fears cancer, so he dimly feared that there might be something fundamentally unsound in this sound education of his. And he had remorse for all the shirking that he had been guilty of during all his years at school. He shook his head solemnly at the immense and nearly universal shirking that continually went on. He could only acquit three or four boys, among the hundreds he had known, of the shameful sin. And all that he could say in favour of himself was that there were many worse than Edwin Clayhanger. Not merely the boys, but the masters, were sinners. Only two masters could he unreservedly respect as having acted conscientiously up to their pretensions, and one of these was an unpleasant brute. All the cleverness, the ingenuities, the fakes, the insincerities, the incapacities, the vanities, and the dishonesties of the rest stood revealed to him, and he judged them by the mere essential force of character alone. A schoolmaster might as well attempt to deceive God as a boy who is watching him every day with the inhuman eye of youth.

"All this must end now!" he said to himself, meaning all that could be included in the word "shirk."

### **Five.**

He was splendidly serious. He was as splendidly serious as a reformer. By a single urgent act of thought he would have made himself a man, and changed imperfection into perfection. He desired and there was real passion in his desire to do his best, to exhaust himself in doing his best, in living according to his conscience. He did not know of what he was capable, nor what he could achieve. Achievement was not the matter of his desire; but endeavour, honest and terrific endeavour. He admitted to himself his shortcomings, and he did not underestimate the difficulties that lay before him; but he said, thinking of his father: "Surely he'll see I mean business! Surely he's bound to give in when he sees how much in earnest I am!" He was convinced, almost, that passionate faith could move mountainous fathers.

“I’ll show ’em!” he muttered.

And he meant that he would show the world... He was honouring the world; he was paying the finest homage to it. In that head of his a flame burnt that was like an altarfire, a miraculous and beautiful phenomenon, than which nothing is more miraculous nor more beautiful over the whole earth. Whence had it suddenly sprung, that flame? After years of muddy inefficiency, of contentedness with the secondrate and the dishonest, that flame astoundingly bursts forth, from a hidden, unheeded spark that none had ever thought to blow upon. It bursts forth out of a damp jungle of careless habits and negligence that could not possibly have fed it. There is little to encourage it. The very architecture of the streets shows that environment has done naught for it: ragged brickwork, walls finished anyhow with saggars and slag; narrow uneven alleys leading to higgledypiggledy workshops and kilns; cottages transformed into factories and factories into cottages, clumsily, hastily, because nothing matters so long as “it will do;” everywhere something forced to fulfil, badly, the function of something else; in brief, the reign of the slovenly makeshift, shameless, filthy, and picturesque. Edwin himself seemed no tabernacle for that singular flame. He was not merely untidy and dirty at his age such defects might have excited in a sane observer uneasiness by their absence; but his gestures and his gait were untidy. He did not mind how he walked. All his sprawling limbs were saying: “What does it matter, so long as we get there?” The angle of the slatternly bag across his shoulders was an insult to the flame. And yet the flame burned with serene and terrible pureness.

It was surprising that no one saw it passing along the mean, black, smokepalled streets that huddle about Saint Luke’s Church. Sundry experienced and fat old women were standing or sitting at their cottage doors, one or two smoking cutties. But even they, who in childbed and at gravesides had been at the very core of life for long years, they, who saw more than most, could only see a fresh lad passing along, with fair hair and a clear complexion, and gawky knees and elbows, a fierce, rapt expression on his straightforward, goodnatured face. Some knew that it was “Clayhanger’s lad,” a nicebehaved young gentleman, and the spitten image of his poor mother. They all knew what a lad is the feel of his young skin under his “duds,” the capricious freedom of his movements, his sudden madresses and shoutings and tendernesses, and the exceeding power of his unconscious wistful charm. They could divine all that in a glance. But they could not see the mysterious and holy flame of the desire for selfperfection blazing within that tousled head. And if Edwin had suspected that anybody could indeed perceive it, he would have whipped it out for shame, though the repudiation had meant everlasting death. Such is youth in the Five Towns, if not elsewhere.

## **Chapter Three.**

### **Entry into the World.**

Edwin came steeply out of the cinderstrewn back streets by Woodisun Bank (hill) into Duck Square, nearly at the junction of Trafalgar Road and Wedgwood Street. A few yards down Woodisun Bank, cocks and hens were scurrying, with necks horizontal, from all quarters, and were even flying, to the call of a little old woman who threw grain from the top step of her porch. On the level of the narrow pavement stood an immense constable, clad in white trousers, with a gun under his arm for the killing of mad dogs; he was talking to the woman, and their two heads were exactly at the same height. On a pair of small double gates near the old woman's cottage were painted the words, "Steam Printing Works. No admittance except on business." And from as far as Duck Square could be heard the puffpuff which proved the use of steam in this works to which idlers and mere pleasureseekers were forbidden access.

Duck Square was one of the oldest, if the least imposing, of all the public places in Bursley. It had no traffic across it, being only a sloping rectangle, like a vacant lot, with Trafalgar Road and Wedgwood Street for its exterior sides, and no outlet on its inner sides. The buildings on those inner sides were low and humble and, as it were, withdrawn from the world, the chief of them being the ancient Duck Inn, where the handbell ringers used to meet. But Duck Square looked out upon the very birth of Trafalgar Road, that wide, straight thoroughfare, whose name dates it, which had been invented, in the lifetime of a few then living, to unite Bursley with Hanbridge. It also looked out upon the birth of several old packhorse roads which Trafalgar Road had supplanted. One of these was Woodisun Bank, that wound slowly up hill and down dale, apparently always choosing the longest and hardest route, to Hanbridge; and another was Aboukir Street, formerly known as Warm Lane, that reached Hanbridge in a manner equally difficult and unhurried. At the junction of Trafalgar Road and Aboukir Street stood the Dragon Hotel, once the great postinghouse of the town, from which all roads started. Duck Square had watched coaches and waggons stop at and start from the Dragon Hotel for hundreds of years. It had seen the Dragon rebuilt in brick and stone, with fine bay windows on each storey, in early Georgian times, and it had seen even the new structure become old and assume the dignity of age. Duck Square could remember strings of packmules driven by women, 'trapesing' in zigzags down Woodisun Bank and Warm Lane, and occasionally falling, with awful smashes of the crockery they carried, in the deep, slippery, scarce passable mire of the first slants into the valley. Duck Square had witnessed the slow declension of these roads into mere streets, and slum streets at that, and the death of all mules, and the disappearance of all coaches and all neighing and prancing and whipcracking romance; while Trafalgar Road, simply because it was straight and broad and easily graded, flourished with tollbars and a couple of pairhorsed

trams that ran on lines. And many people were proud of those cushioned trams; but perhaps they had never known that coachdrivers used to tell each other about the state of the turn at the bottom of Warm Lane (since absurdly renamed in honour of an Egyptian battle), and that Woodisun Bank (now unnoticed save by doubtful characters, policemen, and schoolboys) was once regularly 'taken' by four horses at a canter. The history of human manners is crunched and embedded in the very macadam of that part of the borough, and the burgesses unheedingly tread it down every day and talk gloomily about the ugly smoky prose of industrial manufacture. And yet the Dragon Hotel, safely surviving all revolutions by the mighty virtue and attraction of ale, stands before them to remind them of the interestingness of existence.

## **Two.**

At the southern corner of Trafalgar Road and Wedgwood Street, with Duck Square facing it, the Dragon Hotel and Warm Lane to its right, and Woodisun Bank creeping inconspicuously down to its left, stood a threestorey building consisting of house and shop, the frontage being in Wedgwood Street. Over the doublewindowed shop was a discreet signboard in gilt letters, "D. Clayhanger, Printer and Stationer," but above the first floor was a later and much larger sign, with the single word, "Steamprinting." All the brickwork of the façade was painted yellow, and had obviously been painted yellow many times; the woodwork of the plateglass windows was a very dark green approaching black. The upper windows were stumpy, almost square, some dirty and some clean and curtained, with prominent sills and architraves. The line of the projecting spouting at the base of the roof was slightly curved through subsidence; at either end of the roofridge rose twin chimneys each with three salmoncoloured chimneypots. The gigantic word 'Steamprinting' could be seen from the windows of the Dragon, from the porch of the big Wesleyan chapel higher up the slope, from the Conservative Club and the playground at the top of the slope; and as for Duck Square itself, it could see little else. The lefthand shop window was alluringly set out with the lighter apparatus of writing and reading, and showed incidentally several rosy pictures of ideal English maidens; that to the right was grim and heavy with ledgers, inks, and variegated specimens of steamprinting.

## **Three.**

In the wedgeshaped doorway between the windows stood two men, one middleaged and one old, one bareheaded and the other with a beaver hat, engaged in conversation. They were talking easily, pleasantly, with free gestures, the younger looking down in deferential smiles at the elder, and the elder looking up benignantly at the younger. You could see that, having begun with a business matter, they had quitted it for a topic of the hour. But business none the less went forward, the shop functioned, the presses behind

the shop were being driven by steam as advertised; a customer emerged, and was curtly nodded at by the proprietor as he squeezed past; a girl with a small flannel apron over a large cotton apron went timidly into the shop. The trickling, calm commerce of a provincial town was proceeding, bit being added to bit and item to item, until at the week's end a series of apparent nothings had swollen into the livelihood of near half a score of people. And nobody perceived how interesting it was, this interchange of activities, this ebb and flow of money, this sluggish rise and fall of reputations and fortunes, stretching out of one century into another and towards a third! Printing had been done at that corner, though not by steam, since the time of the French Revolution. Bibles and illustrated herbals had been laboriously produced by hand at that corner, and hawked on the backs of asses all over the county; and nobody heard romance in the puffing of the hidden steamengine multiplying catalogues and billheads on the selfsame spot at the rate of hundreds an hour.

The younger and bigger of the two men chatting in the doorway was Darius Clayhanger, Edwin's father, and the first printer to introduce steam into Bursley. His age was then under fortyfive, but he looked more. He was dressed in black, with an ample shirtfront and a narrow black cravat tied in an angular bow; the wristbands were almost tight on the wrists, and, owing to the shortness of the alpaca coatsleeves, they were very visible even as Darius Clayhanger stood, with his two hands deep in the horizontal pockets of his 'fullfall' trousers. They were not precisely dirty, these wristbands, nor was the shirtfront, nor the turneddown pointed collar, but all the linen looked as though it would scarcely be wearable the next day. Clayhanger's linen invariably looked like that, not dirty and not clean; and further, he appeared to wear eternally the same suit, ever on the point of being done for and never being done for. The trousers always had marked transverse creases; the waistcoat always showed shiningly the outline of every article in the pockets thereof, and it always had a few stains down the front (and never more than a few), and the lowest button insecure. The coat, faintly discoloured round the collar and fretted at the cuffs, fitted him easily and loosely like the character of an old crony; it was as if it had grown up with him, and had expanded with his girth. His head was a little bald on the top, but there was still a great deal of mixed brown and greyish hair at the back and the sides, and the moustache, hanging straight down with an effect recalling the mouth of a seal, was plenteous and defianta moustache of character, contradicting the full placidity of the badly shaved chin. Darius Clayhanger had a habit, when reflective or fierce, of biting with his upper teeth as far down as he could on the lower lip; this trick added emphasis to the moustache. He stood, his feet in their clumsy boots planted firmly about sixteen inches apart, his elbows sticking out, and his head bent sideways, listening to and answering his companion with mien now eager, now roguish, now distinctly respectful.



The older man, Mr Shushions, was apparently very old. He was one of those men of whom one says in conclusion that they are very old. He seemed to be so fully occupied all the time in conducting those physical operations which we perform without thinking of them, that each in his case became a feat. He balanced himself on his legs with conscious craft; he directed carefully his shaking and gnarled hand to his beard in order to stroke it. When he collected his thoughts into a sentence and uttered it in his weak, quavering voice, he did something wonderful; he listened closely, as though to an imperfectly acquired foreign language; and when he was not otherwise employed, he gave attention to the serious business of breathing. He wore a black silk stock, in a style even more antique than his remarkable headgear, and his trousers were very tight. He had survived into another and a more fortunate age than his own.

#### **Four.**

Edwin, his heavy bag on his shoulders, found the doorway blocked by these two. He hesitated with a diffident charming smile, feeling, as he often did in front of his father, that he ought to apologise for his existence, and yet fiercely calling himself an ass for such a sentiment. Darius Clayhanger nodded at him carelessly, but not without a surprising benevolence, over his shoulder.

“This is him,” said Darius briefly.

Edwin was startled to catch a note of pride in his father’s voice.

Little Mr Shushions turned slowly and looked up at Edwin’s face (for he was shorter even than the boy), and gradually acquainted himself with the fact that Edwin was the son of his father.

“Is this thy son, Darius?” he asked; and his ancient eyes were shining.

Edwin had scarcely ever heard any one address his father by his Christian name.

Darius nodded; and then, seeing the old man’s hand creeping out towards him, Edwin pulled off his cap and took the hand, and was struck by the hot smooth brittleness of the skin and the earnest tremulous weakness of the caressing grasp. Edwin had never seen Mr Shushions before.

“Nay, nay, my boy,” trembled the old man, “don’t bare thy head to me ... not to me! I’m one o’ th’ ould sort. Eh, I’m rare glad to see thee!” He kept Edwin’s hand, and stared long at him, with his withered face transfigured by solemn emotion. Slowly he turned

towards Darius, and pulled himself together. "Thou'st begotten a fine lad, Darius! ... a fine, honest lad!"

"Soso!" said Darius gruffly, whom Edwin was amazed to see in a state of agitation similar to that of Mr Shushions.

The men gazed at each other; Edwin looked at the ground and other unresponsive objects.

"Edwin," his father said abruptly, "run and ask Big James for th' proof of that Primitive Methodist hymnpaper; there's a good lad."

And Edwin hastened through the shadowy shop as if loosed from a captivity, and in passing threw his satchel down on a bale of goods.

### **Five.**

He comprehended nothing of the encounter; neither as to the origin of the old man's status in his father's esteem, nor as to the cause of his father's strange emotion. He regarded the old man impatiently as an aged simpleton, probably over pious, certainly connected with the Primitive Methodists. His father had said 'There's a good lad' almost cajolingly. And this was odd; for, though nobody could be more persuasively agreeable than his father when he chose, the occasions when he cared to exert his charm, especially over his children, were infrequent, and getting more so. Edwin also saw something symbolically ominous in his being sent direct to the printing office. It was no affair of his to go to the printing office. He particularly did not want to go to the printing office.

However, he met Big James, with flowing beard and flowing apron, crossing the yard. Big James was brushing crumbs from the beard.

"Father wants the proof of some hymnpaper I don't know what," he said. "I was just coming"

"So was I, Mister Edwin," replied Big James in his magnificent voice, and with his curious humorous smile. And he held up a sheet of paper in his immense hand, and strode majestically on towards the shop.

Here was another detail that struck the boy. Always Big James had addressed him as 'Master Edwin' or 'Master Clayhanger.' Now it was 'Mister.' He had left school. Big James was, of course, aware of that, and Big James had enough finesse and enough

gentle malice to change instantly the 'master' to 'mister.' Edwin was scarcely sure if Big James was not laughing at him. He could not help thinking that Big James had begun so promptly to call him 'mister' because the foreman compositor expected that the son of the house would at once begin to take a share in the business. He could not help thinking that his father must have so informed Big James. And all this vaguely disturbed Edwin, and reminded him of his impending battle and of the complex forces marshalled against him. And his hand, wandering in his pockets, touched that unfortunate report which stated that he had lost one place during the term.

## Six.

He lingered in the bluepaved yard, across which cloudshadows swept continually, and then Big James came back and spectacularly ascended the flight of wooden steps to the printing office, and disappeared. Edwin knew that he must return to the shop to remove his bag, for his father would assuredly reprimand him if he found it where it had been untidily left. He sidled, just like an animal, to the doorway, and then slipped up to the counter, behind the great mahogany case of 'artists' materials.' His father and the old man were within the shop now, and Edwin overheard that they were discussing a topic that had lately been rife in religious circles, namely, Sir Henry Thompson's ingenious device for scientifically testing the efficacy of prayer, known as the 'Prayer Gauge.' The scheme was to take certain hospitals and to pray for the patients in particular wards, leaving other wards unprayed for, and then to tabulate and issue the results.

Mr Shushions profoundly resented the employment of such a dodge; the mere idea of it shocked him, as being blasphemous; and Darius Clayhanger deferentially and feelingly agreed with him, though Edwin had at least once heard his father refer to the topic with the amused and noncommittal impartiality of a man who only went to chapel when he specially felt like going.

"I've preached in the pulpits o' our Connexion," said Mr Shushions with solemn, quavering emotion, "for over fifty year, as you know. But I'd ne'er gi' out another text if Primitives had ought to do wi' such a flouting o' th' Almighty. Nay, I'd go down to my grave dumb afore God!"

He had already been upset by news of a movement that was on foot for deferring Anniversary Sermons from August to September, so that people should be more free to go away for a holiday, and collections be more fruitful. What! Put off God's ordinance, to enable chapelmembers to go 'awakesing'! Monstrous! Yet September was tried, in spite of Mr Shushions, and when even September would not work satisfactorily, God's ordinance was shifted boldly to May, in order to catch people, and their pockets well before the demoralisation incident to holidays.

Edwin thought that his father and the mysterious old man would talk for ever, and timorously he exposed himself to obtain possession of his satchel, hoping to escape unseen. But Mr Shushions saw him, and called him, and took his hand again.

“Eh, my boy,” he said, feebly shaking the hand, “I do pray as you’ll grow up to be worthy o’ your father. That’s all as I pray for.”

Edwin had never considered his father as an exemplar. He was a just and unmerciful judge of his father, against whom he had a thousand grievances. And in his heart he resentfully despised Mr Shushions, and decided again that he was a simpleton, and not a very tactful one. But then he saw a round yellow tear slowly form in the red rim of the old man’s eye and run crookedly down that wrinkled cheek. And his impatient scorn expired. The mere sight of him, Edwin, had brought the old man to weeping! And the tear was so genuine, so convincing, so majestic that it induced in Edwin a blank humility. He was astounded, mystified; but he was also humbled. He himself was never told, and he never learnt, the explanation of that epic tear.

## **Chapter Four.**

### **The ChildMan.**

The origin of the tear on the aged cheek of Mr Shushions went back about forty years, and was embedded in the infancy of Darius Clayhanger.

The earliest memory of Darius Clayhanger had to do with the capital letters Q W and S. Even as the first steamprinter in Bursley, even as the father of a son who had received a thoroughly sound middleclass education, he never noticed a capital Q W or S without recalling the Widow Susan's school, where he had wonderingly learnt the significance of those complicated characters. The school consisted of the entire ground floor of her cottage, namely, one room, of which the far corner was occupied by a tiny winding staircase that led to the ancient widow's bedchamber. The furniture comprised a few low forms for scholars, a table, and a chair; and there were some brilliant coloured prints on the whitewashed walls. At this school Darius acquired a knowledge of the alphabet, and from the alphabet passed to ReadingMadeEasy, and then to the Bible. He made such progress that the widow soon singled him out for honour. He was allowed the high and envied privilege of raking the ashes from under the fireplace and carrying them to the ashpit, which ashpit was vast and lofty, being the joint production of many cottages. To reach the summit of the ashpit, and thence to fling backwards down its steep sides all assailants who challenged your supremacy, was a precious joy. The battles of the ashpit, however, were not battles of giants, as no children had leisure for ashcarrying after the age of seven. A still greater honour accorded to Darius was permission to sit, during lessons, on the topmost visible step of the winding stair. The widow Susan, having taught Darius to read brilliantly, taught him to knit, and he would knit stockings for his father, mother, and sister.

At the age of seven, his education being complete, he was summoned into the world. It is true that he could neither write nor deal with the multiplication table; but there were always night-schools which studious adults of seven and upwards might attend if business permitted. Further, there was the Sunday school, which Darius had joyously frequented since the age of three, and which he had no intention of leaving. As he grew older the Sunday school became more and more enchanting to him. Sunday morning was the morning which he lived for during six days; it was the morning when his hair was brushed and combed, and perfumed with a delightful oil, whose particular fragrance he remembered throughout his life. At Sunday school he was petted and caressed. His success at Sunday school was shining. He passed over the heads of bigger boys, and at the age of six he was in a Bible class.

Upon hearing that Darius was going out into the world, the superintendent of the Sunday school, a grave whiskered young man of perhaps thirty, led him one morning out of the body of the Primitive Methodist Chapel which served as schoolroom before and after chapel service, up into the deserted gallery of the chapel, and there seated him on a stair, and knelt on the stair below him, and caressed his head, and called him a good boy, and presented him with an old battered Bible. This volume was the most valuable thing that Darius had ever possessed. He ran all the way home with it, half suffocated by his triumph. Sunday school prizes had not then been invented. The young superintendent of the Sunday school was Mr Shushions.

## **Two.**

The man Darius was first taken to work by his mother. It was the winter of 1835, January. They passed through the marketplace of the town of Turnhill where they lived. Turnhill lies a couple of miles north of Bursley. One side of the marketplace was barricaded with stacks of coal, and the other with loaves of a species of rye and straw bread. This coal and these loaves were being served out by meticulous and haughty officials, all invisibly, braided with redtape, to a crowd of shivering, moaning, and weeping wretches, men, women and children the basis of the population of Turnhill. Although they, were all endeavouring to make a noise they, made scarcely any noise, from mere lack of strength. Nothing could be heard, under the implacable bright sky, but faint ghosts of sound, as though people were sighing and crying from within the vacuum of a huge glass bell.

The next morning, at halfpast five, Darius began his career in earnest. He was 'mouldrunner' to a 'muffinmaker,' a muffin being not a comestible but a small plate, fashioned by its maker on a mould. The business of Darius was to run as hard as he could with the mould, and a newly, created plate adhering thereto, into the dryingstove. This 'stove' was a room lined with shelves, and having a redhot stove and stovepipe in the middle. As no man of seven could reach the upper shelves, a pair of steps was provided for Darius, and up these he had to scamper. Each mould with its plate had to be leaned carefully against the wall and if the soft clay of a newborn plate was damaged, Darius was knocked down. The atmosphere outside the stove was chill, but owing to the heat of the stove, Darius was obliged to work half naked. His sweat ran down his cheeks, and down his chest, and down his back, making white channels, and lastly it soaked his hair.

When there were no moulds to be sprinted into the dryingstove, and no moulds to be carried less rapidly out, Darius was engaged in claywedging. That is to say, he took a piece of raw clay weighing more than himself, cut it in two with a wire, raised one half above his head and crashed it down with all his force upon the other half, and he

repeated the process until the clay was thoroughly soft and even in texture. At a later period it was discovered that hydraulic machinery could perform this operation more easily and more effectually than the brawny arms of a man of seven. At eight o'clock in the evening Darius was told that he had done enough for that day, and that he must arrive at five sharp the next morning to light the fire, before his master the muffinmaker began to work. When he inquired how he was to light the fire his master kicked him jovially on the thigh and suggested that he should ask another mouldrunner. His master was not a bad man at heart, it was said, but on Tuesdays, after Sunday, and Saint Monday, masters were apt to be capricious.

Darius reached home at a quarter to nine, having eaten nothing but bread all day. Somehow he had lapsed into the child again. His mother took him on her knee, and wrapped her sacking apron round his ragged clothes, and cried over him and cried into his supper of porridge, and undressed him and put him to bed. But he could not sleep easily because he was afraid of being late the next morning.

### **Three.**

And the next morning wandering about the yards of the manufactory in a storm of icy sleet a little before five o'clock, he learnt from a more experienced companion that nobody would provide him with kindling for his fire, that on the contrary everybody who happened to be on the place at that hour would unite to prevent him from getting kindling, and that he must steal it or expect to be thrashed before six o'clock. Near them a vast kiln of ware in process of firing showed a white flaming glow at each of its mouths in the black winter darkness. Darius's mentor crept up to the archway of the great hovel which protected the kiln, and pointed like a conspirator to the figure of the guardian fireman dozing near his monster. The boy had the handleless remains of an old spade, and with it he crept into the hovel, dangerously abstracted fire from one of the scorching mouths, and fled therewith, and the fireman never stirred. Then Darius, to whom the mentor kindly lent his spade, attempted to do the same, but being inexpert woke the fireman, who held him spellbound by his roaring voice and then flung him like a sack of potatoes bodily into the slush of the yard, and the spade after him. Happily the mentor, whose stove was now alight, lent fire to Darius, so that Darius's stove too was cheerfully burning when his master came. And Darius was too excited to feel fatigue.

By six o'clock on Saturday night Darius had earned a shilling for his week's work. But he could only possess himself of the shilling by going to a magnificent publichouse with his master the muffinmaker. This was the first time that he had ever been inside a publichouse. The place was crowded with men, women, and children eating the most lovely, hot rolls and drinking beer, in an atmosphere exquisitely warm. And behind a high counter a stout jolly man was counting piles and piles and piles of silver. Darius's

master, in company, with other boys' masters, gave this stout man four sovereigns to change, and it was an hour before he changed them. Meanwhile Darius was instructed that he must eat a roll like the rest, together with cheese. Never had he tasted anything so luscious. He had a match with his mentor, as to which of them could spin out his roll the longer, honestly chewing all the time; and he won. Some one gave him half a glass of beer. At halfpast seven he received his shilling which consisted of a sixpennypiece and four pennies; and leaving the gay, publichouse, pushed his way through a crowd of tearful women with babies in their arms at the doors, and went home. And such was the attraction of the Sunday school that he was there the next morning, with scented hair, two minutes before the opening.

#### **Four.**

In about a year Darius's increasing knowledge of the world enabled him to rise in it. He became a handlemaker in another manufactory, and also he went about with the pride of one who could form the letters of the alphabet with a pen. In his new work he had to put a bit of clay between two moulds, and then force the top mould on to the bottom one by means of his stomach which it was necessary to press downwards and at the same time to wriggle with a peculiar movement. The workman to whom he was assigned, his new 'master,' attached these handles, with strange rapid skill, to beermugs. For Darius the labour was much lighter than that of mouldrunning and claywedging, and the pay was somewhat higher. But there were minor disadvantages. He descended by twenty steps to his toil, and worked in a long cellar which never received any air except by way of the steps and a passage, and never any daylight at all. Its sole illumination was a stove used for drying. The 'throwers' and the 'turners' rooms were also subterranean dungeons. When in full activity all these stinking cellars were full of men, boys, and young women, working close together in a hot twilight. Certain boys were trained contrabandists of beer, and beer came as steadily into the dungeons as though it had been laid on by a main pipe. It was not honourable even on the part of a young woman, to refuse beer, particularly when the beer happened to arrive in the late afternoon. On such occasions young men and women would often entirely omit to go home of a night, and seasoned men of the world aged eight, on descending into the dungeons early the next morning, would have a full view of pandemonium, and they would witness during the day salutary scenes of remorse, and proofs of the existence of a profound belief in the homeopathic properties of beer.

But perhaps the worst drawback of Darius's new position was the long and irregular hours, due partly to the influences of Saint Monday and of the scenes above indicated but not described, and partly to the fact that the employes were on piecework and entirely unhampered by grandmotherly legislation. The result was that six days' work was generally done in four. And as the younger the workman the earlier he had to start



in the morning, Darius saw scarcely enough of his bed. It was not of course to be expected that a selfsupporting man of the world should rigorously confine himself to an eighthour day or even a twelvehour day, but Darius's day would sometimes stretch to eighteen and nineteen hours: which on hygienic grounds could not be unreservedly defended.

### **Five.**

One Tuesday evening his master, after three days of debauch, ordered him to be at work at three o'clock the next morning. He quickly and even eagerly agreed, for he was already intimate with his master's ropelash. He reached home at ten o'clock on an autumn night, and went to bed and to sleep. He woke up with a start, in the dark. There was no watch or clock in the house, from which nearly all the furniture had gradually vanished, but he knew it must be already after three o'clock; and he sprang up and rushed out. Of course he had not undressed; his life was too strenuous for mere formalities. The stars shone above him as he ran along, wondering whether after all, though late, he could by unprecedented effort make the ordained number of handles before his master tumbled into the cellar at five o'clock.

When he had run a mile he met some sewage men on their rounds, who in reply, to his question told him that the hour was half after midnight. He dared not risk a return to home and bed, for within two and a half hours he must be at work. He wandered aimlessly over the surface of the earth until he came to a tileworks, more or less unenclosed, whose primitive ovens showed a glare. He ventured within, and in spite of himself sat down on the ground near one of those heavenly ovens. And then he wanted to get up again, for he could feel the strong breath of his enemy, sleep. But he could not get up. In a state of terror he yielded himself to his enemy. Shameful cowardice on the part of a man now aged nine! God, however, is merciful, and sent to him an angel in the guise of a nightwatchman, who kicked him into wakefulness and off the place. He ran on limping, beneath the stellar systems, and reached his work at halfpast four o'clock.

Although he had never felt so exhausted in his long life, he set to work with fury. Useless! When his master arrived he had scarcely got through the preliminaries. He dully faced his master in the narrow stifling cellar, lit by candles impaled on nails and already peopled by the dim figures of boys, girls, and a few men. His master was of taciturn habit and merely told him to kneel down. He knelt. Two bigger boys turned hastily from their work to snatch a glimpse of the affair. The master moved to the back of the cellar and took from a box a piece of rope an inch thick and clogged with clay. At the same moment a companion offered him, in silence, a tin with a slim neck, out of which he drank deep; it contained a pint of porter owing on loan from the previous day. When the master came in due course with the rope to do justice upon the sluggard he

found the lad fallen forward and breathing heavily and regularly. Darius had gone to sleep. He was awakened with some violence, but the public opinion of the dungeon saved him from a torn shirt and a bloody back.

This was Darius's last day on a potbank. The next morning he and his went in procession to the Bastille, as the place was called. His father, having been too prominent and too independent in a strike, had been blacklisted by every manufacturer in the district; and Darius, though nine, could not keep the family.

## **Chapter Five.**

### **Mr Shushions's Tear Explained.**

The Bastille was on the top of a hill about a couple of miles long, and the journey thither was much lengthened by the desire of the family to avoid the main road. They were all intensely ashamed; Darius was ashamed to tears, and did not know why; even his little sister wept and had to be carried, not because she was shoeless and had had nothing to eat, but because she was going to the Ba-ba-bastille; she had no notion what the place was. It proved to be the largest building that Darius had ever seen; and indeed it was the largest in the district; they stood against its steep sides like flies against a kennel. Then there was rattling of keybunches, and the rasping voices of sour officials, who did not inquire if they would like a meal after their stroll. And they were put into a cellar and stripped and washed and dressed in other people's clothes, and then separated, amid tears. And Darius was pitched into a large crowd of other boys, all clothed like himself. He now understood the reason for shame; it was because he could have no distinctive clothes of his own, because he had somehow lost his identity. All the boys had a sullen, furtive glance, and when they spoke it was in whispers.

In the low room where the boys were assembled there fell a silence, and Darius heard some one whisper that the celebrated boy who had run away and been caught would be flogged before supper. Down the long room ran a long table. Some one brought in three candles in tin candlesticks and set them near the end of this table. Then somebody else brought in a pickled birchrod, dripping with the salt water from which it had been taken, and also a small square table. Then came some officials, and a clergyman, and then, surpassing the rest in majesty, the governor of the Bastille, a terrible man. The governor made a speech about the crime of running away from the Bastille, and when he had spoken for a fair time, the clergyman talked in the same sense; and then a captured tiger, dressed like a boy, with darting fierce eyes, was dragged in by two men, and laid face down on the square table, and four boys were commanded to step forward and hold tightly the four members of this tiger. And, his clothes having previously been removed as far as his waist, his breeches were next pulled down his legs. Then the rod was raised and it descended swishing, and blood began to flow; but far more startling than the blood were the shrill screams of the tiger; they were so loud and deafening that the spectators could safely converse under their shelter. The boys in charge of the victim had to cling hard and grind their teeth in the effort to keep him prone. As the blows succeeded each other, Darius became more and more ashamed. The physical spectacle did not sicken nor horrify him, for he was a man of wide experience; but he had never before seen flogging by lawful authority. Flogging in the workshop was different, a private if sanguinary affair between free human beings. This ritualistic and coldblooded torture was infinitely more appalling in its humiliation. The screaming grew feebler,

then ceased; then the blows ceased, and the unconscious infant (cured of being a tiger) was carried away leaving a trail of red drops along the floor.

## **Two.**

After this, supper was prepared on the long table, and the clergyman called down upon it the blessing of God, and enjoined the boys to be thankful, and departed in company with the governor. Darius, who had not tasted all day, could not eat. The flogging had not nauseated him, but the bread and the skilly revolted his pampered tastes. Never had he, with all his experience, seen nor smelt anything so foully disgusting. When supper was completed, a minor official interceded with the Almighty in various ways for ten minutes, and at last the boys were marched upstairs to bed. They all slept in one room. The night also could be set down in words, but must not be, lest the settingdown should be disastrous...

Darius knew that he was ruined; he knew that he was a workhouse boy for evermore, and that the bright freedom of sixteen hours a day in a cellar was lost to him for evermore. He was now a prisoner, branded, hopeless. He would never be able to withstand the influences that had closed around him and upon him. He supposed that he should become desperate, become a tiger, and then...

## **Three.**

But the following afternoon he was forcibly reclothed in his own beautiful and beloved rags, and was pushed out of the Bastille, and there he saw his pale father and his mother, and his little sister, and another man. And his mother was on her knees in the cold autumn sunshine, and hysterically clasping the knees of the man, and weeping; and the man was trying to raise her, and the man was weeping too. Darius wept. The man was Mr Shushions. Somehow, in a way that Darius comprehended not, Mr Shushions had saved them. Mr Shushions, in a beaver tallhat and with an apron rolled round his waist under his coat, escorted them back to their house, into which some fresh furniture had been brought. And Darius knew that a situation was waiting for his father. And further, Mr Shushions, by his immense mysterious power, found a superb situation for Darius himself as a printer's devil. All this because Mr Shushions, as superintendent of a Sunday school, was emotionally interested in the queer, harsh boy who had there picked up the art of writing so quickly.

Such was the origin of the tear that ran down Mr Shushions's cheek when he beheld Edwin, wellnourished, welldressed and intelligent, the son of Darius the successful steamprinter. Mr Shushions's tear was the tear of the creator looking upon his creation and marvelling at it. Mr Shushions loved Darius as only the benefactor can love the

benefited. He had been out of the district for over thirty years, and, having returned there to die, the wonder of what he had accomplished by merely saving a lad from the certain perdition of a prolonged stay in the workhouse, struck him blindingly in the face and dazzled him.

Darius had never spoken to a soul of his night in the Bastille. All his infancy was his own fearful secret. His life, seen whole, had been a miracle. But none knew that except himself and Mr Shushions. Assuredly Edwin never even faintly suspected it. To Edwin Mr Shushions was nothing but a feeble and tedious old man.

## **Chapter Six.**

### **In the House.**

To return to Edwin. On that Friday afternoon of the breakingup he was, in the local phrase, at a loose end. That is, he had no task, no programme, and no definite desires. Not knowing, when he started out in the morning, whether school would formally end before or after the dinnerhour, he had taken his dinner with him, as usual, and had eaten it at Oldcastle. Thus, though the family dinner had not begun when he reached home, he had no share in it, partly because he was not hungry, and partly because he was shy about having left school. The fact that he had left school affected him as he was affected by the wearing of a new suit for the first time, or by the cutting of his hair after a prolonged neglect of the barber. It inspired him with a wish to avoid his kind, and especially his sisters, Maggie and Clara. Clara might make some facetious remark. Edwin could never forget the Red Indian glee with which Clara had danced round him when for the first time and quite unprepared for the exquisite shock she had seen him in long trousers. There was also his father. He wanted to have a plain talk with his father; he knew that he would not be at peace until he had had that talk; and yet in spite of himself he had carefully kept out of his father's way during all the afternoon, save for a moment when, strolling with affected nonchalance up to Darius's private desk in the shop, he had dropped thereon his school report, and strolled off again.

Towards six o'clock he was in his bedroom, an attic with a floor very much more spacious than its ceiling, and a window that commanded the slope of Trafalgar Road towards Bleakridge. It had been his room, his castle, his sanctuary, for at least ten years, since before his mother's death of cancer. He did not know that he loved it, with all its inconveniences and makeshifts; but he did love it, and he was jealous for it; no one should lay a hand on it to rearrange what he had once arranged. His sisters knew this; the middleaged servant knew it; even his father, with a curt laugh, would humorously acquiesce in the theory of the sacredness of Edwin's bedroom. As for Edwin, he saw nothing extraordinary in his attitude concerning his bedroom; and he could not understand, and he somewhat resented, that the household should perceive anything comic in it. He never went near his sisters' bedroom, never wished to go near it, never thought about it.

### **Two.**

Now he sat idly on the patchwork counterpane of his bed and gazed at the sky. He was feeling a little happier, a little less unsettled, for his stomach was empty and his mind had begun to fix itself with pleasure on the images of hot toast and jam. He 'wanted his tea:' the manner in which he glanced at his old silver watch proved that. He wished only

that before six o'clock struck he could settle upon the necessary changes in his bedroom. A beautiful schooner, which for over a year, with all sails spread, had awaited the breeze in a low dark corner to the right of the window, would assuredly have to be dismissed to the small, empty attic. Once that schooner had thrilled him; the slight rake of its masts and the knotted reality of its rigging had thrilled him; and to navigate it had promised the most delicious sensations conceivable. Now, one moment it was a toy as silly as a doll, and the next moment it thrilled him once more, and he could believe again its promises of bliss and then he knew that it was for ever a vain toy, and he was sad, and his sadness was pleasure. He had already stacked most of his schoolbooks in the other attic. He would need a table and a lamp; he knew not for what precise purpose; but a table and a lamp were necessary to the continuance of his self-respect. The only question was, Should he remodel his bedroom, or should he demand the other attic, and plant his flag in it and rule over it in addition to his bedroom? Had he the initiative and the energy to carry out such an enterprise? He was not able to make up his mind. And, moreover, he could not decide anything until after that plain talk with his father.

His sister Clara's high voice sounded outside, on the landing, or halfway up the attic stairs.

"Edwin! Edwin!"

"What's up?" he called in answer, rising with a nervous start. The door of the room was unlatched.

"You're mighty mysterious in your bedroom," said Clara's voice behind the door.

"Come in! Come in! Why don't you come in?" he replied, with good-natured impatience. But somehow he could not speak in a natural tone. The mere fact that he had left school that day and that the world awaited him, and that everybody in the house knew this, rendered him self-conscious.

### **Three.**

Clara entered, with a curious sidelong movement, half-winning and half-serpentine. She was aged fourteen, a very fair and very slight girl, with a thin face and thin lips, and extraordinarily slender hands; in general appearance fragile. She wore a semicircular comb on the crown of her head, and her abundant hair hung over her shoulders in two tight pig-tails. Edwin considered that Clara was harsh and capricious; he had much fault to find with her; but nevertheless the sight of her usually affected him pleasantly (of course without his knowing it), and he never for long sat definitely in adverse judgement upon her. Her gestures had a charm for him which he felt but did not realise. And this

charm was similar to his own charm. But nothing would have so surprised him as to learn that he himself had any charm at all. He would have laughed, and been ashamed to hear that his gestures and the play of his features had an ingratiating, awkward, and wistful grace; he would have tried to cure that.

“Father wants you,” said Clara, her hand on the handle of the thin attic door hung with odd garments.

Edwin’s heart fell instantly, and all the agreeable images of tea vanished from his mind. His father must have read the school report and perceived that Edwin had been beaten by Charlie Orgreave, a boy younger than himself!

“Did he send you up for me?” Edwin asked.

“No,” said Clara, frowning. “But I heard him calling out for you all over. So Maggie told me to run up. Not that I expect any thanks.” She put her head forward a little.

The episode, and Clara’s tone, showed clearly the nature and force of the paternal authority in the house. It was an authority with the gift of getting its commands anticipated.

“All right! I’m coming,” said Edwin superiorly.

“I know what you want,” Clara said teasingly as she turned towards the passage.

“What do I want?”

“You want the empty attic all to yourself, and a fine state it would be in in a month, my word!”

“How do you know I want the empty attic?” Edwin repelled the onslaught; but he was considerably taken aback. It was a mystery to him how those girls, and Clara in particular, got wind of his ideas before he had even formulated them definitely to himself. It was also a mystery to him how they could be so tremendously interested in matters which did not concern them.

“You never mind!” Clara gibed, with a smile that was malicious, but charmingly malicious. “I know!”

She had merely seen him staring into the empty attic, and from that brief spectacle she had by divination constructed all his plans.



#### **Four.**

The Clayhanger sittingroom, which served as both diningroom and drawingroom, according to the more primitive practices of those days, was over one half of the shop, and looked on Duck Square. Owing to its northern aspect it scarcely ever saw the sun. The furniture followed the universal fashion of horsehair, mahogany, and wool embroidery. There was a piano, with a high backfretted wood over silk pleated in rays from the centre; a bookcase whose lower part was a cupboard; a sofa; and a large leather easychair which did not match the rest of the room. This easychair had its back to the window and its front legs a little towards the fireplace, so that Mr Clayhanger could read his newspaper with facility in daytime. At night the light fell a little awkwardly from the central chandelier, and Mr Clayhanger, if he happened to be reading, would continually shift his chair an inch or two to left or right, backwards or forwards, and would also continually glance up at the chandelier, as if accusing it of not doing its best. A common sight in the sittingroom was Mr Clayhanger balanced on a chair, the table having been pushed away, screwing the newest burner into the chandelier. When he was seated in his easychair the piano could not be played, because there was not sufficient space for the stool between the piano and his chair; nor could the fire be made up without disturbing him, because the japanned coalbox was on the same side of the hearthrug as the chair. Thus, when the fire languished and Mr Clayhanger neglected it, the children had either to ask permission to step over his legs, or suggest that he should attend to the fire himself. Occasionally, when he was in one of his gay moods, he would humorously impede the efforts of the firemaker with his feet, and if the firemaker was Clara or Edwin, the child would tickle him, which brought him to his senses and forced him to shout: "None o' that! None o' that!"

The position of Mr Clayhanger's easychair a detail apparently trifling was in reality a strongly influencing factor in the family life, for it meant that the father's presence obsessed the room. And it could not be altered, for it depended on the window; the window was too small to be quite efficient. When the children reflected upon the history of their childhood they saw one important aspect of it as a long series of detached hours spent in the sittingroom, in a state of desire to do something that could not be done without disturbing father, and in a state of indecision whether or not to disturb him. If by chance, as sometimes occurred, he chose to sit on the sofa, which was unobtrusive in the corner away from the window, between the fireplace and the door, the room was instantly changed into something larger, freer, and less inconvenient.

## Five.

As the hour was approaching six, Edwin, on the way downstairs, looked in at the sittingroom for his father; but Darius was not there.

“Where’s father?” he demanded.

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” said Maggie, at the sewingmachine. Maggie was aged twenty; dark, rather stout, with an expression at once benevolent and worried. She rarely seemed to belong to the same generation as her brother and sister. She consorted on equal terms with married women, and talked seriously of the same things as they did. Mr Clayhanger treated her somewhat differently from the other two. Yet, though he would often bid them accept her authority, he would now and then impair that authority by roughly ‘dressing her down’ at the mealtable. She was a capable girl; she had much less firmness, and much more goodnature, than she seemed to have. She could not assert herself adequately. She ‘managed’ very well; indeed she had ‘done wonders’ in filling the place of the mother who had died when Clara was four and Edwin six, and she herself only ten. Responsibility, apprehension, and strained effort had printed their marks on her features. But the majority of acquaintances were more impressed by her good intention than by her capacity; they would call her ‘a nice thing.’ The discerning minority, while saying with admiring conviction that she was ‘a very fine girl,’ would regret that somehow she had not the faculty of ‘making the best of herself,’ of ‘putting her best foot foremost.’ And would they not heartily stand up for her with the superficial majority!

A thin, greyhaired, dreamyeyed woman hurried into the room, bearing a noisy tray and followed by Clara with a white cloth. This was Mrs Nixon, the domestic staff of the Clayhanger household for years. Clara and Mrs Nixon swept Maggie’s sewing materials from the corner of the table on to a chair, put Maggie’s flowerglasses on to the ledge of the bookcase, folded up the green cloth, and began rapidly to lay the tea. Simultaneously Maggie, glancing at the clock, closed up her sewingmachine, and deposited her work in a basket. Clara, leaving the table, stooped to pick up the bits of cotton and white stuff that littered the carpet. The clock struck six.

“Now, sharp!” she exclaimed curtly to Edwin, who stood hesitatingly with his hands in his pockets. “Can’t you help Maggie to push that sewingmachine into the corner?”

“What on earth’s up?” he inquired vaguely, but starting forward to help Maggie.

“She’ll be here in a minute,” said Maggie, almost under her breath, as she fitted on the cover of the sewingmachine.

“Who?” asked Edwin. “Oh! Auntie! I’d forgotten it was her night.”

“As if anyone could forget!” murmured Clara, with sarcastic unbelief.

By this time the table was completely set.

### **Six.**

Edwin wondered mildly, as he often wondered, at the extremely bitter tone in which Clara always referred to their Aunt Clara Hamps, when Mrs Hamps was not there. Even Maggie’s private attitude to Auntie Clara was scarcely more Christian. Mrs Hamps was the widowed younger sister of their mother, and she had taken a certain share in the supervision of Darius Clayhanger’s domestic affairs after the death of Mrs Clayhanger. This latter fact might account, partially but not wholly, for the intense and steady dislike in which she was held by Maggie, Clara, and Mrs Nixon. Clara hated her own name because she had been ‘called after’ her auntie. Mr Clayhanger ‘got on’ excellently with his sisterinlaw. He ‘thought highly’ of her, and was indeed proud to have her for a relative. In their father’s presence the girls never showed their dislike of Mrs Hamps; it was a secret pleasure shared between them and Mrs Nixon, and only disclosed to Edwin because the girls were indifferent to what Edwin might think. They casually despised him for somehow liking his auntie, for not seeing through her wiles; but they could count on his loyalty to themselves.

“Are you ready for tea, or aren’t you?” Clara asked him. She frequently spoke to him as if she was the elder instead of the younger.

“Yes,” he said. “But I must find father.”

He went off, but he did not find his father in the shop, and after a few futile minutes he returned upstairs. Mrs Nixon preceded him, carrying the teacup, and she told him that his father had sent word into the kitchen that they were not to ‘wait tea’ for him.

## **Chapter Seven.**

### **Auntie Hamps.**

Mrs Hamps had splendidly arrived. The atmosphere of the sittingroom was changed. Maggie, smiling, wore her secondbest black silk apron. Clara, smiling and laughing, wore a clean long white pinafore. Mrs Nixon, with her dreamy eyes less vacant than usual, greeted Mrs Ramps effusively, and effusively gave humble thanks for kind inquiries after her health. A stranger might have thought that these women were strongly attached to one another by ties of affection and respect. Edwin never understood how his sisters, especially Maggie, could practise such vast and eternal hypocrisy with his aunt. As for him, his aunt acted on him now, as generally, like a tonic. Some effluence from her quickened him. He put away the worry in connection with his father, and gave himself up to the physical pleasures of tea.

Aunt Clara was a handsome woman. She had been calledbut not by men whose manners and code she would have approved'a damned fine woman.' Her age was about forty, which at that period, in a woman's habit of mind, was the equivalent of about fifty today. Her latest photograph was considered to be very successful. It showed her standing behind a velvet chair and leaning her large but still shapely bust slightly over the chair. Her forearms, ruffled and braceleted, lay along the fringed back of the chair, and from one negligent hand depended a rose. A heavy curtain came downwards out of nothing into the picture, and the end of it lay coiled and draped on the seat of the chair. The great dress was of slatecoloured silk, with sleeves tight to the elbow, and thence, from a ribbonbow, broadening to a wide, triangular climax that revealed quantities of lace at the wrists. The pointed ends of the sleeves were picked out with squares of velvet. A short and highly ornamental fringed and looped flounce waved grandly out behind from the waist to the level of the knees; and the stomacher recalled the ornamentation of the flounce; and both the stomacher and flounce gave contrasting value to the severe plainness of the skirt, designed to emphasise the quality of the silk. Round the neck was a lace collarette to match the furniture of the wrists, and the broad ends of the collarette were crossed on the bosom and held by a large jet brooch. Above that you saw a fine regular face, with a firm hard mouth and a very straight nose and dark eyebrows; small ears weighted with heavy jet earrings.

The photograph could not render the clear perfection of Aunt Clara's rosy skin; she had the colour and the flashing eye of a girl. But it did justice to her really magnificent black hair. This hair was all her own, and the coiffure seemed as ample as a judge's wig. From the low forehead the hair was parted exactly in the middle for about two inches; then plaited bands crossed and recrossed the scalp in profusion, forming behind a pattern exceedingly complicated, and down either side of the head, now behind the ear, now

hiding it, now resting on the shoulders, now hanging clear of them, fell long multitudinous glossy curls. These curls one of them in the photograph reached as far as the stomach could not have been surpassed in Bursley.

She was a woman of terrific vitality. Her dead sister had been nothing in comparison with her. She had a glorious digestion, and was the envy of her brother-in-law who suffered much from biliousness because she could eat with perfect impunity hot buttered toast and raw celery in large quantities. Further, she had independent means, and no children to cause anxieties. Yet she was always, as the phrase went, 'bearing up,' or, as another phrase went, 'leaning hard.' Frances Ridley Havergal was her favourite author, and Frances Ridley Havergal's little book *Lean Hard*, was kept on her dressing-table. (The girls, however, averred that she never opened it.) Aunt Clara's spiritual life must be imagined as a continual, almost physical leaning on Christ. Nevertheless she never complained, and she was seldom depressed. Her desire, and her achievement, was to be bright, to take everything cheerfully, to look obstinately on the best side of things, and to instil this religion into others.

## Two.

Thus, when it was announced that father had been called out unexpectedly, leaving an order that they were not to wait for him, she said gaily that they had better be obedient and begin, though it would have been more agreeable to wait for father. And she said how beautiful the tea was, and how beautiful the toast, and how beautiful the strawberryjam, and how beautiful the pikelets. She would herself pour some hot water into the slop basin, and put a pikelet on a plate thereon, covered, to keep warm for father. She would not hear a word about the toast being a little hard, and when Maggie in her curious quiet way 'stuck her out' that the toast was in fact hard, she said that that precise degree of hardness was the degree which she, for herself, preferred. Then she talked of jams, and mentioned gooseberryjam, whereupon Clara privately put her tongue out, with the quickness of a snake, to signal to Maggie.

"Ours isn't good this year," said Maggie.

"I told auntie we weren't so set up with it, a fortnight ago," said Clara simply, like a little angel.

"Did you, dear?" Mrs Hamps exclaimed, with great surprise, almost with shocked surprise. "I'm sure it's beautiful. I was quite looking forward to tasting it; quite! I know what your gooseberryjam is."

"Would you like to try it now?" Maggie suggested. "But we've warned you."

"Oh, I don't want to trouble you now. We're all so cosy here. Any time"

"No trouble, auntie," said Clara, with her most captivating and innocent smile.

"Well, if you talk about 'warning' me, of course I must insist on having some," said Auntie Clara.

Clara jumped up, passed behind Mrs Hamps, making a contemptuous face at those curls as she did so, and ran gracefully down to the kitchen.

"Here," she said crossly to Mrs Nixon. "A pot of that gooseberry, please. A small one will do. She knows it's short of sugar, and so she's determined to try it, just out of spite; and nothing will stop her."

Clara returned smiling to the teatable, and Maggie neatly unsealed the jam; and Auntie Clara, with a face beaming with pleasurable anticipation, helped herself circumspectly to a spoonful.

“Beautiful!” she murmured.

“Don’t you think it’s a bit tart?” Maggie asked.

“Oh no!” protestingly.

“Don’t you?” asked Clara, with an air of delighted deferential astonishment.

“Oh no!” Mrs Hamps repeated. “It’s beautiful!” She did not smack her lips over it, because she would have considered it unladylike to smack her lips, but by less offensive gestures she sought to convey her unbounded pleasure in the jam. “How much sugar did you put in?” she inquired after a while. “Half and half?”

“Yes,” said Maggie.

“They do say gooseberries were a tiny bit sour this year, owing to the weather,” said Mrs Hamps reflectively.

Clara kicked Edwin under the table, as it were viciously, but her delightful innocent smile, directed vaguely upon Mrs Hamps, did not relax. Such duplicity passed Edwin’s comprehension; it seemed to him purposeless. Yet he could not quite deny that there might be a certain sting, a certain insinuation, in his auntie’s last remark.

### **Three.**

Then Mr Clayhanger entered, blowing forth a long breath as if trying to repulse the oppressive heat of the July afternoon. He came straight to the table, with a slightly preoccupied air, quickly, his arms motionless at his sides, and slanting a little outwards. Mr Clayhanger always walked like this, with motionless arms so that in spite of a rather clumsy and heavy step, the upper part of him appeared to glide along. He shook hands genially with Auntie Clara, greeting her almost as grandiosely as she greeted him, putting on for a moment the grand manner, not without dignity. Each admired the other. Each often said that the other was ‘wonderful.’ Each undoubtedly flattered the other, made a fuss of the other. Mr Clayhanger’s admiration was the greater. The bitterest thing that Edwin had ever heard Maggie say was: “It’s something to be thankful for that she’s his deceased wife’s sister!” And she had said the bitter thing with such quiet bitterness! Edwin had not instantly perceived the point of it.

Darius Clayhanger then sat down, with a thud, snatched at the cup of tea which Maggie had placed before him, and drank half of it with a considerable indrawing noise. No one asked where or why he had been detained; it was not etiquette to do so. If father had been 'called away,' or had 'had to go away,' or was 'kept somewhere,' the details were out of deference allowed to remain in mystery, respected by curiosity ... 'Fatherbusiness.' ... All business was sacred. He himself had inculcated this attitude.

In a short silence the sound of the bell that the carman rang before the tram started for Hanbridge floated in through the open window.

"There's the tram!" observed Auntie Clara, apparently with warm and special interest in the phenomena of the tram. Then another little silence.

"Auntie," said Clara, writhing about youthfully on her chair.

"Can't ye sit still a bit?" the father asked, interrupting her roughly, but with good humour. "Ye'll be falling off th' chair in a minute."

Clara blushed swiftly, and stopped.

"Yes, love?" Auntie Clara encouraged her. It was as if Auntie Clara had said: "Your dear father is of course quite right, more than right, to insist on your sitting properly at table. However, do not take the correction too much to heart. I sympathise with all your difficulties."

"I was only going to ask you," Clara went on, in a weaker, stammering voice, "if you knew that Edwin's left school today." Her archness had deserted her.

"Mischievous little thing!" thought Edwin. "Why must she deliberately go and draw attention to that?" And he too blushed, feeling as if he owed an apology to the company for having left school.

"Oh yes!" said Auntie Clara with eager benevolence. "I've got something to say about that to my nephew."

Mr Clayhanger searched in a pocket of his alpaca, and drew forth an open envelope.

"Here's the lad's report, auntie," said he. "Happen ye'd like to look at it."

"I should indeed!" she replied fervently. "I'm sure it's a very good one."



#### **Four.**

She took the paper, and assumed her spectacles.

“ConductExcellent,” she read, poring with enthusiasm over the document. And she read again: “ConductExcellent.” Then she went down the list of subjects, declaiming the number of marks for each; and at the end she read: “Position in class next term: Third. Splendid, Eddy!” she exclaimed.

“I thought you were second,” said Clara, in her sharp manner.

Edwin blushed again, and hesitated.

“Eh? What’s that? What’s that?” his father demanded. “I didn’t notice that. Third?”

“Charlie Orgreave beat me in the examination,” Edwin muttered.

“Well, that’s a pretty how d’ye do!” said his father. “Going down one! Ye ought to ha’ been first instead o’ third. And would ha’ been, happen, if ye’d pegged at it.”

“Now I won’t have that! I won’t have it!” Auntie Clara protested, laughingly showing her fine teeth and gazing first at Darius, and then at Edwin, from under her spectacles, her head being thrown back and the curls hanging far behind. “No one shall say that Edwin doesn’t work, not even his father, while his auntie’s about! Because I know he does work! And besides, he hasn’t gone down. It says, ‘position next term’not this term. You were still second today, weren’t you, my boy?”

“I suppose so. Yes,” Edwin answered, pulling himself together.

“Well! There you are!” Auntie Clara’s voice rang triumphantly. She was opening her purse. “And there you are!” she repeated, popping half a sovereign down in front of him. “That’s a little present from your auntie on your leaving school.”

“Oh, auntie!” he cried feebly.

“Oh!” cried Clara, genuinely startled.

Mrs Hamps was sometimes thus astoundingly munificent. It was she who had given the schooner to Edwin. And her presents of elaborately enveloped and costly toilet soap on the birthdays of the children, and at Christmas, were massive. Yet Clara always maintained that she was the meanest old thing imaginable. And Maggie had once said

that she knew that Auntie Clara made her servant eat dripping instead of butter. To give inferior food to a servant was to Maggie the unforgivable in parsimony.

“Well,” Mr Clayhanger warningly inquired, “what do you say to your aunt?”

“Thank you, auntie,” Edwin sheepishly responded, fingering the coin.

It was a princely sum. And she had stuck up for him famously in the matter of the report. Strange that his father should not have read the report with sufficient attention to remark the fall to third place! Anyway, that aspect of the affair was now safely over, and it seemed to him that he had not lost much prestige by it. He would still be able to argue with his father on terms not too unequal, he hoped.

### **Five.**

As the tea drew to an end, and the plates of toast, bread and butter, and teacake grew emptier, and the slopbasin filled, and only Maggie’s flowers remained fresh and immaculate amid the untidy débris of the meal; and as Edwin and Clara became gradually indifferent to jam, and then inimical to it; and as the sounds of the street took on the softer quality of summer evening, and the first filmy shades of twilight gathered imperceptibly in the corners of the room, and Mr Clayhanger performed the eructations which signified that he had had enough; so Mrs Hamps prepared herself for one of her classic outbursts of feeling.

“Well!” she said at last, putting her spoon to the left of her cup as a final indication that seriously she would drink no more. And she gave a great sigh. “School over! And the only son going out into the world! How time flies!” And she gave another great sigh, implying an immense melancholy due to this vision of the reality of things. Then she remembered her courage, and the device of leaning hard, and all her philosophy.

“But it’s all for the best!” she broke forth in a new brave tone. “Everything is ordered for the best. We must never forget that! And I’m quite sure that Edwin will be a very great credit to us all, with help from above.”

She proceeded powerfully in this strain. She brought in God, Christ, and even the Holy Spirit. She mentioned the dangers of the world, and the disguises of the devil, and the unspeakable advantages of a good home, and the special goodness of Mr Clayhanger and of Maggie, yes, and of her little Clara; and the pride which they all had in Edwin, and the unique opportunities which he had of doing good, by example, and also, soon, by precept, for others younger than himself would begin to look up to him; and again her personal pride in him, and her sure faith in him; and what a solemn hour it was...

Nothing could stop her. The girls loathed these exhibitions. Maggie always looked at the table during their progress, and she felt as though she had done something wrong and was ashamed of it. Clara not merely felt like a criminal she felt like an unrepentant criminal; she blushed, she glanced nervously about the room, and all the time she repeated steadily in her heart a highly obscene word which she had heard at school. This unspoken word, hurled soundlessly but savagely at her aunt in that innocent heart, afforded much comfort to Clara in the affliction. Even Edwin, who was more lenient in all ways than his sisters, profoundly deplored these moralisings of his aunt. They filled him with a desire to run fast and far, to be alone at sea, or to be deep somewhere in the bosom of the earth. He could not understand this side of his auntie's individuality. But there was no delivery from Mrs Hamps. The only person who could possibly have delivered them seemed to enjoy the sinister thralldom. Mr Clayhanger listened with appreciative and admiring nods; he appeared to be quite sincere. And Edwin could not understand his father either. "How simple father must be!" he thought vaguely. Whereas Clara fatalistically dismissed her father's attitude as only one more of the preposterously unreasonable phenomena which she was constantly meeting in life; and she persevered grimly with her obscene word.

## Six.

"Eh!" said Mrs Hamps enthusiastically, after a trifling pause. "It does me good when I think what a help you'll be to your father in the business, with that clever head of yours."

She gazed at him fondly.

Now this was Edwin's chance. He did not wish to be any help at all to his father in the business. He had other plans for himself He had never mentioned them before, because his father had never talked to him about his future career, apparently assuming that he would go into the business. He had been waiting for his father to begin. "Surely," he had said to himself "father's bound to speak to me sometime about what I'm going to do, and when he does I shall just tell him." But his father never had begun; and by timidity, negligence, and perhaps illluck, Edwin had thus arrived at his last day at school with the supreme question not merely unsolved but unattacked. Oh he blamed himself! Any ordinary boy (he thought) would have discussed such a question naturally long ago. After all it was not a crime it was no cause for shame, to wish not to be a printer. Yet he was ashamed! Absurd! He blamed himself. But he also blamed his father. Now, however, in responding to his auntie's remark, he could remedy all the past by simply and boldly stating that he did not want to follow his father. It would be unpleasant, of course, but the worst shock would be over in a moment, like the drawing of a tooth. He had merely to utter certain words. He must utter them. They were perfectly easy to say,

and they were also of the greatest urgency. "I don't want to be a printer." He mumbled them over in his mind. "I don't want to be a printer." What could it matter to his father whether he was a printer or not? Seconds, minutes, seemed to pass. He knew that if he was so inconceivably craven as to remain silent, his self-respect would never recover from the blow. Then, in response to Mrs Hamps's prediction about his usefulness to his father in the business, he said, with a false jaunty, unconvinced, unconvincing air

"Well, that remains to be seen."

This was all he could accomplish. It seemed as if he had looked death itself in the face, and drawn away.

"Remains to be seen?" Auntie Clara repeated, with a hint of startled pain, due to this levity.

He was mute. No one suspected, as he sat there, so boyish, wistful, and uneasily squirming, that he was agonised to the very centre of his being. All the time, in his sweating soul, he kept trying to persuade himself: "I've given them a hint, anyhow! I've given them a hint, anyhow!"

"Them" included everybody at the table.

### **Seven.**

Mr Clayhanger, completely ignoring Edwin's reply to his aunt and her somewhat shocked repetition of it, turned suddenly towards his son and said, in a manner friendly but serious, a manner that assumed everything, a manner that begged the question, unconscious even that there was a question

"I shall be out the better part o' tomorrow. I want ye to be sure to be in the shop all afternoon I'll tell you what for downstairs." It was characteristic of him thus to make a mystery of business in front of the women.

Edwin felt the net closing about him. Then he thought of one of those 'posers' which often present themselves to youths of his age.

"But tomorrow's Saturday," he said, perhaps perkily. "What about the Bible class?"

Six months previously a young minister of the Wesleyan Circuit, to whom Heaven had denied both a sense of humour and a sense of honour, had committed the infamy of starting a Bible class for big boys on Saturday afternoons. This outrage had appalled and

disgusted the boyhood of Wesleyanism in Bursley. Their afternoon for games, their only fair afternoon in the desert of the week, to be filched from them and used against them for such an odious purpose as a Bible class! Not only Sunday school on Sunday afternoon, but a Bible class on Saturday afternoon! It was incredible. It was unbearable. It was gross tyranny, and nothing else. Nevertheless the young minister had his way, by dint of meanly calling upon parents and invoking their help. The scurvy worm actually got together a class of twelve to fifteen boys, to the end of securing their eternal welfare. And they had to attend the class, though they swore they never would, and they had to sing hymns, and they had to kneel and listen to prayers, and they had to listen to the most intolerable tedium, and to take notes of it. All this, while the sun was shining, or the rain was raining, on fields and streets and open spaces and ponds!

Edwin had been trapped in the snare. His father, after only three words from the young minister, had yielded up his son like a burnt sacrifice and with a casual nonchalance that utterly confounded Edwin. In vain Edwin had pointed out to his elders that a Saturday afternoon of confinement must be bad for his health. His attention had been directed to his eternal health. In vain he had pointed out that on wet Saturday afternoons he frequently worked at his homelessons, which therefore might suffer under the régime of a Bible class. His attention had been directed to the peace which passeth understanding. So he had been beaten, and was secretly twitted by Clara as an abject victim. Hence it was with a keen and peculiar feeling of triumph, of hopelessly cornering the inscrutable generation which a few months ago had cornered him, that he demanded, perhaps perkily: "What about the Bible class?"

"There'll be no more Bible classing," said his father, with a mild but slightly sardonic smile, as who should say: "I'm ready to make all allowances for youth; but I must get you to understand, as gently as I can, that you can't keep on going to Bible classes for ever and ever."

Mrs Hamps said

"It won't be as if you were at school. But I do hope you won't neglect to study your Bible. Eh, but I do hope you'll always find time for that, to your dying day!"

"Oh but I say" Edwin began, and stopped.

He was beaten by the mere effrontery of the replies. His father and his aunt (the latter of whom at any rate was a firm and confessed religionist, who had been responsible for converting Mr Clayhanger from Primitive Methodism to Wesleyan Methodism) did not trouble to defend their new position by argument. They made no effort to reconcile it with their position of a few months back, when the importance of heavenly welfare far

exceeded the importance of any conceivable earthly welfare. The fact was that they had no argument. If God took precedence of knowledge and of health, he took precedence of a peddling shop! That was unanswerable.

### **Eight.**

Edwin was dashed. His faith in humanity was dashed. These elders were not sincere. And as Mrs Hamps continued to embroider the original theme of her exhortation about the Bible, Edwin looked at her stealthily, and the doubt crossed his mind whether that majestic and vital woman was ever sincere about anything, even to herself whether the whole of her daily existence, from her getting up to her downlying, was not a grandiose pretence.

Not that he had the least desire to cling to the Bible class, even as an alternative to the shop! No! He was much relieved to be rid of the Bible class. What upset him was the crude illogicality of the new decree, and the shameless tacit admission of previous insincerity.

Two hours later, as he stood idly at the window of his bedroom, watching the gas lamps of Trafalgar Road wax brighter in the last glooms of twilight, he was still occupied with the sham and the unreason and the lack of scruple suddenly revealed in the life of the elder generation. Unconsciously imitating a trick of his father's when annoyed but calm, he nodded his head several times, and with his tongue against his teeth made the noise which in writing is represented by 'tuttut.' Yet somehow he had always known that it would be so. At bottom, he was only pretending to himself to be shocked and outraged.

His plans were no further advanced; indeed they were put back, for this Saturday afternoon vigil in the shop would be in some sort a symbolic temporary defeat for him. Why had he not spoken out clearly? Why was he always like a baby in presence of his father? The future was all askew for him. He had forgotten his tremendous serious resolves. The touch of the halfsovereign in his pocket, however, was comforting in a universe of discomfort.

## **Chapter Eight.**

### **In the Shop.**

“Here, lad!” said his father to Edwin, as soon as he had scraped up the last crumbs of cheese from his plate at the end of dinner on the following day.

Edwin rose obediently and followed him out of the room. Having waited at the top of the stairs until his father had reached the foot, he leaned forward as far as he could with one hand on the rail and the other pressing against the wall, swooped down to the mat at the bottom, without touching a single step on the way, and made a rocketlike noise with his mouth. He had no other manner of descending the staircase, unless he happened to be in disgrace. His father went straight to the desk in the corner behind the accountbook window, assumed his spectacles, and lifted the lid of the desk.

“Here!” he said, in a low voice. “Mr Enoch Peake is stepping in this afternoon to look at this here.” He displayed the proofan unusually elaborate wedding card, which announced the marriage of Mr Enoch Peake with Mrs Louisa Loggerheads. “Ye know him as I mean?”

“Yes,” said Edwin, “The stout man. The Cocknage Gardens man.”

“That’s him. Well ye’ll tell him I’ve been called away. Tell him who ye are. Not but what he’ll know. Tell him I think it might be better” Darius’s thick finger ran along a line of print “if we put ‘widow of the late Simon Loggerheads Esquire,’ instead of Esq.’ See? Otherwise it’s all right. Tell him I say as otherwise it’s all right. And ask him if he’ll have it printed in silver, and how many he wants, and show him this sample envelope. Now, d’ye understand?”

“Yes,” said Edwin, in a tone to convey, not disrespectfully, that there was nothing to understand. Curious, how his father had the air of bracing all his intellect as if to a problem!

“Then ye’ll take it to Big James, and he can start Chawner on it. Th’ job’s promised for Monday forenoon.”

“Will Big James be working?” asked Edwin, for it was Saturday afternoon, when, though the shop remained open, the printing office was closed.

“They’re all on overtime,” said Mr Clayhanger; and then he added, in a voice still lower, and with a surreptitious glance at Miss Ingamells, the shopwoman, who was stolidly

enfolding newspapers in wrappers at the opposite counter, "See to it yourself, now. He won't want to talk to her about a thing like that. Tell him I told you specially. Just let me see how well ye can do it."

"Right!" said Edwin; and to himself, superciliously: "It might be life and death."

"We ought to be doing a lot o' business wi' Enoch Peake, later on," Mr Clayhanger finished, in a whisper.

"I see," said Edwin, impressed, perceiving that he had perhaps been supercilious too soon.

Mr Clayhanger returned his spectacles to their case, and taking his hat from its customary hook behind him, over the jobfiles, consulted his watch and passed round the counter to go. Then he stopped.

"I'm going to Manchester," he murmured confidentially. "To see if I can pick up a machine as I've heard of."

Edwin was flattered. At the dinnertable Mr Clayhanger had only vouchsafed that he had a train to catch, and would probably not be in till late at night.

The next moment he glimpsed Darius through the window, his arms motionless by his sides and sticking slightly out; hurrying in the sunshine along Wedgwood Street in the direction of Shawport station.

## **Two.**

So this was business! It was not the business he desired and meant to have; and he was uneasy at the extent to which he was already entangled in it; but it was rather amusing, and his father had really been very friendly. He felt a sense of importance.

Soon afterwards Clara ran into the shop to speak to Miss Ingamells. The two chatted and giggled together.

"Father's gone to Manchester," he found opportunity to say to Clara as she was leaving.

"Why aren't you doing those prizes he told you to do?" retorted Clara, and vanished, She wanted none of Edwin's superior airs.



During dinner Mr Clayhanger had instructed his son to go through the Sunday school prize stock and make an inventory of it.

This injunction from the child Clara, which Miss Ingamells had certainly overheard, prevented him, as an independent man, from beginning his work for at least ten minutes. He whistled, opened his father's desk and stared vacantly into it, examined the pennib case in detail, and tore off two leaves from the date calendar so that it should be ready for Monday. He had a great scorn for Miss Ingamells, who was a personable if somewhat heavy creature of twentyeight, because she kept company with a young man. He had caught them arminarm and practically hugging each other, one Sunday afternoon in the street. He could see naught but silliness in that kind of thing.

The entrance of a customer caused him to turn abruptly to the high shelves where the books were kept. He was glad that the customer was not Mr Enoch Peake, the expectation of whose arrival made him curiously nervous. He placed the stepladder against the shelves, climbed up, and began to finger volumes and parcels of volumes. The dust was incredible. The disorder filled him with contempt. It was astounding that his father could tolerate such disorder; no doubt the whole shop was in the same condition. "Thirteen Archie's Old Desk," he read on a parcel, but when he opened the parcel he found seven "From Jest to Earnest." Hence he had to undo every parcel. However, the work was easy. He first wrote the inventory in pencil, then he copied it in ink; then he folded it, and wrote very carefully on the back, because his father had a mania for endorsing documents in the legal manner: "Inventory of Sunday school prize stock." And after an instant's hesitation he added his own initials. Then he began to tie up and restore the parcels and the single volumes. None of all this literature had any charm for him. He possessed five or six such books, all gilt and chromatic, which had been awarded to him at Sunday school, 'suitably inscribed,' for doing nothing in particular; and he regarded them without exception as frauds upon boyhood. However, Clara had always enjoyed reading them. But lying flat on one of the top shelves he discovered, nearly at the end of his task, an oblong tome which did interest him: "Cazenove's Architectural Views of European Capitals, with descriptive letterpress." It had an oldfashioned look, and was probably some relic of his father's predecessor in the establishment. Another example of the lack of order which prevailed!

### **Three.**

He took the volume to the retreat of the desk, and there turned over its pages of coloured illustrations. At first his interest in them, and in the letterpress, was less instinctive than deliberate. He said to himself: "Now, if there is anything in me, I ought really to be interested in this, and I must be interested in it." And he was. He glanced carelessly at the clock, which was hung above the shelves of exercisebooks and

notebooks, exactly opposite the door. A quarter past four. The afternoon was quietly passing, and he had not found it too tedious. In the background of the task which (he considered) he had accomplished with extraordinary efficiency, his senses noted faintly the continual trickle of customers, all of whom were infallibly drawn to Miss Ingamells's counter by her mere watchful and receptive appearance. He had heard phrases and ends of phrases, such as: "No, we haven't anything smaller," "A camelhair brush," "Gum but not glue," "Very sorry, sir. I'll speak firmly to the paper boy," and the sound of coins dragged along the counter, the sound of the testing of half a sovereign, the opening and shutting of the tilldrawer; and occasionally Miss Ingamells exclaiming to herself upon the stupidity of customers after a customer had gone; and once Miss Ingamells crossing angrily to fix the door ajar which some heedless customer had closed: "Did they suppose that people didn't want air like other people?" And now it was a quarter past four. Undoubtedly he had a peculiar, and pleasant, feeling of importance. In another halfminute he glanced at the clock again, and it was a quarter to five.

What hypnotism attracted him towards the artists' materials cabinet which stood magnificent, complicated, and complete in the middle of the shop, like a monument? His father, after one infantile disastrous raid, had absolutely forbidden any visitation of that cabinet, with its glass case of assorted paints, crayons, brushes and pencils, and its innumerable long drawers full of paper and cards and wondrous perfectly equipped boxes, and Tsquares and setsquares, with a hundred other contrivances. But of course the order had now ceased to have force. Edwin had left school; and, if he was not a man, he was certainly not a boy. He began to open the drawers, at first gingerly, then boldly; after all it was no business of Miss Ingamells's! And, to be just, Miss Ingamells made no sort of pretence that it was any business of hers. She proceeded with her own business. Edwin opened a rather large wooden watercolour box. It was marked five and sixpence. It seemed to comprise everything needed for the production of the most entrancing and majestic architectural views, and as Edwin took out its upper case and discovered still further marvellous devices and apparatus in its basement beneath, he dimly but passionately saw, in his heart, bright masterpieces that ought to be the fruit of that box. There was a key to it. He must have it. He would have given all that he possessed for it, if necessary.

#### **Four.**

"Miss Ingamells," he said: and, as she did not look up immediately, "I say, Miss Ingamells! How much does father take off in the shilling to auntie when she buys anything?"

"Don't ask me, Master Edwin," said Miss Ingamells; "I don't know, How should I know?"

“Well, then,” he muttered, “I shall pay full price for it that’s all.” He could not wait, and he wanted to be on the safe side.

Miss Ingamells gave him change for his halfsovereign in a strictly impartial manner, to indicate that she accepted no responsibility. And the squaring of Edwin’s shoulders conveyed to Miss Ingamells that he advised her to keep carefully within her own sphere, and not to make impertinent inquiries about the origin of the halfsovereign, which he could see intrigued her acutely. He now owned the box; it was not a box of colours, but a box of enchantment. He had had colourboxes before, but nothing to compare with this, nothing that could have seemed magical to anybody wiser than a very small boy. Then he bought some cartridgepaper; he considered that cartridgepaper would be good enough for preliminary experiments.

### **Five.**

It was while he was paying for the cartridgepaper he being, as was indeed proper, on the customers’ side of the counter that a heavy loutish boy in an apron entered the shop, blushing. Edwin turned away. This was Miss Ingamells’s affair.

“If ye please, Mester Peake’s sent me. He canna come in this afternoon he’s got a bit o’ rattin on and will Mester Clayhanger step across to th’ Dragon tonight after eight, with that there peeper (paper) as he knows on?”

At the name of Peake, Edwin started. He had utterly forgotten the matter.

“Master Edwin,” said Miss Ingamells drily. “You know all about that, don’t you?” Clearly she resented that he knew all about that while she didn’t.

“Oh! Yes,” Edwin stammered. “What did you say?” It was his first piece of real business.

“If you please, Mester Peake sent me.” The messenger blundered through his message again word for word.

“Very well. I’ll attend to it,” said Edwin, as nonchalantly as he could.

Nevertheless he was at a loss what to do, simple though the situation might have seemed to a person with an experience of business longer than Edwin’s. Just as three hours previously his father had appeared to be bracing all his intellect to a problem that struck Edwin as entirely simple, so now Edwin seemed to be bracing all his intellect to another aspect of the same problem. Time, revenging his father! ... What! Go across to the

Dragon and in cold blood demand Mr Enoch Peake, and then parley with Mr Enoch Peake as one man with another! He had never been inside the Dragon. He had been brought up in the belief that the Dragon was a place of sin. The Dragon was included in the generic term 'ginpalace,' and quite probably in the Siamesetwin term 'gamingsaloon.' Moreover, to discuss business with Mr Enoch Peake... Mr Enoch Peake was as mysterious to Edwin as, say, a Chinese mandarin! Still, business was business, and something would have to be done. He did not know what. Ought he to go to the Dragon? His father had not foreseen the possibility of this development. He instantly decided one fundamental: he would not consult Miss Ingamells; no, nor even Maggie! There remained only Big James. He went across to see Big James, who was calmly smoking a pipe on the little landing at the top of the steps leading to the printing office.

Big James showed no astonishment.

"You come along o' me to the Dragon tonight, young sir, at eight o'clock, or as soon after as makes no matter, and I'll see as you see Mr Enoch Peake. I shall be coming up Woodisun Bank at eight o'clock, or as soon after as makes no matter. You be waiting for me at the back gates there, and I'll see as you see Mr Enoch Peake."

"Are you going to the Dragon?"

"Am I going to the Dragon, young sir!" exclaimed Big James, in his majestic voice.

## Chapter Nine.

### The Town.

James Yarlett was worthy of his nickname. He stood six feet four and a half inches in height, and his girth was proportionate; he had enormous hands and feet, large features, and a magnificent long dark brown beard; owing to this beard his necktie was never seen. But the most magnificent thing about him was his bass voice, acknowledged to be the finest bass in the town, and one of the finest even in Hanbridge, where, in his earlier prime, James had lived as a 'news comp' on the "Staffordshire Signal." He was now a 'jobbing comp' in Bursley, because Bursley was his native town and because he preferred jobbing. He made the fourth and heaviest member of the celebrated Bursley Male Glee Party, the other three being Arthur Smallrice, an old man with a striking falsetto voice, Abraham Harracles, and Jos Rawnpike (pronounced Rampick). These men were accustomed to fame, and Big James was the king of them, though the mildest. They sang at dinners, freeandeesies, concerts, and Martinmas teameetings. They sang for the glory, and when there was no demand for their services, they sang to themselves, for the sake of singing. Each of them was a star in some church or chapel choir. And except Arthur Smallrice, they all shared a certain elasticity of religious opinion. Big James, for example, had varied in ten years from Wesleyan, through Old Church, to Roman Catholic up at Bleakridge. It all depended on niceties in the treatment accorded to him, and on the choice of anthems. Moreover, he liked a change.

He was what his superiors called 'a very superior man.' Owing to the more careful enunciation required in singing, he had lost a great deal of the Five Towns accent, and one cannot be a compositor for a quarter of a century without insensibly acquiring an education and a store of knowledge far excelling the ordinary. His manner was gentle, and perhaps somewhat pompous, as is common with very big men; but you could never be sure whether an extremely subdued humour did not underlie his pomposity. He was a bachelor, aged fortyfive, and lived quietly with a married sister at the bottom of Woodisun Bank, near the National Schools. The wonder was that, with all his advantages, he had not more deeply impressed himself upon Bursley as an individuality, and not merely as a voice. But he seemed never to seek to do so. He was without ambition; and, though curiously careful sometimes about preserving his own dignity, and beyond question sensitive by temperament, he showed marked respect, and even humility, to the worldysuccessful. Despite his bigness and simplicity there was something small about him which came out in odd trifling details. Thus it was characteristic of Big James to ask Edwin to be waiting for him at the back gates in Woodisun Bank when he might just as easily have met him at the side door by the closed shop in Wedgwood Street.

Edwin, who from mere pride had said nothing to his sisters about the impending visit to the Dragon, was a little surprised and dashed to see Big James in broadcloth and a high hat; for he had not dreamed of changing his own everyday suit, nor had it occurred to him that the Dragon was a temple of ceremoniousness. Big James looked enormous. The wide lapel of his shining frockcoat was buttoned high up under his beard and curved downwards for a distance of considerably more than a yard to his knees: it was a heroic frockcoat. The sleeves were wide, but narrowing at the wrists, and the white wristbands were very tight. The trousers fell in ample folds on the uppers of the gigantic boots. Big James had a way of sticking out his chest and throwing his head back which would have projected the tip of his beard ten inches forth from his body, had the beard been stiff; but the soft silkiness of the beard frustrated this spectacular phenomenon which would have been very interesting to witness.

## **Two.**

The pair stepped across Trafalgar Road together, Edwin, though he tried to be sedate, nothing but a frisking morsel by the side of the vast monument. Compared with the architectural grandeur of Mr Varlett, his thin, supple, freemoving limbs had an almost pathetic appearance of ephemeral fragility.

Big James directed himself to the archway leading to the Dragon stables, and there he saw an ostler or oddman. Edwin, feeling the imminence of an ordeal, surreptitiously explored a pocket to be sure that the proof of the weddingcard was safely there.

The ostler raised his reddish eyebrows to Big James. Big James jerked his head to one side, indicating apparently the entire Dragon, and simultaneously conveying a query. The ostler paused immobile an instant and then shook his insignificant turnippate. Big James turned away. No word had been spoken; nevertheless, the men had exchanged a dialogue which might be thus put into words

“I wasn’t thinking to see ye so soon,” from the ostler.

“Then nobody of any importance has yet gone into the assembly room?” from Big James.

“Nobody worth speaking of, and won’t, for a while,” from the other.

“Then I’ll take a turn,” from Big James.

The latter now looked down at Edwin, and addressed him in words

“Seemingly we’re too soon, Mr Edwin. What do you say to a turn round the townplayground way? I doubted we should be too soon.”

Edwin showed alacrity. As a schoolboy it had been definitely forbidden to him to go out at night; and unless sent on a special and hurried errand, he had scarcely seen the physiognomy of the streets after eight o’clock. He had never seen the playground in the evening. And this evening the town did not seem like the same town; it had become a new and mysterious town of adventure. And yet Edwin was not fifty yards away from his own bedroom.

They ascended Duck Bank together, Edwin proud to be with a celebrity of the calibre of Big James, and Big James calmly satisfied to show himself thus formally with his master’s son. It appeared almost incredible that those two immortals, so diverse, had issued from the womb practically alike; that a few brief years on the earth had given Big James such a tremendous physical advantage. Several hours’ daily submission to the exact regularities of lines of type and to the unvarying demands of minutely adjusted machines in motion had stamped Big James’s body and mind with the delicate and quasifinicking preciseness which characterises all composers and printers; and the continual monotonous performance of similar tasks that employed his faculties while never absorbing or straining them, had soothed and dulled the fever of life in him to a beneficent calm, a calm refined and beautified by the pleasurable exercise of song. Big James had seldom known a violent emotion. He had craved nothing, sought for nothing, and lost nothing.

Edwin, like Big James in progress from everlasting to everlasting, was all inchoate, unformed, undisciplined, and burning with capricious fires; all expectant, eager, reluctant, tingling, timid, innocently and wistfully audacious. By taking the boy’s hand, Big James might have poetically symbolised their relation.

### **Three.**

“Are you going to sing tonight at the Dragon, Mr Yarlett?” asked Edwin. He lengthened his step to Big James’s, controlled his ardent body, and tried to remember that he was a man with a man.

“I am, young sir,” said Big James. “There is a party of us.”

“Is it the Male Glee Party?” Edwin pursued.

“Yes, Mr Edwin.”

“Then Mr Smallrice will be there?”

“He will, Mr Edwin.”

“Why can Mr Smallrice sing such high notes?”

Big James slowly shook his head, as Edwin looked up at him. “I tell you what it is, young sir. It’s a gift, that’s what it is, same as I can sing low.”

“But Mr Smallrice is very old, isn’t he?”

“There’s a parrot in a cage over at the Duck, there, as is eightyfive years old, and that’s proved by record kept, young sir.”

“No!” protested Edwin’s incredulity politely.

“By record kept,” said Big James.

“Do you often sing at the Dragon, Mr Yarlett?”

“Time was,” said Big James, “when some of us used to sing there every night, Sundays excepted, and concerts and whatnot excepted. Aye! For hours and hours every night. And still do sometimes.”

“After your work?”

“After our work. Aye! And often till dawn in summer. One o’clock, two o’clock, halfpast two o’clock, every night. But now they say that this new Licensing Act will close every publichouse in this town at eleven o’clock, and a straightup eleven at that!”

“But what do you do it for?”

“What do we do it for? We do it to pass the time and the glass, young sir. Not as I should like you to think as I ever drank, Mr Edwin. One quart of ale I take every night, and have ever done; no more, no less.”

“But”Edwin’s rapid, breaking voice interrupted eagerly the deep majestic tones“aren’t you tired the next day? I should be!”

“Never,” said Big James. “I get up from my bed as fresh as a daisy at six sharp. And I’ve known the nights when my bed ne’er saw me.”



“You must be strong, Mr Yarlett, my word!” Edwin exclaimed. These revelations of the habits and prowess of Big James astounded him. He had never suspected that such things went on in the town.

“Aye! Middling!”

“I suppose it’s a freeandeasy at the Dragon, tonight, Mr Yarlett?”

“In a manner of speaking,” said Big James.

“I wish I could stay for it.”

“And why not?” Big James suggested, and looked down at Edwin with halfhumorous incertitude.

Edwin shrugged his shoulders superiorly, indicating by instinct, in spite of himself, that possibly Big James was trespassing over the social line that divided them. And yet Big James’s father would have condescended to Edwin’s grandfather. Only, Edwin now belonged to the employing class, whilst Big James belonged to the employed. Already Edwin, whose father had been thrashed by workmen whom a compositor would hesitate to call skilled already Edwin had the mien natural to a ruler, and Big James, with dignified deference, would submit unresentingly to his attitude. It was the subtlest thing. It was not that Edwin obscurely objected to the suggestion of his being present at the freeandeasy; it was that he objected (but nicely, and with good nature) to any assumption of Big James’s right to influence him towards an act that his father would not approve. Instead of saying, “Why not?” Big James ought to have said: “Nobody but you can decide that, as your father’s away.” James ought to have been strictly impartial.

#### **Four.**

“Well,” said Big James, when they arrived at the playground, which lay north of the covered Meat Market or Shambles, “it looks as if they hadn’t been able to make a start yet at the Blood Tub.” His tone was marked by a calm, grand disdain, as of one entertainer talking about another.

The Blood Tub, otherwise known as Snaggs’s, was the centre of nocturnal pleasure in Bursley. It stood almost on the very spot where the jawbone of a whale had once lain, as a supreme natural curiosity. It represented the softened manners which had developed out of the old medievalism of the century. It had supplanted the bearpit and the cockpit. It corresponded somewhat with the ideals symbolised by the new Town Hall. In the tiny

odorous beerhouses of all the undulating, twisting, reddish streets that surrounded the contiguous open spaces of Duck Bank, the playground, the marketplace, and Saint Luke's Square, the folk no longer discussed eagerly what chance on Sunday morning the municipal bear would have against five dogs. They had progressed as far as a free library, boxinggloves, rabbitcoursing, and the Blood Tub.

This last was a theatre with wooden sides and a canvas roof, and it would hold quite a crowd of people. In front of it was a platform, and an orchestra, lighted by oil flares that, as Big James and Edwin approached, were gaining strength in the twilight. Leaning against the platform was a blackboard on which was chalked the announcement of two plays: "The Forty Thieves" (author unstated) and Cruikshank's "The Bottle." The orchestra, after terrific concussions, fell silent, and then a troupe of players in costume, cramped on the narrow trestle boards, performed a sample scene from "The Forty Thieves," just to give the crowd in front an idea of the wonders of this powerful work. And four thieves passed and repassed behind the screen hiding the doors, and reappeared nine times as four fresh thieves until the tale of forty was complete. And then old Hammerad, the beloved clown who played the drum (and whose wife kept a barber's shop in Buck Row and shaved for a penny), left his drum and did two minutes' stiff clowning, and then the orchestra burst forth again, and the brazen voice of old Snaggs (in his moleskin waistcoat) easily rode the storm, adjuring the folk to walk up and walk up: which some of the folk did do. And lastly the band played "God Save the Queen," and the players, followed by old Snaggs, processionally entered the booth.

"I lay they come out again," said Big James, with grim blandness.

"Why?" asked Edwin. He was absolutely new to the scene.

"I lay they haven't got twenty couple inside," said Big James.

And in less than a minute the troupe did indeed emerge, and old Snaggs expostulated with a dilatory public, respectfully but firmly. It had been a queer year for Mr Snaggs. Rain had ruined the Wakes; rain had ruined everything; rain had nearly ruined him. July was obviously not a month in which a selfrespecting theatre ought to be open, but Mr Snaggs had got to the point of catching at straws. He stated that in order to prove his absolute bona fides the troupe would now give a scene from that worldrenowned and unique drama, "The Bottle," after which the performance really would commence, since he could not as a gentleman keep his kind patrons within waiting any longer. His habit, which emphasised itself as he grew older, was to treat the staring crowd in front of his booth like a family of nephews and nieces. The device was quite useless, for the public's stolidity was impregnable. It touched the heroic. No more granitic and crass stolidity could have been discovered in England. The crowd stood; it exercised no other function

of existence. It just stood, and there it would stand until convinced that the gratis part of the spectacle was positively at an end.

### **Five.**

With a ceremonious gesture signifying that he assumed the young sir's consent, Big James turned away. He had displayed to Edwin the poverty and the futility of the Blood Tub. Edwin would perhaps have liked to stay. The scenes enacted on the outer platform were certainly tinged with the ridiculous, but they were the first histrionics that he had ever witnessed; and he could not help thinking, hoping, in spite of his common sense, that within the booth all was different, miraculously transformed into the grand and the impressive. Left to himself, he would surely have preferred an evening at the Blood Tub to a business interview with Mr Enoch Peake at the Dragon. But naturally he had to scorn the Blood Tub with a scorn equal to the massive and silent scorn of Big James. And on the whole he considered that he was behaving as a man with another man rather well. He sought by depreciatory remarks to keep the conversation at its proper adult level.

Big James led him through the marketplace, where a few vegetable, tripe, and gingerbread stallsrelics of the day's marketwere still attracting customers in the twilight. These slatternly and picturesque groups, beneath their flickering yellow flares, were encamped at the gigantic foot of the Town Hall porch as at the foot of a precipice. The monstrous black walls of the Town Hall rose and were merged in gloom; and the spire of the Town Hall, on whose summit stood a gold angel holding a gold crown, rose right into the heavens and was there lost. It was marvellous that this town, by adding stone to stone, had upreared this monument which, in expressing the secret nobility of its ideals, dwarfed the town. On every side of it the beerhouses, full of a dulled, savage ecstasy of life, gleamed brighter than the shops. Big James led Edwin down through the mysteries of the Cock Yard and up along Bugg's Gutter, and so back to the Dragon.

## **Chapter Ten.**

### **Free and Easy.**

When Edwin, shyly, followed Big James into the assembly room of the Dragon, it already held a fair sprinkling of men, and newcomers continued to drop in. They were soberly and respectably clothed, though a few had knotted handkerchiefs round their necks instead of collars and ties. The occasion was a jollity of the Bursley Mutual Burial Club. This Club, a singular example of that dogged private cooperative enterprise which so sharply distinguishes English corporate life from the corporate life of other European countries, had lustily survived from a period when men were far less sure of a decent burial than they were then, in the very prosperous early seventies. It had helped to maintain the barbaric fashion of ostentatiously expensive funerals, out of which undertakers and beersellers made vast sums; but it had also provided a basis of common endeavour and of fellowship. And its respectability was intense, and at the same time broadminded. To be an established subscriber to the Burial Club was evidence of good character and of social spirit. The periodic jollities of this company of men whose professed aim was to bury each other, had a high reputation for excellence. Up till a year previously they had always been held at the Duck, in Duck Square, opposite; but Mr Enoch Peake, Chairman of the Club, had by persistent and relentless chicane, triumphing over immense influences, changed their venue to the Dragon, whose landlady, Mrs Louisa Loggerheads, he was then courting. (It must be stated that Mrs Louisa's name contained no slur of cantankerousness; it is merely the local word for a harmless plant, the knapweed.) He had now won Mrs Loggerheads, after being a widower thrice, and with her the second best 'house' in the town.

There were long benches down the room, with forms on either side of them. Big James, not without pomp, escorted a blushing Edwin to the end of one of these tables, near a small raised platform that occupied the extremity of the room. Over this platform was printed a legend: "As a bird is known by its note"; and over the legend was a fullrigged ship in a glass case, and a pair of antlers. The walls of the room were dark brown, the ceiling grey with soot of various sorts, and the floor tiled red and black and sanded. Smoke rose in spirals from about a score of churchwarden pipes and as many cutties, which were charged from tin pouches, and lighted by spills of newspaper from the three double gasjets that hung down over the benches. Two middleaged women, one in black and the other checked, served beer, porter, and stout in mugs, and gin in glasses, passing in and out through a side door. The company talked little, and it had not yet begun seriously to drink; but, sprawled about in attitudes of restful abeyance, it was smoking religiously, and the flat noise of solemn expectorations punctuated the minutes. Edwin was easily the youngest person present the average age appeared to be about fifty but nobody's curiosity seemed to be much stirred by his odd arrival, and he

ceased gradually to blush. When, however, one of the women paused before him in silent question, and he had to explain that he required no drink because he had only called for a moment about a matter of business, he blushed again vigorously.

## **Two.**

Then Mr Enoch Peake appeared. He was a short, stout old man, with fat hands, a red, minutely wrinkled face, and very small eyes. Greeted with the respect due to the owner of Cocknage Gardens, a sporting resort where all the best footracing and rabbitcoursing took place, he accepted it in somnolent indifference, and immediately took off his coat and sat down in cotton shirtsleeves. Then he pulled out a red handkerchief and his tobaccobox, and set them on the table. Big James motioned to Edwin.

“Evening, Mr Peake,” said Big James, crossing the floor, “and here’s a young gent wishful for two words with you.”

Mr Peake stared vacantly.

“Young Mr Clayhanger,” explained Big James.

“It’s about this card,” Edwin began, in a whisper, drawing the weddingcard sheepishly from his pocket. “Father had to go to Manchester,” he added, when he had finished.

Mr Enoch Peake seized the card in both hands, and examined it; and Edwin could hear his heavy breathing.

Mrs Louisa Loggerheads, a comfortable, smiling administrative woman of fifty, showed herself at the servicedoor, and nodded with dignity to a few of the habitués.

“Missis is at door,” said Big James to Mr Peake.

“Is her?” muttered Mr Peake, not interrupting his examination of the card.

One of the servingwomen, having removed Mr Peake’s coat, brought a new church warden, filled it, and carefully directed the tip towards his tight little mouth: the lips closed on it. Then she lighted a spill and applied it to the distant bowl, and the mouth puffed; and then the woman deposited the bowl cautiously on the bench. Lastly, she came with a small glass of sloe gin. Mr Peake did not move.

At length Mr Peake withdrew the pipe from his mouth, and after an interval said

“Aye!”

He continued to stare at the card, now held in one hand.

“And is it to be printed in silver?” Edwin asked.

Mr Peake took a few more puffs.

“Aye!”

When he had stared further for a long time at the card, his hand moved slowly with it towards Edwin, and Edwin resumed possession of it.

Mrs Louisa Loggerheads had now vanished.

“Missis has gone,” said Big James.

“Has her?” muttered Mr Peake.

Edwin rose to leave, though unwillingly; but Big James asked him in polite reproach whether he should not stay for the first song. He nodded, encouraged; and sat down. He did not know that the uppermost idea in Big James’s mind for an hour past had been that Edwin would hear him sing.

Mr Peake lifted his glass, held it from him, approached his lips towards it, and emptied it at a draught. He then glanced round and said thickly

“Gentlemen all, Mester Smallrice, Mester Harracles, Mester Rampick, and Mester Yarlett will now oblige with one o’ th’ ould favourites.”

There was some applause, a few coats were removed, and Mr Peake fixed himself in a contemplative attitude.

### **Three.**

Messrs Arthur Smallrice, Abraham Harracles, Jos Rawnpike, and James Yarlett rose, stepped heavily on to the little platform, and stood in a line with their hands in their pockets. “As a bird is known by its note” was hidden by the rampart of their shoulders. They had no music. They knew the music; they had sung it a thousand times. They knew precisely the effects which they wished to produce, and the means of production. They worked together like an inspired machine. Mr Arthur Smallrice gave a rapid glance into

a corner, and from that corner a concertina spoke one short note. Then began, with no hesitating shuffling preliminaries nor mute consultations, the singing of that classic quartet, justly celebrated from Hull to Wigan and from Northallerton to Lichfield, "Loud Ocean's Roar." The thing was performed with absolute assurance and perfection. Mr Arthur Smallrice did the yapping of the short waves on the foamveiled rocks, and Big James in fullest grandeur did the long and mighty rolling of the deep. It was majestic, terrific, and overwhelming. Many bars before the close Edwin was thrilled, as by an exquisite and vast revelation. He tingled from head to foot. He had never heard any singing like it, or any singing in any way comparable to it. He had never guessed that song held such possibilities of emotion. The pure and fine essential qualities of the voices, the dizzying harmonies, the fugal calls and responses, the strange relief of the unisons, and above all the free, natural mien of the singers, proudly aware that they were producing something beautiful that could not be produced more beautifully, conscious of unchallenged supremacy, all this enfevered him to an unprecedented and selfastonished enthusiasm.

He murmured under his breath, as "Loud Ocean's Roar" died away and the little voices of the street supervened: "By Gad! By Gad!"

The applause was generous. Edwin stamped and clapped with childlike violence and fury. Mr Peake slowly and regularly thumped one fist on the bench, puffing the while. Glasses and mugs could be seen, but not heard, dancing. Mr Arthur Smallrice, Mr Abraham Harracles, Mr Jos Rawnpike, and Mr James Yarlett, entirely inattentive to the acclamations, stepped heavily from the platform and sat down. When Edwin caught Big James's eye he clapped again, reanimating the general approval, and Big James gazed at him with bland satisfaction. Mr Enoch Peake was now, save for the rise and fall of his great chest, as immobile and brooding as an Indian god.

#### **Four.**

Edwin did not depart. He reflected that, even if his father should come home earlier than the last train and prove curious, it would be impossible for him to know the exact moment at which his son had been able to have speech with Mr Enoch Peake on the important matter of business. For aught his father could ever guess he might have been prevented from obtaining the attention of the chairman of the proceedings until, say, eleven o'clock. Also, he meant to present his conduct to his father in the light of an enterprising and fearless action showing a marked aptitude for affairs. Mr Enoch Peake, whom his father was anxious to flatter, had desired his father's company at the Dragon, and, to save the situation, Edwin had courageously gone instead: that was it.

Besides, he would have stayed in any case. His mind was elevated above the fear of consequences.

There was some concertina playing, with a realistic imitation of church bells borne on the wind from a distance; and then the Bursley Prize Handbell Ringers (or Campanologists) produced a whole family of real bells from under a form, and the ostler and the two women arranged a special table, and the campanologists fixed their bells on it and themselves round it, and performed a selection of Scotch and Irish airs, without once deceiving themselves as to the precise note which a chosen bell would emit when duly shaken.

Singular as was this feat, it was far less so than a young man's performance of the ophicleide, a serpentine instrument that coiled round and about its player, and when breathed into persuasively gave forth prodigious brassy sounds that resembled the nightnoises of beasts of prey. This item roused the Indian god from his umbilical contemplations, and as the young ophicleide player, somewhat breathless, passed down the room with his brazen creature in his arms, Mr Enoch Peake pulled him by the jackettail.

"Eh!" said Mr Enoch Peake. "Is that the ophicleide as thy father used to play at th' owd church?"

"Yes, Mr Peake," said the young man, with bright respect.

Mr Peake dropped his eyes again, and when the young man had gone, he murmured, to his stomach

"I well knowed it were th' ophicleide as his father used to play at th' owd church!" And suddenly starting up, he continued hoarsely, "Gentlemen all, Mr James Yarlett will now kindly oblige with 'The Miller of the Dee.'" And one of the women relighted his pipe and served him with beer.

## **Five.**

Big James's rendering of "The Miller of the Dee" had been renowned in the Five Towns since 1852. It was classical, hallowed. It was the only possible rendering of "The Miller of the Dee." If the greatest bass in the world had come incognito to Bursley and sung "The Miller of the Dee," people would have said, "Ah! But ye should hear Big James sing it!" It suited Big James. The sentiments of the song were his sentiments; he expressed them with natural simplicity; but at the same time they underwent a certain refinement



at his hands; for even when he sang at his loudest Big James was refined, natty, and restrained. His instinctive gentlemanliness was invincible and allpervading. And the real beauty and enormous power of his magnificent voice saved him by its mere distinction from the charge of being finicking. The simple sound of the voice gave pleasure. And the simple production of that sound was Big James's deepest joy. Amid all the expected loud applause the giant looked naïvely for Edwin's boyish mad enthusiasm, and felt it; and was thrilled, and very glad that he had brought Edwin. As for Edwin, Edwin was humbled that he should have been so blind to what Big James was. He had always regarded Big James as a dull, decent, somewhat peculiar fellow in a dirty apron, who was his father's foreman. He had actually talked once to Big James of the wonderful way in which Maggie and Clara sang, and Big James had been properly respectful. But the singing of Maggie and Clara was less than nothing, the crudest amateurism, compared to these public performances of Big James's. Even the accompanying concertina was far more cleverly handled than the Clayhanger piano had ever been handled. Yes, Edwin was humbled. And he had a great wish to be able to do something brilliantly himself he knew not what. The intoxication of the desire for glory was upon him as he sat amid those shirtsleeved men, near the brooding Indian god, under a crawling bluish canopy of smoke, gazing absently at the legend: "As a bird is known by its note"

After an interval, during which Mr Enoch Peake was roused more than once, a man with a Lancashire accent recited a poem entitled "The Patent Hairbrushing Machine," the rotary hairbrush being at that time an exceedingly piquant novelty that had only been heard of in the barbers' shops of the Five Towns, though travellers to Manchester could boast that they had sat under it. As the principle of the new machine was easily grasped, and the sensations induced by it easily imagined, the recitation had a success which was indicated by slappings of thighs and great blowingsoff of mirth. But Mr Enoch Peake preserved his tranquillity throughout it, and immediately it was over he announced with haste

"Gentlemen all, Miss Florence Simcox shall us say Mrs Offlow, wife of the gentleman who has just obliged the champion female clogdancer of the Midlands, will now oblige."

### **Six.**

These words put every man whom they surprised into a state of unusual animation; and they surprised most of the company. It may be doubted whether a female clogdancer had ever footed it in Bursley. Several publichouses possessed local champions of a street, of a village but these were emphatically not women. Enoch Peake had arranged this daring item in the course of his afternoon's business at Cocknage Gardens, Mr Offlow being an expert in ratting terriers, and Mrs Offlow happening to be on a tour with her husband through the realms of her championship, a tour which mingled the varying

advantages derivable from terriers, recitations, and clogs. The affair was therefore respectable beyond cavil.

Nevertheless when Florence shone suddenly at the servicedoor, the shortness of her redandblack velvet skirts, and the undeniable complete visibility of her rounded calves produced an uneasy and agreeable impression that Enoch Peake, for a chairman of the Mutual Burial Club, had gone rather far, superbly far, and that his moral ascendancy over Louisa Loggerheads must indeed be truly astonishing. Louisa now stood gravely behind the dancer, in the shadow of the doorway, and the contrast between her and Florence was in every way striking enough to prove what a wonderful and mysterious man Enoch Peake was. Florence was accustomed to audiences. She was a pretty, dolllike woman, if inclined to amplitude; but the smile between those shaking golden ringlets had neither the modesty nor the false modesty nor the docility that Bursley was accustomed to think proper to the face of woman. It could have stared down any man in the place, except perhaps Mr Peake.

The gestures of Mr Offlow, and her gestures, as he arranged and prepared the surface of the little square dancingboard that was her throne, showed that he was the husband of Florence Simcox rather than she the wife of Offlow the reciter and dogfancier. Further, it was his rôle to play the concertina to her: he had had to learn the concertinapossibly a secret humiliation for one whose judgement in terriers was not excelled in many publichouses.

### **Seven.**

She danced; and the servicedoorway showed a vista of openmouthed scullions. There was no sound in the room, save the concertina and the champion clogs. Every eye was fixed on those clogs; even the little eyes of Mr Peake quitted the button of his waistcoat and burned like diamond points on those clogs. Florence herself chiefly gazed on those clogs, but occasionally her nonchalant petulant gaze would wander up and down her bare arms and across her bosom. At intervals, with her ringed fingers she would lift the short skirta nothing, an imperceptibility, half an inch, with glance downcast; and the effect was profound, recondite, inexplicable. Her style was not that of a male dogdancer, but it was indubitably clogdancing, full of marvels to the connoisseur, and to the profane naught but a highly complicated series of wooden noises. Florence's face began to perspire. Then the concertina ceased playing, so that an undistracted attention might be given to the supremely difficult final figures of the dance.

And thus was rendered back to the people in the charming form of beauty that which the instinct of the artist had taken from the sordid ugliness of the people. The clog, the very emblem of the servitude and the squalor of brutalised populations, was changed, on the

light feet of this favourite, into the medium of grace. Few of these men but at some time of their lives had worn the clog, had clattered in it through winter's slush, and through the freezing darkness before dawn, to the manufactory and the mill and the mine, whence after a day of labour under discipline more than military, they had clattered back to their little candlelighted homes. One of the slatterns behind the doorway actually stood in clogs to watch the dancer. The clog meant everything that was harsh, foul, and desolating; it summoned images of misery and disgust. Yet on those feet that had never worn it seriously, it became the magic instrument of pleasure, waking dulled wits and forgotten aspirations, putting upon everybody an enchantment... And then, suddenly, the dancer threw up one foot as high as her head and brought two clogs down together like a double mallet on the board, and stood still. It was over.

Mrs Louisa Loggerheads turned nervously away, pushing her servants in front of her. And when the society of mutual buriers had recovered from the startling shameless insolence of that last high kick, it gave the rein to its panting excitement, and roared and stamped. Edwin was staggered. The blood swept into his face, a hot tide. He was ravished, but he was also staggered. He did not know what to think of Florence, the champion female clogdancer. He felt that she was wondrous; he felt that he could have gazed at her all night; but he felt that she had put him under the necessity of reconsidering some of his fundamental opinions. For example, he was obliged to admit within himself a lessening of scorn for the attitude toward each other of Miss Ingamells and her young man. He saw those things in a new light. And he reflected, dazzled by the unforeseen chances of existence: "Yesterday I was at school and today I see this!" He was so preoccupied by his own intimate sensations that the idea of applauding never occurred to him, until he perceived his conspicuousness in not applauding, whereupon he clapped selfconsciously.

### **Eight.**

Miss Florence Simcox, somewhat breathless, tripped away, with simulated coyness and many curtseys. She had done her task, and as a woman she had to go: this was a gathering of members of the Mutual Burial Club, a masculine company, and not meet for females. The men pulled themselves together, remembering that their proudest quality was a stoic callousness that nothing could overthrow. They refilled pipes, ordered more beer, and resumed the mask of invulnerable solemnity.

"Aye!" muttered Mr Enoch Peake.

Edwin, with a great effort, rose and walked out. He would have liked to say good night to Big James; he did not deny that he ought to have done so; but he dared not complicate his exit. On the pavement outside, in the warm damp night, a few loitering listeners

stood doggedly before an open window, hearkening, their hands deep in their pockets, motionless. And Edwin could hear Mr Enoch Peake: “Gentlemen all, Mester Arthur Smallrice, Mester Abraham Harracles, Mester Jos Rampick, and Mester James Yarlett”

## **Chapter Eleven.**

### **Son and Father.**

Later that evening, Edwin sat at a small deal table in the embrasure of the dormer window of the empty attic next to his bedroom. During the interval between tea and the rendezvous with Big James he had formally planted his flag in that room. He had swept it out with a longbrush, while Clara stood at the door giggling at the spectacle and telling him that he had no right thus to annex territory in the absence of the overlord. He had mounted a pair of steps, and put a lot of lumber through a trap at the head of the stairs into the loft. And he had got a table, a lamp, and a chair. That was all that he needed for the moment. He had gone out to meet Big James with his head quite half full of this vague atticproject, but the night sights of Bursley, and especially the music at the Dragon, and still more especially the dancing at the Dragon, had almost expelled the atticproject from his head. When he returned unobtrusively into the house and learnt from a disturbed Mrs Nixon, who was sewing in the kitchen, that he was understood to be in his new attic, and that his sisters had gone to bed, the enchantment of the attic had instantly resumed much of its power over him, and he had hurried upstairs fortified with a slice of bread and half a cold sausage. He had eaten the food absently in gulps while staring at the cover of "Cazenove's Architectural Views of European Capitals," abstracted from the shop without payment. Then he had pinned part of a sheet of cartridgepaper on an old drawingboard which he possessed, and had sat down. For his purpose the paper ought to have been soaked and stretched on the board with paste, but that would have meant a delay of seven or eight hours, and he was not willing to wait. Though he could not concentrate his mind to begin, his mind could not be reconciled to waiting. So he had decided to draw his picture in pencil outline, and then stretch the paper early on Sunday morning; it would dry during chapel. His new box of paints, a cracked Tsquare, and some indiarubber also lay on the table.

He had chosen "View of the Cathedral of Notre Dame Paris, from the Pont des Arts." It pleased him by the coloration of the old houses in front of Notre Dame, and the reflections in the water of the Seine, and the elusive blueness of the twin towers amid the pale grey clouds of a Parisian sky. A romantic scene! He wanted to copy it exactly, to recreate it from beginning to end, to feel the thrill of producing each wonderful effect himself. Yet he sat inactive. He sat and vaguely gazed at the slope of Trafalgar Road with its double row of yellow jewels, beautifully ascending in fire to the ridge of the horizon and there losing itself in the deep and solemn purple of the summer night; and he thought how ugly and commonplace all that was, and how different from all that were the noble capitals of Europe. Scarcely a sound came through the open window; song doubtless still gushed forth at the Dragon, and revellers would not for hours awake the street on their way to the exacerbating atmosphere of home.

## Two.

He had no resolution to take up the pencil. Yet after the Male Glee Party had sung "Loud Ocean's Roar," he remembered that he had had a most clear and distinct impulse to begin drawing architecture at once, and to do something grand and fine, as grand and fine as the singing, something that would thrill people as the singing thrilled. If he had not rushed home instantly it was solely because he had been held back by the stronger desire to hear more music and by the hope of further novel and exciting sensations. But Florence the clogdancer had easily diverted the seeming powerful current of his mind. He wanted as much as ever to do wondrous things, and to do them soon, but it appeared to him that he must think out first the enigmatic subject of Florence. Never had he seen any female creature as he saw her, and ephemeral images of her were continually forming and dissolving before him. He could come to no conclusion at all about the subject of Florence. Only his boyish pride was gradually being beaten back by an oncoming idea that up to that very evening he had been a sort of rather silly kid with no eyes in his head.

It was in order to ignore for a time this unsettling and humiliating idea that, finally, he began to copy the outlines of the Parisian scene on his cartridge paper. He was in no way a skilled draughtsman, but he had dabbled in pencils and colours, and he had lately picked up from a handbook the hint that in blocking out a drawing the first thing to do was to observe what points were vertically under what points, and what points horizontal with what points. He seemed to see the whole secret of draughtsmanship in this priceless counsel, which, indeed, with an elementary knowledge of geometry acquired at school, and the familiarity of his fingers with a pencil, constituted the whole of his technical equipment. All the rest was mere desire. Happily the architectural nature of the subject made it more amenable than, say, a rural landscape to the use of a T-square and common sense. And Edwin considered that he was doing rather well until, quitting measurements and rulings, he arrived at the stage of drawing the detail of the towers. Then at once the dream of perfect accomplishment began to fade at the edges, and the crust of faith to yield ominously. Each stroke was a falling away from the ideal, a blow to hope.

And suddenly a yawn surprised him, and recalled him to the existence of his body. He thought: "I can't really be tired. It would be absurd to go to bed." For his theory had long been that the notions of parents about bedtime were indeed absurd, and that he would be just as thoroughly reposed after three hours sleep as after ten. And now that he was a man he meant to practise his theory so far as circumstances allowed. He looked at his watch. It was turned halfpast eleven. A delicious wave of joy and of satisfaction animated him. He had never been up so late, within his recollection, save on a few occasions when even infants were allowed to be up late. He was alone, secreted, master

of his time and his activity, his mind charged with novel impressions, and a congenial work in progress. Alone? ... It was as if he was spiritually alone in the vast solitude of the night. It was as if he could behold the unconscious forms of all humanity, sleeping. This feeling that only he had preserved consciousness and energy, that he was the sole active possessor of the mysterious night, affected him in the most exquisite manner. He had not been so nobly happy in his life. And at the same time he was proud, in a childlike way, of being up so late.

### **Three.**

He heard the door being pushed open, and he gave a jump and turned his head. His father stood in the entrance to the attic.

“Hello, father!” he said weakly, ingratiatingly.

“What art doing at this time o’ night, lad?” Darius Clayhanger demanded.

Strange to say, the autocrat was not angered by the remarkable sight in front of him. Edwin knew that his father would probably come home from Manchester on the mail train, which would stop to set down a passenger at Shawport by suitable arrangement. And he had expected that his father would go to bed, as usual on such evenings, after having eaten the supper left for him in the sittingroom. His father’s bedroom was next door to the sittingroom. Save for Mrs Nixon in a distant nook, Edwin had the attic floor to himself. He ought to have been as safe from intrusion there as in the farthest capital of Europe. His father did not climb the attic stairs once in six months. So that he had regarded himself as secure. Still, he must have positively forgotten the very existence of his father; he must have been ‘lost,’ otherwise he could not but have heard the footsteps on the stairs.

“I was just drawing,” said Edwin, with a little more confidence.

He looked at his father and saw an old man, a man who for him had always been old, generally harsh, often truculent, and seldom indulgent. He saw an ugly, undistinguished, and somewhat vulgar man (far less dignified, for instance, than Big James); a man who had his way by force and scarcely ever by argument; a man whose arguments for or against a given course were simply pitiable, if not despicable. He sometimes indeed thought that there must be a peculiar twist in his father’s brain which prevented him from appreciating an adverse point in a debate; he had ceased to expect that his father would listen to reason. Latterly he was always surprised when, as tonight, he caught a glance of mild benevolence on that face; yet he would never fail to respond to such a mood eagerly, without resentment. It might be said that he regarded his father

as he regarded the weather, fatalistically. No more than against the weather would he have dreamed of bearing malice against his father, even had such a plan not been unwise and dangerous. He was convinced that his father's interest in him was about the same as the sun's interest in him. His father was nearly always wrapped in business affairs, and seemed to come to the trifling affairs of Edwin with difficulty, as out of an absorbing engrossment.

Assuredly he would have been amazed to know that his father had been thinking of him all the afternoon and evening. But it was so. Darius Clayhanger had been nervous as to the manner in which the boy would acquit himself in the bit of business which had been confided to him. It was the boy's first bit of business. Straightforward as it was, the boy might muddle it, might omit a portion of it, might say the wrong thing, might forget. Darius hoped for the best, but he was afraid. He saw in his son an amiable irresponsible fool. He compared Edwin at sixteen with himself at the same age. Edwin had never had a care, never suffered a privation, never been forced to think for himself. (Darius might more justly have put it never been allowed to think for himself.) Edwin had lived in cottonwool, and knew less of the world than his father had known at half his years; much less. Darius was sure that Edwin had never even come near suspecting the miracles which his father had accomplished: this was true, and not merely was Edwin stupendously ignorant, and even pettily scornful, of realities, but he was ignorant of his own ignorance. Education! ... Darius snorted. To Darius it seemed that Edwin's education was like lying down in an orchard in lovely summer and having ripe fruit dropped into your mouth... A cocky infant! A girl! And yet there was something about Edwin that his father admired, even respected and envied ... an occasional gesture, an attitude in walking, an intonation, a smile. Edwin, his own son, had a personal distinction that he himself could never compass. Edwin talked more correctly than his father. He thought differently from his father. He had an original grace. In the essence of his being he was superior to both his father and his sisters. Sometimes when his father saw him walking along the street, or coming into a room, or uttering some simple phrase, or shrugging his shoulders, Darius was aware of a faint thrill. Pride? Perhaps; but he would never have admitted it. An agreeable perplexity rather a state of being puzzled how he, so common, had begotten a creature so subtly aristocratic ... aristocratic was the word. And Edwin seemed so young, fragile, innocent, and defenceless!

#### **Four.**

Darius advanced into the attic.

"What about that matter of Enoch Peake's?" he asked, hoping and fearing, really anxious for his son. He defended himself against probable disappointment by preparing to lapse



into savage paternal pessimism and disgust at the futility of an offspring nursed in luxury.

“Oh! It’s all right,” said Edwin eagerly. “Mr Peake sent word he couldn’t come, and he wanted you to go across to the Dragon this evening. So I went instead.” It sounded dashinglly capable.

He finished the recital, and added that of course Big James had not been able to proceed with the job.

“And where’s the proof?” demanded Darius. His relief expressed itself in a superficial surliness; but Edwin was not deceived. As his father gazed mechanically at the proof that Edwin produced hurriedly from his pocket, he added with a negligent air

“There was a freeandeasy on at the Dragon, father.”

“Was there?” muttered Darius.

Edwin saw that whatever danger had existed was now over.

“And I suppose,” said Darius, with assumed grimness, “if I hadn’t happened to ha’ seen a light from th’ bottom o’ th’ attic stairs I should never have known aught about all this here?” He indicated the cleansed attic, the table, the lamp, and the apparatus of art.

“Oh yes, you would, father!” Edwin reassured him.

Darius came nearer. They were close together, Edwin twisted on the cane chair, and his father almost over him. The lamp smelt, and gave off a stuffy warmth; the open window, through which came a wandering air, was a black oblong; the triangular side walls of the dormer shut them intimately in; the house slept.

“What art up to?”

The tone was benignant. Edwin had not been ordered abruptly off to bed, with a reprimand for late hours and silly proceedings generally. He sought the reason in vain. One reason was that Darius Clayhanger had made a grand bargain at Manchester in the purchase of a secondhand printing machine.

“I’m copying this,” he replied slowly, and then all the details tumbled rashly out of his mouth, one after the other. “Oh, father! I found this book in the shop, packed away on a top shelf, and I want to borrow it. I only want to borrow it. And I’ve bought this

paintbox, out of auntie's halfsovereign. I paid Miss Ingamells the full price... I thought I'd have a go at some of these architecture things."

Darius glared at the copy.

"Humph!"

"It's only just started, you know."

"Them prize bookshave ye done all that?"

"Yes, father."

"And put all the prices down, as I told ye?"

"Yes, father."

Then a pause. Edwin's heart was beating hard.

"I want to do some of these architecture things," he repeated. No remark from his father. Then he said, fastening his gaze intensely on the table: "You know, father, what I should really like to beI should like to be an architect."

It was out. He had said it.

"Should ye?" said his father, who attached no importance of any kind to this avowal of a preference. "Well, what you want is a bit o' business training for a start, I'm thinking."

"Oh, of course!" Edwin concurred, with pathetic eagerness, and added a piece of information for his father: "I'm only sixteen, aren't I?"

"Sixteen ought to ha' been in bed this two hours and more. Off with ye!"

Edwin retired in an extraordinary state of relief and happiness.

## **Chapter Twelve.**

### **Machinery.**

Rather more than a week later, Edwin had so far entered into the life of his father's business that he could fully share the excitement caused by an impending solemnity in the printing office. He was somewhat pleased with himself, and especially with his seriousness. The memory of school was slipping away from him in the most extraordinary manner. His only schoolfriend, Charlie Orgreave, had departed, with all the multitudinous Orgreaves, for a month in Wales. He might have written to the Sunday; the Sunday might have written to him: but the idea of writing did not occur to either of them; they were both still sufficiently childlike to accept with fatalism all the consequences of parental caprice. Orgreave senior had taken his family to Wales; the boys were thus separated, and there was an end of it. Edwin regretted this, because Orgreave senior happened to be a very successful architect, and hence there were possibilities of getting into an architectural atmosphere. He had never been inside the home of the Sunday, nor the Sunday in his schoolboy friendship can flourish in perfect independence of home but he nervously hoped that on the return of the Orgreave regiment from Wales, something favourable to his ambitions she knew not what would come to pass. In the meantime he was conscientiously doing his best to acquire a business training, as his father had suggested. He gave himself with an enthusiasm almost religious to the study of business methods. All the force of his resolve to perfect himself went for the moment into this immediate enterprise, and he was sorry that business methods were not more complex, mysterious, and original than they seemed to be: he was also sorry that his father did not show a greater interest in his industry and progress.

He no longer wanted to 'play' now. He despised play. His unique wish was to work. It struck him as curious and delightful that he really enjoyed work. Work had indeed become play. He could not do enough work to satisfy his appetite. And after the work of the day, scorning all silly notions about exercise and relaxation, he would spend the evening in his beautiful new attic, copying designs, which he would sometimes rise early to finish. He thought he had conquered the gross body, and that it was of no account. Even the desolating failures which his copies invariably proved did not much discourage him; besides, one of them had impressed both Maggie and Clara. He copied with laborious ardour undiminished. And further, he masterfully appropriated Maggie's ticket for the Free Library, pending the preliminaries to the possession of a ticket of his own, to procure a volume on architecture. From timidity, from a singular false shame, he kept this volume in the attic, like a crime; nobody knew what the volume was. Evidence of a strange trait in his character; a trait perhaps not defensible! He argued with himself that having told his father plainly that he wanted to be an architect, he

need do nothing else aggressive for the present. He had agreed to the suggestion about business training, and he must be loyal to his agreement. He pointed out to himself how right his father was. At sixteen one could scarcely begin to be an architect; it was too soon; and a good business training would not be out of place in any career or profession.

He was so wrapped up in his days and his nights that he forgot to inquire why earthenware was made in just the Five Towns. He had grown too serious for trifles and all in about a week! True, he was feeling the temporary excitement of the printing office, which was perhaps expressed boyishly by the printing staff; but he reckoned that his share of it was quite adult, frowningly superior, and in a strictly business sense justifiable and even proper.

## **Two.**

Darius Clayhanger's printing office was a fine example of the policy of makeshift which governed and still governs the commercial activity of the Five Towns. It consisted of the first floor of a nondescript building which stood at the bottom of the irregularly shaped yard behind the house and shop, and which formed the southern boundary of the Clayhanger premises. The antique building had once been part of an old-fashioned potworks, but that must have been in the eighteenth century. Kilns and chimneys of all ages, sizes, and tints rose behind it to prove that this part of the town was one of the old manufacturing quarters. The groundfloor of the building, entirely inaccessible from Clayhanger's yard, had a separate entrance of its own in an alley that branched off from Woodisun Bank, ran parallel to Wedgwood Street, and stopped abruptly at the back gate of a saddler's workshop. In the narrow entry you were like a creeping animal amid the undergrowth of a forest of chimneys, ovens, and high blank walls. This groundfloor had been a stable for many years; it was now, however, a baker's storeroom. Once there had been an interior staircase leading from the groundfloor to the firstfloor, but it had been suppressed in order to save floor space, and an exterior staircase constructed with its foot in Clayhanger's yard. To meet the requirement of the staircase, one of the firstfloor windows had been transformed into a door. Further, as the staircase came against one of the groundfloor windows, and as Clayhanger's predecessor had objected to those alien windows overlooking his yard, and as numerous windows were anyhow unnecessary to a stable, all the groundfloor windows had been closed up with oddments of brick and tile, giving to the wall a very variegated and chequered appearance. Thus the groundfloor and the firstfloor were absolutely divorced, the former having its entrance and light from the public alley, the latter from the private yard.

The firstfloor had been a printing office for over seventy years. All the machinery in it had had to be manoeuvred up the rickety stairs, or put through one of the windows on either side of the window that had been turned into a door. When Darius Clayhanger, in

his audacity, decided to print by steam, many people imagined that he would at last be compelled to rent the groundfloor or to take other premises. But no! The elasticity of the makeshift policy was not yet fully stretched. Darius, in consultation with a jobbing builder, came happily to the conclusion that he could 'manage,' that he could 'make things do,' by adding to the top of his stairs a little landing for an engineshed. This was done, and the engine and boiler perched in the air; the shaft of the engine went through the wall; the chimneypipe of the boiler ran up straight to the level of the roofridge, and was stayed with pieces of wire. A new chimney had also been pierced in the middle of the roof, for the uses of a heating stove. The original chimneys had been allowed to fall into decay. Finally, a new large skylight added interest to the roof. In a general way, the building resembled a suit of clothes that had been worn, during four of the seven ages of man, by an untidy husband with a tidy and economical wife, and then given by the wife to a poor relation of a somewhat different figure to finish. All that could be said of it was that it survived and served.

But these considerations occurred to nobody.

### **Three.**

Edwin, quite unaware that he was an instrument in the hands of his Auntie Clara's Providence, left the shop without due excuse and passed down the long bluepaved yard towards the printing office. He imagined that he was being drawn thither simply by his own curiosity, a curiosity, however, which he considered to be justifiable, and even laudable. The yard showed signs that the unusual had lately been happening there. Its brick pavement, in the narrow branch of it that led to the double gates in Woodisun Bank (those gates which said to the casual visitor, 'No Admittance except on Business'), was muddy, littered, and damaged, as though a Juggernaut had passed that way. Ladders reclined against the walls. Moreover, one of the windows of the office had been taken out of its frame, leaving naught but an oblong aperture. Through this aperture Edwin could see the busy, eager forms of his father, Big James, and Chawner. Through this aperture had been lifted, in parts and by the employment of every possible combination of lever and pulley, the printing machine which Darius Clayhanger had so successfully purchased in Manchester on the day of the freeandeasy at the Dragon.

At the top of the flight of steps two apprentices, one nearly 'out of his time,' were ministering to the engine, which that morning did not happen to be running. The engine, giving glory to the entire establishment by virtue of the imposing word 'steam', was a crotchety and capricious thing, constant only in its tendency to break down. No more reliance could be placed on it than on a pampered donkey. Sometimes it would run, and sometimes it would not run, but nobody could safely prophesy its moods. Of the several machines it drove but one, the grand cylinder, the last triumph of the

ingenuity of man, and even that had to be started by hand before the engine would consent to work it. The staff hated the engine, except during those rare hours when one of its willing moods coincided with a pressure of business. Then, when the steam was sputtering and the smoke smoking and the piston throbbing, and the leathern belt travelling round and round and the complete building atremble and aclatter, and an attendant with clean hands was feeding the sheets at one end of the machine and another attendant with clean hands taking them off at the other, all at the rate of twenty copies per sixty seconds then the staff loved the engine and meditated upon the wonders of their modern civilisation. The engine had been known to do its five thousand in an afternoon, and its horsepower was only one.

#### **Four.**

Edwin could not keep out of the printing office. He went inconspicuously and, as it were, by accident up the stone steps, and disappeared into the interior. When you entered the office you were first of all impressed by the multiplicity of odours competing for your attention, the chief among them being those of ink, oil, and paraffin. Despite the fact that the door was open and one window gone, the smell and heat in the office on that warm morning were notable. Old sheets of the "Manchester Examiner" had been pinned over the skylight to keep out the sun, but, as these were torn and rent, the sun was not kept out. Nobody, however, seemed to suffer inconvenience. After the odours, the remarkable feature of the place was the quantity of machinery on its uneven floor. Timid employés had occasionally suggested to Darius that the floor might yield one day and add themselves and all the machinery to the baker's stores below; but Darius knew that floors never did yield.

In the middle of the floor was a huge and heavy heating stove, whose pipe ran straight upwards to the visible roof. The mighty cylinder machine stood to the left hand. Behind was a small roughandready binding department with a guillotine cutting machine, a cardboardcutting machine, and a perforating machine, trifles by the side of the cylinder, but still each of them formidable masses of metal heavy enough to crush a horse; the cutting machines might have served to illustrate the French Revolution, and the perforating machine the Holy Inquisition.

Then there was what was called in the office the 'old machine,' a relic of Clayhanger's predecessor, and at least eighty years old. It was one of those machines whose worn physiognomies, full of character, show at once that they have a history. In construction it carried solidity to an absurd degree. Its pillars were like the piles of a pier. Once, in a historic ratcatching, a rat had got up one of them, and a piece of smouldering brown paper had done what a terrier could not do. The machine at one period of its career had been enlarged, and the neat seaming of the metal was an ecstasy to the eye of a good

workman. Long ago, it was known, this machine had printed a Reform newspaper at Stockport. Now, after thus participating in the violent politics of an age heroic and unhappy, it had been put to printing small posters of auctions and teameetings. Its movement was double: first that of a handle to bring the bed under the platen, and second, a lever pulled over to make contact between the type and the paper. It still worked perfectly. It was so solid, and it had been so honestly made, that it could never get out of order nor wear away. And, indeed, the conscientiousness and skill of artificers in the eighteenth century are still, through that resistless machine, producing their effect in the twentieth. But it needed a strong hand to bestir its smooth plumcoloured limbs of metal, and a speed of a hundred an hour meant gentle perspiration. The machine was loved like an animal.

Near this honourable and lumbering survival stood pertly an Empire treadlemachine for printing envelopes and similar trifles. It was new, and full of natty little devices. It worked with the lightness of something unsubstantial. A child could actuate it, and it would print delicately a thousand envelopes an hour. This machine, with the latest purchase, which was away at the other end of the room near the large doublepointed caserack, completed the tale of machines. That caserack alone held fifty different founts of type, and there were other caseracks. The leadrack was nearly as large, and beneath the leadrack was a rack containing all those “furnitures” which help to hold a forme of type together without betraying themselves to the reader of the printed sheet. And under the furniture rack was the ‘random,’ full of galleys. Then there was a table with a top of solid stone, upon which the formes were bolted up. And there was the inkslab, another solidity, upon which the inkrollers were inked. Rollers of various weightiness lay about, and large heavy cans, and many bottles, and metal galleys, and nameless fragments of metal. Everything contributed to the impression of immense ponderosity exceeding the imagination. The fancy of being pinned down by even the lightest of these constructions was excruciating. You moved about in narrow alleys among upstanding, unyielding metallic enormities, and you felt fragile and perilously soft.

### **Five.**

The only unintimidating phenomena in the crowded place were the lyebrushes, the dusty jobfiles that hung from the great transverse beams, and the proofsheets that were scattered about. These printed things showed to what extent Darius Clayhanger’s establishment was a channel through which the life of the town had somehow to pass. Auctions, meetings, concerts, sermons, improving lectures, miscellaneous entertainments, programmes, catalogues, deaths, births, marriages, specifications, municipal notices, summonses, demands, receipts, subscriptionlists, accounts, rateforms, lists of voters, jurylists, inaugurations, closures, billheads, handbills, addresses, visitingcards, society rules, bargainsales, lost and found notices: traces of all

these matters, and more, were to be found in that office; it was impregnated with the human interest; it was dusty with the human interest; its hot smell seemed to you to come off life itself, if the real sentiment and love of life were sufficiently in you. A grand, stuffy, living, seething place, with all its metallic immobility!

### **Six.**

Edwin sidled towards the centre of interest, the new machine, which, however, was not a new machine. Darius Clayhanger did not buy more new things than he could help. His delight was to 'pick up' articles that were supposed to be 'as good as new'; occasionally he would even assert that an object bought secondhand was 'better than new,' because it had been 'broken in,' as if it were a horse. Nevertheless, the latest machine was, for a printing machine, nearly new: its age was four years only. It was a Demy Columbian Press, similar in conception and movement to the historic 'old machine' that had been through the Reform agitation; but how much lighter, how much handier, how much more ingenious and precise in the detail of its working! A beautiful edifice, as it stood there, gazed on admiringly by the expert eyes of Darius, in his shirtsleeves, Big James, in his royally flowing apron, and Chawner, the journeyman compositor, who, with the two apprentices outside, completed the staff! Aided by no mechanic more skilled than a daylabourer, those men had got the machine piecemeal into the office, and had duly erected it. At that day a foreman had to be equal to anything.

The machine appeared so majestic there, so solid and immovable, that it might ever have existed where it then was. Who could credit that, less than a fortnight earlier, it had stood equally majestic, solid, and immovable in Manchester? There remained nothing to show how the miracle had been accomplished, except a bandage of ropes round the lower pillars and some pulleytackle hanging from one of the transverse beams exactly overhead. The situation of the machine in the workshop had been fixed partly by that beam above and partly by the run of the beams that supported the floor. The stout roofbeam enabled the artificers to handle the great masses by means of the tackle; and as for the floorbeams, Darius had so far listened to warnings as to take them into account.

### **Seven.**

"Take another impress, James," said Darius. And when he saw Edwin, instead of asking the youth what he was wasting his time there for, he goodhumouredly added: "Just watch this, my lad." Darius was pleased with himself, his men, and his acquisition. He was in one of his moods when he could charm; he was jolly, and he held up his chin. Two days before, so interested had he been in the Demy Columbian, he had actually



gone through a bilious attack while scarcely noticing it! And now the whole complex operation had been brought to a triumphant conclusion.

Big James inserted the sheet of paper, with gentle and fine movements. The journeyman turned the handle, and the bed of the machine slid horizontally forward in frictionless, stately silence. And then Big James seized the lever with his hairy arm bared to the elbow, and pulled it over. The delicate process was done with minute and level exactitude; adjusted to the thirtysecond of an inch, the great masses of metal had brought the paper and the type together and separated them again. In another moment Big James drew out the sheet, and the three men inspected it, each leaning over it. A perfect impression!

“Well,” said Darius, glowing, “we’ve had a bit o’ luck in getting that up! Never had less trouble! Shows we can do better without those Foundry chaps than with ’em! James, ye can have a quart brought in, if ye’n a mind, but I won’t have them apprentices drinking! No, I won’t! Mrs Nixon’ll give ’em some nettlebeer if they fancy it.”

He was benignant. The inauguration of a new machine deserved solemn recognition, especially on a hot day. It was an event.

“An infant in arms could turn this here,” murmured the journeyman, toying with the handle that moved the bed. It was an exaggeration, but an excusable, poetical exaggeration.

Big James wiped his wrists on his apron.

### **Eight.**

Then there was a queer sound of cracking somewhere, vague, faint, and yet formidable. Darius was standing between the machines and the dismantled window, his back to the latter. Big James and the journeyman rushed instinctively from the centre of the floor towards him. In a second the journeyman was on the window sill.

“What art doing?” Darius demanded roughly; but there was no sincerity in his voice.

“Th’ floor!” the journeyman excitedly exclaimed.

Big James stood close to the wall.

“And what about th’ floor?” Darius challenged him obstinately.

“One o’ them beams is agoing,” stammered the journeyman.

“Rubbish!” shouted Darius. But simultaneously he motioned to Edwin to move from the middle of the room, and Edwin obeyed. All four listened, with nerves stretched to the tightest. Darius was biting his lower lip with his upper teeth. His humour had swiftly changed to the savage. Every warning that had been uttered for years past concerning that floor was remembered with startling distinctness. Every impatient reassurance offered by Darius for years past suddenly seemed fatuous and perverse. How could any man in his senses expect the old floor to withstand such a terrific strain as that to which Darius had at last dared to subject it? The floor ought by rights to have given way years ago! His men ought to have declined to obey instructions that were obviously insane. These and similar thoughts visited the minds of Big James and the journeyman.

As for Edwin, his excitement was, on balance, pleasurable. In truth, he could not kill in his mind the hope that the floor would yield. The greatness of the resulting catastrophe fascinated him. He knew that he should be disappointed if the catastrophe did not occur. That it would mean ruinous damage to the extent of hundreds of pounds, and enormous worry, did not influence him. His reason did not influence him, nor his personal danger. He saw a large hook in the wall to which he could cling when the exquisite crash came, and pictured a welter of broken machinery and timber ten feet below him, and the immense pother that the affair would create in the town.

### **Nine.**

Darius would not loose his belief in his floor. He hugged it in mute fury. He would not climb on to the window sill, nor tell Big James to do so, nor even Edwin. On the subject of the floor he was religious; he was above the appeal of the intelligence. He had always held passionately that the floor was immovable, and he always would. He had finally convinced himself of its omnipotent strength by the long process of assertion and reassertion. When a voice within him murmured that his belief in the floor had no scientific basis, he strangled the voice. So he remained, motionless, between the window and the machine.

No sound! No slightest sound! No tremor of the machine! But Darius’s breathing could be heard after a moment.

He guffawed sneeringly.

“And what next?” he defiantly asked, scowling. “What’s amiss wi’ ye all?” He put his hands in his pockets. “Dun ye mean to tell me as”

The younger apprentice entered from the engineshed.

“Get back there!” rolled and thundered the voice of Big James. It was the first word he had spoken, and he did not speak it in frantic, hysteric command, but with a terrible and convincing mildness. The phrase fell on the apprentice like a sandbag, and he vanished.

Darius said nothing. There was another cracking sound, louder, and unmistakably beneath the bed of the machine. And at the same instant a flake of grimy plaster detached itself from the opposite wall and dropped into pale dust on the floor. And still Darius religiously did not move, and Big James would not move. They might have been under a spell. The journeyman jumped down incautiously into the yard.

### **Ten.**

And then Edwin, hardly knowing what he did, and certainly not knowing why he did it, walked quickly out on to the floor, seized the huge hook attached to the lower pulley of the tackle that hung from the roofbeam, pulled up the slack of the ropebandage on the hind part of the machine, and stuck the hook into it, then walked quickly back. The haulingrope of the tackle had been carried to the iron ring of a trapdoor in the corner near Big James; this trapdoor, once the outlet of the interior staircase from the ground floor, had been nailed down many years previously. Big James dropped to his knees and tightened and knotted the rope. Another and much louder noise of cracking followed, the floor visibly yielded, and the hindpart of the machine visibly sank about a quarter of an inch. But no more. The tackle held. The strain was distributed between the beam above and the beam below, and equilibrium established.

“Out! Lad! Out!” cried Darius feebly, in the wreck, not of his workshop, but of his religion. And Edwin fled down the steps, pushing the mystified apprentices before him, and followed by the men. In the yard the journeyman, entirely selfcentred, was hopping about on one leg and cursing.

### **Eleven.**

Darius, Big James, and Edwin stared in the morning sunshine at the aperture of the window and listened.

“Nay!” said Big James, after an eternity. “He’s saved it! He’s saved th’ old shop! But by gumby gum”

Darius turned to Edwin, and tried to say something; and then Edwin saw his father’s face working into monstrous angular shapes, and saw the tears spurt out of his eyes, and

was clutched convulsively in his father's shirtsleeved arms. He was very proud, very pleased, but he did not like this embrace; it made him feel ashamed. He thought how Clara would have sniggered about it and caricatured it afterwards, had she witnessed it. And although he had incontestably done something which was very wonderful and very heroic, and which proved in him the most extraordinary presence of mind, he could not honestly glorify himself in his own heart, because it appeared to him that he had acted exactly like an automaton. He blankly marvelled, and thought the situation agreeably thrilling, if somewhat awkward. His father let him go. Then all Edwin's feelings gave place to an immense stupefaction at his father's truly remarkable behaviour. What! His father emotional! He had to begin to revise again his settled views.

## **Chapter Thirteen.**

### **One Result of Courage.**

By the next morning a certain tranquillity was restored.

It was only in this relative calm that the Clayhanger family and its dependants began to realise the intensity of the experience through which they had passed, and, in particular, the strain of waiting for events after the printing office had been abandoned by its denizens. The rumour of what had happened, and of what might have happened, had spread about the premises in an instant, and in another instant all the women had collected in the yard; even Miss Ingamells had betrayed the sacred charge of the shop. Ten people were in the yard, staring at the window aperture on the first floor and listening for ruin. Some time had elapsed before Darius would allow anybody even to mount the steps. Then the baker, the tenant of the ground floor, had had to be fetched. A pleasant, bland man, he had consented in advance to every suggestion; he had practically made Darius a present of the ground floor, if Darius possessed the courage to go into it, or to send others into it. The seat of deliberation had then been transferred to the alley behind. And the jobbing builder and carpenters had been fetched, and there was a palaver of tremendous length and solemnity. For hours nothing definite seemed to happen; no one ate or drank, and the current of life at the corner of Trafalgar Road and Wedgwood Street ceased to flow. Boys and men who had heard of the affair, and who had the divine gift of curiosity, gazed in rapture at the 'No Admittance' notice on the ramshackle double gates in Woodisun Bank. It seemed that they might never be rewarded, but their great faith was justified when a handcart, bearing several beams three yards long, halted at the gates and was, after a pause, laboriously pushed past them and round the corner into the alley and up the alley. The alley had been crammed to witness the taking of the beams into the baker's storeroom. If the floor above had decided to yield, the noble, negligent carpenters would have been crushed beneath tons of machinery. At length a forest of pillars stood planted on the ground floor amid the baker's lumber; every beam was duly supported, and the experts pronounced that calamity was now inconceivable. Lastly, the tackle on the Demy Columbian had been loosed, and the machine, slightly askew, permitted gently to sink to full rest on the floor: and the result justified the experts.

### **Two.**

By this time people had started to eat, but informally, as it were apologetically. Evening was at hand. The Clayhangers, later, had met at table. A strange repast! A strange father! The children had difficulty in speaking naturally. And then Mrs Hamps had come, ebulliently thanking God, and conveying the fact that the town was thrilled

and standing utterly amazed in admiration before her heroical nephew. And yet she had said ardently that she was in no way amazed at her nephew's coolness; she would have been surprised if he had shown himself even one degree less cool. From a long study of his character she had foreknown infallibly that in such a crisis as had supervened he would behave precisely as he had behaved. This attitude of Auntie Hamps, however, though it reduced the miraculous to the ordinary expected, did not diminish Clara's ingenuous awe of Edwin. From a mocker, the child had been temporarily transformed into an unwilling her worshipper. Mrs Hamps having departed, all the family, including Darius, had retired earlier than usual.

And now, on meeting his father and Big James and Miss Ingamells in the queer peace of the morning, in the relaxation after tension, and in the complete realisation of the occurrence, Edwin perceived from the demeanour of all that, by an instinctive action extending over perhaps five seconds of time, he had procured for himself a wondrous and apparently permanent respect. Miss Ingamells, when he went vaguely into the freshly watered shop before breakfast, greeted him in a new tone, and with startling deference asked him what he thought she had better do in regard to the addressing of a certain parcel. Edwin considered this odd; he considered it illogical; and one consequence of Miss Ingamells's quite sincere attitude was that he despised Miss Ingamells for a moral weakling. He knew that he himself was a moral weakling, but he was sure that he could never bend, never crouch, to such a posture as Miss Ingamells's; that she was obviously sincere only increased his secret scorn.

But his father resembled Miss Ingamells. Edwin had not dreamt that mankind, and especially his father, was characterised by such simplicity. And yet, on reflection, had he not always found in his father a peculiar ingenuousness, which he could not but look down upon? His father, whom he met crossing the yard, spoke to him almost as he might have spoken to a junior partner. It was more than odd; it was against nature, as Edwin had conceived nature.

He was so superior and lofty, yet without intending it, that he made no attempt to put himself in his father's place. He, in the exciting moments between the first cracking sound and the second, had had a vision of wrecked machinery and timber in an abyss at his feet. His father had had a vision far more realistic and terrifying. His father had seen the whole course of his printing business brought to a standstill, and all his savings dragged out of him to pay for reconstruction and for new machinery. His father had seen loss of life which might be accounted to his negligence. His father had seen, with that pessimism which may overtake anybody in a crisis, the ruin of a career, the final frustration of his lifelong daring and obstinacy, and the end of everything. And then he had seen his son suddenly walk forth and save the frightful situation. He had always looked down upon that son as helpless, coddled, incapable of initiative or of boldness.

He believed himself to be a highly remarkable man, and existence had taught him that remarkable men seldom or never have remarkable sons. Again and again had he noted the tendency of remarkable men to beget gaping and idle fools. Nevertheless, he had intensely desired to be able to be proud of his son. He had intensely desired to be able, when acquaintances should be sincerely enthusiastic about the merits of his son, to pretend, insincerely and with pride only half concealed, that his son was quite an ordinary youth.

Now his desire had been fulfilled; it had been more than fulfilled. The town would chatter about Edwin's presence of mind for a week. Edwin's act would become historic; it already was historic. And not only was the act in itself wonderful and admirable and epochmaking; but it proved that Edwin, despite his blondness, his finickiness, his hesitations, had grit. That was the point: the lad had grit; there was material in the lad of which much could be made. Add to this, the father's mere instinctive gratitudea gratitude of such unguessed depth that it had prevented him even from being ashamed of having publicly and impulsively embraced his son on the previous morning.

Edwin, in his unconscious egoism, ignored all that.

### **Three.**

"I've just seen Barlow," said Darius confidentially to Edwin. Barlow was the baker. "He's been here afore his rounds. He's willing to sublet me his storeroomso that'll be all right! Eh?"

"Yes," said Edwin, seeing that his approval was being sought for.

"We must fix that machine plumb again."

"I suppose the floor's as firm as rocks now?" Edwin suggested.

"Eh! Bless ye! Yes!" said his father, with a trace of kindly impatience.

The policy of makeshift was to continue. The floor having been stayed with oak, the easiest thing and the least immediately expensive thing was to leave matters as they were. When the baker's stores were cleared from his warehouse, Darius could use the spaces between the pillars for lumber of his own; and he could either knock an entranceway through the wall in the yard, or he could open the naileddown trap door and patch the ancient stairway within; or he could do nothingit would only mean walking out into Woodisun Bank and up the alley each time he wanted access to his lumber!

And yet, after the second cracking sound on the previous day, he had been ready to vow to rent an entirely new and commonsense printing office somewhere else if only he should be saved from disaster that once! But he had not quite vowed. And, in any case, a vow to oneself is not a vow to the Virgin. He had escaped from a danger, and the recurrence of the particular danger was impossible. Why then commit follies of prudence, when the existing arrangement of things 'would do'?

#### **Four.**

That afternoon Darius Clayhanger, with his most mysterious air of business, told Edwin to follow him into the shop. Several hours of miscellaneous consultative pottering had passed between Darius and his compositors round and about the new printing machine, which was once more plumb and ready for action. For considerably over a week Edwin had been on his father's general staff without any definite task or occupation having been assigned to him. His father had been too excitedly preoccupied with the arrival and erection of the machine to bestow due thought upon the activities proper to Edwin in the complex dailiness of the business. Now he meant at any rate to begin to put the boy into a suitable niche. The boy had deserved at least that.

At the desk he opened before him the daily and weekly newspaperbook, and explained its system.

"Let's take the 'British Mechanic,'" he said.

And he turned to the page where the title 'British Mechanic' was written in red ink. Underneath that title were written the names and addresses of fifteen subscribers to the paper. To the right of the names were thirteen columns, representing a quarter of the year. With his customary laboriousness, Darius described the entire process of distribution. The parcel of papers arrived and was counted, and the name of a subscriber scribbled in an abbreviated form on each copy. Some copies had to be delivered by the errand boy; these were handed to the errand boy, and a tick made against each subscriber in the column for the week: other copies were called for by the subscriber, and as each of these was taken away, similarly a tick had to be made against the name of its subscriber. Some copies were paid for in cash in the shop, some were paid in cash to the office boy, some were paid for monthly, some were paid for quarterly, and some, as Darius said grimly, were never paid for at all. No matter what the method of paying, when a copy was paid for, or thirteen copies were paid for, a crossing tick had to be made in the book for each copy. Thus, for a single quarter of "British Mechanic" nearly two hundred ticks and nearly two hundred crossing ticks had to be made in the book, if the work was properly done. However, it was never properly done Miss Ingamells being



short of leisure and the errand boy utterly unreliable and Darius wanted it properly done. The total gross profit on a quarter of "British Mechanics" was less than five shillings, and no customers were more exigent and cantankerous than those who bought one pennyworth of goods per week, and had them delivered free, and received three months' credit. Still, that could not be helped. A printer and stationer was compelled by usage to supply papers; and besides, paper subscribers served a purpose as a nucleus of general business.

As with the "British Mechanics," so with seventeen other weeklies. The daily papers were fewer, but the accountancy they caused was even more elaborate. For monthly magazines there was a separate book with a separate system; here the sums involved were vaster, ranging as high as half a crown.

Darius led Edwin with patient minuteness through the whole labyrinth.

"Now," he said, "you're going to have sole charge of all this."

And he said it benevolently, in the conviction that he was awarding a deserved recompense, with the mien of one who was giving dominion to a faithful steward over ten cities.

"Just look into it carefully yerself, lad," he said at last, and left Edwin with a mixed parcel of journals upon which to practise.

Before Edwin's eyes flickered hundreds of names, thousands of figures, and tens of thousands of ticks. His heart protested; it protested with loathing. The prospect stretching far in front of him made him feel sick. But something weak and goodnatured in him forced him to smile, and to simulate a subdued ecstasy at receiving this overwhelming proof of his father's confidence in him. As for Darius, Darius was delighted with himself and with his son, and he felt that he was behaving as a benignant father should. Edwin had proved his grit, proved that he had that uncommunicable quality, 'character,' and had well deserved encouragement.

## **Five.**

The next morning, in the printing office, Edwin came upon Big James giving a lesson in composing to the younger apprentice, who in theory had 'learned his cases.' Big James held the composing stick in his great left hand, like a matchbox, and with his great right thumb and index picked letter after letter from the case, very slowly in order to display the movement, and dropped them into the stick. In his mild, resonant tones he explained that each letter must be picked up unfalteringly in a particular way, so that it

would drop face upward into the stick without any intermediate manipulation. And he explained also that the left hand must be held so that the right hand would have to travel to and fro as little as possible. He was revealing the basic mysteries of his craft, and was happy, making the while the broad series of stock pleasantries which have probably been current in composing rooms since printing was invented. Then he was silent, working more and more quickly, till his right hand could scarcely be followed in its twinklings, and the face of the apprentice duly spread in marvel. When the line was finished he drew out the rule, clapped it down on the top of the last row of letters, and gave the composing stick to the apprentice to essay.

The apprentice began to compose with his feet, his shoulders, his mouth, his eyebrows with all his body except his hands, which nevertheless travelled spaciouly far and wide.

“It’s not in seven year, nor in seventy, as you’ll learn, young son of a gun!” said Big James.

And, having unsettled the youth to his foundations with a bland thwack across the head, he resumed the composing stick and began again the exposition of the unique smooth movement which is the root of rapid typesetting.

“Here!” said Big James, when the apprentice had behaved worse than ever. “Us’ll ask Mr Edwin to have a go. Us’ll see what he’ll do.”

And Edwin, sheepish, had to comply. He was in pride bound to surpass the apprentice, and did so.

“There!” said Big James. “What did I tell ye?” He seemed to imply a prophecy that, because Edwin had saved the printing office from destruction two days previously, he would necessarily prove to be a born compositor.

The apprentice deferentially sniggered, and Edwin smiled modestly and awkwardly and departed without having accomplished what he had come to do.

By his own act of cool, nonchalant, unconsidered courage in a crisis, he had, it seemed, definitely proved himself to possess a special aptitude in all branches of the business of printer and stationer. Everybody assumed it. Everybody was pleased. Everybody saw that Providence had been kind to Darius and to his son. The fathers of the town, and the mothers, who liked Edwin’s complexion and fair hair, told each other that not every parent was so fortunate as Mr Clayhanger, and what a blessing it was that the old breed

was not after all dying out in those newfangled days. Edwin could not escape from the universal assumption. He felt it round him as a net which somehow he had to cut.

## **Chapter Fourteen.**

### **The Architect.**

One morning Edwin was busy in the shop with his own private minion, the paper boy, who went in awe of him. But this was not the same Edwin, though people who could only judge by features, and by the length of trousers and sleeves on legs and arms, might have thought that it was the same Edwin enlarged and corrected. Half a year had passed. The month was February, cold. Mr Enoch Peake had not merely married Mrs Louisa Loggerheads, but had died of an apoplexy, leaving behind him Cocknage Gardens, a widow, and his name painted in large letters over the word 'Loggerheads' on the lintel of the Dragon. The steamprinter had done the funeral cards, and had gone to the burial of his hopes of business in that quarter. Many funeral cards had come out of the same printing office during the winter, including that of Mr Udall, the great marbleplayer. It seemed uncanny to Edwin that a marbleplayer whom he had actually seen playing marbles should do anything so solemn as expire. However, Edwin had perfectly lost all interest in marbles; only once in six months had he thought of them, and that once through a funeral card. Also he was growing used to funeral cards. He would enter an order for funeral cards as nonchalantly as an order for butterscotch labels. But it was not deaths and the spectacle of life as seen from the shop that had made another Edwin of him.

What had changed him was the slow daily influence of a large number of trifling habitual duties none of which fully strained his faculties, and the monotony of them, and the constant watchful conventionality of his deportment with customers. He was still a youth, very youthful, but you had to keep an eye open for his youthfulness if you wished to find it beneath the little man that he had been transformed into. He now took his watch out of his pocket with an absent gesture and look exactly like his father's; and his tones would be a reflection of those of the last important fullsized man with whom he had happened to have been in contact. And though he had not developed into a dandy (finance forbidding), he kept his hair unnaturally straight, and amiably grumbled to Maggie about his collars every fortnight or so. Yes, another Edwin! Yet it must not be assumed that he was growing in discontent, either chronic or acute. On the contrary, the malady of discontent troubled him less and less.

To the paper boy he was a real man. The paper boy accepted him with unreserved fatalism, as Edwin accepted his father. Thus the boy stood passive while Edwin brought business to a standstill by privately perusing the "Manchester Examiner." It was Saturday morning, the morning on which the "Examiner" published its renowned Literary Supplement. All the children read eagerly the Literary Supplement; but Edwin, in virtue of his office, got it first. On the first and second pages was the serial story, by

George MacDonald, W. Clark Russell, or Mrs Lynn Linton; then followed readable extracts from new books, and on the fourth page were selected jokes from "Punch." Edwin somehow always began with the jokes, and in so doing was rather ashamed of his levity. He would skim the jokes, glance at the titles of the new books, and look at the dialogue parts of the serial, while business and the boy waited. There was no hurry then, even though the year had reached 1873 and people were saying that they would soon be at the middle of the seventies; even though the Licensing Act had come into force and publicans were predicting the end of the world. Morning papers were not delivered till ten, eleven, or twelve o'clock in Bursley, and on Saturdays, owing to Edwin's laudable interest in the best periodical literature, they were apt to be delivered later than usual.

## **Two.**

On this particular morning Edwin was disturbed in his studies by a greater than the paper boy, a greater even than his father. Mr Osmond Orgreave came stamping his cold feet into the shop, the floor of which was still a little damp from the watering that preceded its sweeping. Mr Orgreave, though as far as Edwin knew he had never been in the shop before, went straight to the cokestove, bent his knees, and began to warm his hands. In this position he opened an interview with Edwin, who dropped the Literary Supplement. Miss Ingamells was momentarily absent.

"Father in?"

"No, sir."

Edwin did not say where his father was, because he had received general instructions never to 'volunteer information' on that point.

"Where is he?"

"He's out, sir."

"Oh! Well! Has he left any instructions about those specifications for the Shawport Board School?"

"No, sir. I'm afraid he hasn't. But I can ask in the printing office."

Mr Orgreave approached the counter, smiling. His face was angular, rather stout, and harsh, with a grey moustache and a short grey beard, and yet his demeanour and his voice had a jocular, youthful quality. And this was not the only contradiction about him. His clothes were extremely elegant and nice in detail the whiteness of his linen would

have struck the most casual observer but he seemed to be perfectly oblivious of his clothes, indeed, to show carelessness concerning them. His fingernails were marvellously tended. But he scribbled in pencil on his cuff, and apparently was not offended by a grey mark on his hand due to touching the top of the stove. The idea in Edwin's head was that Mr Orgreave must put on a new suit of clothes once a week, and new linen every day, and take a bath about once an hour. The man had no ceremoniousness. Thus, though he had never previously spoken to Edwin, he made no preliminary pretence of not being sure who Edwin was; he chatted with him as though they were old friends and had parted only the day before; he also chatted with him as though they were equals in age, eminence, and wealth. A strange man!

"Now look here!" he said, as the conversation proceeded, "those specifications are at the Sytch Chapel. If you could come along with me now I mean now I could give them to you and point out one or two things to you, and perhaps Big James could make a start on them this morning. You see it's urgent."

So he was familiar with Big James.

"Certainly," said Edwin, excited.

And when he had curtly told the paper boy to do portions of the newspaper job which he had always held the paper boy was absolutely incapable of doing, he sent the boy to find Miss Ingamells, informed her where he was going, and followed Mr Orgreave out of the shop.

### **Three.**

"Of course you know Charlie's at school in France," said Mr Orgreave, as they passed along Wedgwood Street in the direction of Saint Luke's Square. He was really very companionable.

"Eryes!" Edwin replied, nervously explosive, and buttoning up his tight overcoat with an important business air.

"At least it isn't a school it's a university. Besançon, you know. They take university students much younger there. Oh! He has a rare time a rare time. Never writes to you, I suppose?"

"No." Edwin gave a short laugh.

Mr Orgreave laughed aloud. "And he wouldn't to us either, if his mother didn't make a fuss about it. But when he does write, we gather there's no place like Besançon."

"It must be splendid," Edwin said thoughtfully.

"You and he were great chums, weren't you? I know we used to hear about you every day. His mother used to say that we had Clayhanger with every meal." Mr Orgreave again laughed heartily.

Edwin blushed. He was quite startled, and immensely flattered. What on earth could the Sunday have found to tell them every day about him? He, Edwin Clayhanger, a subject of conversation in the household of the Orgreaves, that mysterious household which he had never entered but which he had always pictured to himself as being so finely superior! Less than a year ago Charlie Orgreave had been 'the Sunday,' had been 'old Perishintheattempt,' and now he was a student in Besançon University, unapproachable, extraordinarily romantic; and he, Edwin, remained in his father's shop! He had been aware that Charlie had gone to Besançon University, but he had not realised it effectively till this moment. The realisation blew discontent into a flame, which fed on the further perception that evidently the Orgreave family were a gay, jolly crowd of cronies together, not in the least like parents and children; their home life must be something fundamentally different from his.

#### **Four.**

When they had crossed the windy space of Saint Luke's Square and reached the top of the Sytch Bank, Mr Orgreave stopped an instant in front of the Sytch Pottery, and pointed to a large window at the south end that was in process of being boarded up.

"At last!" he murmured with disgust. Then he said: "That's the most beautiful window in Bursley, and perhaps in the Five Towns; and you see what's happening to it."

Edwin had never heard the word 'beautiful' uttered in quite that tone, except by women, such as Auntie Hamps, about a baby or a valentine or a sermon. But Mr Orgreave was not a woman; he was a man of the world, he was almost the man of the world; and the subject of his adjective was a window!

"Why are they boarding it up, Mr Orgreave?" Edwin asked.

"Oh! Ancient lights! Ancient lights!"

Edwin began to snigger. He thought for an instant that Mr Orgreave was being jocular over his head, for he could only connect the phrase 'ancient lights' with the meaner organs of a dead animal, exposed, for example, in tripe shops. However, he saw his ineptitude almost simultaneously with the commission of it, and smothered the snigger in becoming gravity. It was clear that he had something to learn in the phraseology employed by architects.

"I should think," said Mr Orgreave, "I should think they've been at law about that window for thirty years, if not more. Well, it's over now, seemingly." He gazed at the disappearing window. "What a shame!"

"It is," said Edwin politely.

Mr Orgreave crossed the road and then stood still to gaze at the façade of the Sytch Pottery. It was a long twostorey building, purest Georgian, of red brick with very elaborate stone facings which contrasted admirably with the austere simplicity of the walls. The porch was lofty, with a majestic flight of steps narrowing to the doors. The ironwork of the basement railings was unusually rich and impressive.

"Ever seen another potworks like that?" demanded Mr Orgreave, enthusiastically musing.

"No," said Edwin. Now that the question was put to him, he never had seen another potworks like that.

"There are one or two pretty fine works in the Five Towns," said Mr Orgreave. "But there's nothing elsewhere to touch this. I nearly always stop and look at it if I'm passing. Just look at the pointing! The pointing alone"

Edwin had to readjust his ideas. It had never occurred to him to search for anything fine in Bursley. The fact was, he had never opened his eyes at Bursley. Dozens of times he must have passed the Sytch Pottery, and yet not noticed, not suspected, that it differed from any other potworks: he who dreamed of being an architect!

"You don't think much of it?" said Mr Orgreave, moving on. "People don't."

"Oh yes! I do!" Edwin protested, and with such an air of eager sincerity that Mr Orgreave turned to glance at him. And in truth he did think that the Sytch Pottery was beautiful. He never would have thought so but for the accident of the walk with Mr Orgreave; he might have spent his whole life in the town, and never troubled himself a moment about the Sytch Pottery. Nevertheless he now, by an act of sheer faith,



suddenly, miraculously and genuinely regarded it as an exquisitely beautiful edifice, on a plane with the edifices of the capitals of Europe, and as a feast for discerning eyes. "I like architecture very much," he added. And this too was said with such feverish conviction that Mr Orgreave was quite moved.

"I must show you my new Sytch Chapel," said Mr Orgreave gaily.

"Oh! I should like you to show it me," said Edwin.

But he was exceedingly perturbed by misgivings. Here was he wanting to be an architect, and he had never observed the Sytch Pottery! Surely that was an absolute proof that he had no vocation for architecture! And yet now he did most passionately admire the Sytch Pottery. And he was proud to be sharing the admiration of the fine, joyous, superior, luxurious, companionable man, Mr Orgreave.

### **Five.**

They went down the Sytch Bank to the new chapel of which Mr Orgreave, though a churchman, was the architect, in that vague quarter of the world between Bursley and Turnhill. The roof was not on; the scaffolding was extraordinarily interesting and confusing; they bent their heads to pass under low portals; Edwin had the delicious smell of new mortar; they stumbled through sand, mud, cinders and little pools; they climbed a ladder and stepped over a large block of dressed stone, and Mr Orgreave said

"This is the gallery we're in, here. You see the scheme of the place now... That hole only a flue. Now you see what that arch carriesthey didn't like it in the plans because they thought it might be mistaken for a church"

Edwin was receptive.

"Of course it's a very small affair, but it'll cost less per sitting than any other chapel in your circuit, and I fancy it'll look less like a box of bricks." Mr Orgreave subtly smiled, and Edwin tried to equal his subtlety. "I must show you the elevation some other time a bit later. What I've been after in it, is to keep it in character with the street... Hi! Dan, there!" Now, Mr Orgreave was calling across the hollow of the chapel to a fat man in corduroys. "Have you remembered about those blue bricks?"

Perhaps the most captivating phenomenon of all was a little leanto shed with a real door evidently taken from somewhere else, and a little stove, and a table and a chair. Here Mr Orgreave had a confabulation with the corduroyed man, who was the builder, and they pored over immense sheets of coloured plans that lay on the table, and Mr Orgreave

made marks and even sketches on the plans, and the fat man objected to his instructions, and Mr Orgreave insisted, "Yes, yes!" And it seemed to Edwin as though the building of the chapel stood still while Mr Orgreave cogitated and explained; it seemed to Edwin that he was in the creating chamber. The atmosphere of the shed was inexpressibly romantic to him. After the fat man had gone Mr Orgreave took a clothesbrush off a plank that had been roughly nailed on two brackets to the wall, and brushed Edwin's clothes, and Edwin brushed Mr Orgreave, and then Mr Orgreave, having run his hand through the brush, lightly brushed his hair with it. All this was part of Edwin's joy.

"Yes," he said, "I think the idea of that arch is splendid."

"You do?" said Mr Orgreave quite simply and ingenuously pleased and interested. "You see with the lie of the ground as it is"

That was another point that Edwin ought to have thought of by himself the lie of the ground but he had not thought of it. Mr Orgreave went on talking. In the shop he had conveyed the idea that he was tremendously pressed for time; now he had apparently forgotten time.

"I'm afraid I shall have to be off," said Edwin timidly. And he made a preliminary movement as if to depart.

"And what about those specifications, young man?" asked Mr Orgreave, drily twinkling. He unlocked a drawer in the rickety table. Edwin had forgotten the specifications as successfully as Mr Orgreave had forgotten time. Throughout the remainder of the day he smelt imaginary mortar.

## **Chapter Fifteen.**

### **A Decision.**

The next day being the day of rest, Mrs Nixon arose from her nook at 5:30 a.m. and woke Edwin. She did this from goodnature, and because she could refuse him nothing, and not under any sort of compulsion. Edwin got up at the first call, though he was in no way remarkable for his triumphs over the pillow. Twentyfive minutes later he was crossing Trafalgar Road and entering the schoolyard of the Wesleyan Chapel. And from various quarters of the town, other young men, of ages varying from sixteen to fifty, were converging upon the same point. Black night still reigned above the lamplights that flickered in the wind which precedes the dawn, and the mud was frozen. Not merely had these young men to be afoot and abroad, but they had to be ceremoniously dressed. They could not issue forth in flannels and sweater, with a towel round the neck, as for a morning plunge in the river. The day was Sunday, though Sunday had not dawned, and the plunge was into the river of intellectual life. Moreover, they were bound by conscience to be prompt. To have arrived late, even five minutes late, would have spoilt the whole effect. It had to be six o'clock or nothing.

The Young Men's Debating Society was a newly formed branch of the multifarious activity of the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. It met on Sunday because Sunday was the only day that would suit everybody; and at six in the morning for two reasons. The obvious reason was that at any other hour its meetings would clash either with other activities or with the solemnity of Sabbath meals. This obvious reason could not have stood by itself; it was secretly supported by the recondite reason that the preposterous hour of 6 a.m. appealed powerfully to something youthful, perverse, silly, fanatical, and fine in the youths. They discovered the ascetic's joy in robbing themselves of sleep and in catching chills, and in disturbing households and chapelkeepers. They thought it was a great thing to be discussing intellectual topics at an hour when a town that ignorantly scorned intellectuality was snoring in all its heavy brutishness. And it was a great thing. They considered themselves the salt of the earth, or of that part of the earth. And I have an idea that they were.

Edwin had joined this Society partly because he did not possess the art of refusing, partly because the notion of it appealed spectacularly to the martyr in him, and partly because it gave him an excuse for ceasing to attend the afternoon Sunday school, which he loathed. Without such an excuse he could never have told his father that he meant to give up Sunday school. He could never have dared to do so. His father had what Edwin deemed to be a superstitious and hypocritical regard for the Sunday school. Darius never went near the Sunday school, and assuredly in business and in home life he did not practise the precepts inculcated at the Sunday school, and yet he always spoke of the

Sunday school with what was to Edwin a ridiculous reverence. Another of those problems in his father's character which Edwin gave up in disgust!

## **Two.**

The Society met in a small classroom. The secretary, arch ascetic, arrived at 5:45 and lit the fire which the chapelkeeper (a man with no enthusiasm whatever for flagellation, the hairshirt, or intellectuality) had laid but would not get up to light. The chairman of the Society, a little Welshman named Llewelyn Roberts, aged fifty, but a youth because a bachelor, sat on a chair at one side of the incipient fire, and some dozen members sat round the room on forms. A single gas jet flamed from the ceiling. Everybody wore his overcoat, and within the collars of overcoats could be seen glimpses of rich neckties; the hats, some glossy, dotted the hatrack which ran along two walls. A hymn was sung, and then all knelt, some spreading handkerchiefs on the dusty floor to protect fine trousers, and the chairman invoked the blessing of God on their discussions. The proper mental and emotional atmosphere was now established. The secretary read the minutes of the last meeting, while the chairman surreptitiously poked the fire with a piece of wood from the lower works of a chair, and then the chairman, as he signed the minutes with a pen dipped in an excise inkbottle that stood on the narrow mantelpiece, said in his dry voice

"I call upon our young friend, Mr Edwin Clayhanger, to open the debate, 'Is Bishop Colenso, considered as a Biblical commentator, a force for good?'"

"I'm a damned fool!" said Edwin to himself savagely, as he stood on his feet. But to look at his wistful and nervously smiling face, no one would have guessed that he was thus blasphemously swearing in the privacy of his own brain.

He had been entrapped into the situation in which he found himself. It was not until after he had joined the Society that he had learnt of a rule which made it compulsory for every member to speak at every meeting attended, and for every member to open a debate at least once in a year. And this was not all; the use of notes while the orator was 'up' was absolutely forbidden. A drastic Society! It had commended itself to elders by claiming to be a nursery for ready speakers.

## **Three.**

Edwin had chosen the subject of Bishop Colenso the ultimate wording of the resolution was not his because he had been reading about the intellectually adventurous Bishop in the "Manchester Examiner." And, although eleven years had passed since the publication of the first part of "The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically

Examined," the Colenso question was only just filtering down to the thinking classes of the Five Towns; it was an actuality in the Five Towns, if in abeyance in London. Even Hugh Miller's "The Old Red Sandstone, or New Walks in an Old Field," then over thirty years old, was still being looked upon as dangerously original in the Five Towns in 1873. However, the effect of its disturbing geological evidence that the earth could scarcely have been begun and finished in a little under a week, was happily nullified by the suicide of its author; that pistolshot had been a striking proof of the literal inspiration of the Bible.

Bishop Colenso had, in Edwin, an ingenuous admirer. Edwin stammeringly and hesitatingly gave a preliminary sketch of his life; how he had been censured by Convocation and deposed from his See by his Metropolitan; how the Privy Council had decided that the deposition was null and void; how the ecclesiastical authorities had then circumvented the Privy Council by refusing to pay his salary to the Bishop (which Edwin considered mean); how the Bishop had circumvented the ecclesiastical authorities by appealing to the Master of the Rolls, who ordered the ecclesiastical authorities to pay him his arrears of income with interest thereon, unless they were ready to bring him to trial for heresy; how the said authorities would not bring him to trial for heresy (which Edwin considered to be miserable cowardice on their part); how the Bishop had then been publicly excommunicated, without authority; and how his friends, among whom were some very respectable and powerful people, had made him a present of over three thousand pounds. After this graphic historical survey, Edwin proceeded to the Pentateuchal puzzles, and, without pronouncing an opinion thereon, argued that any commentator who was both learned and sincere must be a force for good, as the Bible had nothing to fear from honest inquiry, etcetera, etcetera. Fivesixths of his speech was coloured by phrases and modes of thought which he had picked up in the Wesleyan community, and the other sixth belonged to himself. The speech was moderately bad, but not inferior to many other speeches. It was received in absolute silence. This rather surprised Edwin, because the tone in which the leading members of the Society usually spoke to him indicated that (for reasons which he knew not) they regarded him as a very superior intellect indeed; and Edwin was not entirely ashamed of the quality of his speech; in fact, he had feared worse from himself, especially as, since his walk with Mr Orgreave, he had been quite unable to concentrate his thoughts on Bishop Colenso at all, and had been exceedingly unhappy and apprehensive concerning an affair that bore no kind of relation to the Pentateuch.

#### **Four.**

The chairman began to speak at once. His function was to call upon the speakers in the order arranged, and to sum up before putting the resolution to the vote. But now he produced surprisingly a speech of his own. He reminded the meeting that in 1860 Bishop Colenso had memorialised the Archbishop of Canterbury against compelling natives who had already more than one wife to renounce polygamy as a condition to baptism in the Christian religion; he stated that, though there were young men present who were almost infants in arms at that period, he for his part could well remember all the episode, and in particular Bishop Colenso's amazing allegation that he could find no disapproval of polygamy either in the Bible or in the writings of the Ancient Church. He also pointed out that in 1861 Bishop Colenso had argued against the doctrine of Eternal Punishment. He warned the meeting to beware of youthful indiscretions. Every one there assembled of course meant well, and believed what it was a duty to believe, but at the same time...

"I shall write father a letter!" said Edwin to himself. The idea came to him in a flash like a divine succour; and it seemed to solve all his difficulties difficulties unconnected with the subject of debate.

#### **Five.**

The chairman went on crossing t's and dotting i's. And soon even Edwin perceived that the chairman was diplomatically and tactfully, yet very firmly, bent upon saving the meeting from any possibility of scandalising itself and the Wesleyan community. Bishop Colenso must not be approved beneath those roofs. Evidently Edwin had been more persuasive than he dreamt of; and daring beyond precedent. He had meant to carry his resolution if he could, whereas, it appeared, he ought to have meant to be defeated, in the true interests of revealed religion. The chairman kept referring to his young friend the proposer's brilliant brains, and to the grave danger that lurked in brilliant brains, and the inability of brilliant brains to atone for lack of experience. The meeting had its cue. Young man after young man arose to snub Bishop Colenso, to hope charitably that Bishop Colenso was sincere, and to insist that no Bishop Colenso should lead him to the awful abyss of polygamy, and that no Bishop Colenso should deprive him of that unique incentive to righteousness the doctrine of an everlasting burning hell. Moses was put on his legs again as a serious historian, and the subject of the resolution utterly lost to view. The Chairman then remarked that his impartial rôle forbade him to support either side, and the voting showed fourteen against one. They all sang the Doxology, and the Chairman pronounced a benediction. The fourteen forgave the one, as one who knew not what he did; but their demeanour rather too patently showed that they were forgiving under difficulty; and that it would be as well that this kind of youthful

temerariousness was not practised too often. Edwin, in the language of the district, was 'sneaped.' Wondering what on earth he after all had said to raise such an alarm, he nevertheless did not feel resentful, only very depressed about the debate and about other things. He knew in his heart that for him attendance at the meetings of the Young Men's Debating Society was ridiculous.

### **Six.**

He allowed all the rest to precede him from the room. When he was alone he smiled sheepishly, and also disdainfully; he knew that the chasm between himself and the others was a real chasm, and not a figment of his childish diffidence, as he had sometimes suspected it to be. Then he turned the gas out. A beautiful faint silver surged through the window. While the debate was in progress, the sun had been going about its business of the dawn, unperceived.

"I shall write a letter!" he kept saying to himself. "He'll never let me explain myself properly if I start talking. I shall write a letter. I can write a very good letter, and he'll be bound to take notice of it. He'll never be able to get over my letter."

In the schoolyard daylight reigned. The debaters had already disappeared. Trafalgar Road and Duck Bank were empty and silent under rosy clouds. Instead of going straight home Edwin went past the Town Hall and through the Market Place to the Sytch Pottery. Astounding that he had never noticed for himself how beautiful the building was! It was a simply lovely building!

"Yes," he said, "I shall write him a letter, and this very day, too! May I be hung, drawn, and quartered if he doesn't have to read my letter tomorrow morning!"

## **Chapter Sixteen.**

### **The Letter.**

Then there was roast goose for dinner, and Clara amused herself by making silly facetious faces, furtively, dangerously, under her father's very eyes. The children feared goose for their father, whose digestion was usually unequal to this particular bird. Like many fathers of families in the Five Towns, he had the habit of going forth on Saturday mornings to the butcher's or the poulterer's and buying Sunday's dinner. He was a fairly good judge of a joint, but Maggie considered herself to be his superior in this respect. However, Darius was not prepared to learn from Maggie, and his purchases had to be accepted without criticism. At a given meal Darius would never admit that anything chosen and bought by him was not perfect; but a week afterwards, if the fact was so, he would of his own accord recall imperfections in that which he had asserted to be perfect; and he would do this without any shame, without any apparent sense of inconsistency or weakness. Edwin noticed a similar trait in other grownup persons, and it astonished him. It astonished him especially in his father, who, despite the faults and vulgarities which his fastidious son could find in him, always impressed Edwin as a strong man, a man with the heroic quality of not caring too much what other people thought.

When Edwin saw his father take a second plateful of goose, with the deadly stuffing thereof Darius simply could not resist it, like most dyspeptics he was somewhat greedy he foresaw an indisposed and perilous father for the morrow. Which prevision was supported by Clara's pantomimic antics, and even by Maggie's grave and restrained sigh. Still, he had sworn to write and send the letter, and he should do so. A career, a lifetime, was not to be at the mercy of a bilious attack, surely! Such a notion offended logic and proportion, and he scorned it away.

### **Two.**

The meal proceeded in silence. Darius, as in duty bound, mentioned the sermon, but neither Clara nor Edwin would have anything to do with the sermon, and Maggie had not been to chapel. Clara and Edwin felt themselves free of piety till six o'clock at least, and they doggedly would not respond. And Darius from prudence did not insist, for he had arrived at chapel unthinkably late during the second chant and Clara was capable of audacious remarks upon occasions. The silence grew stolid.

And Edwin wondered what the dinnertable of the Orgreaves was like. And he could smell fresh mortar. And he dreamed of a romantic life he knew not what kind of life, but something different fundamentally from his own. He suddenly understood, understood



with sympathy, the impulse which had made boys run away to sea. He could feel the open sea; he could feel the breath of freedom on his cheek.

He said to himself

“Why shouldn’t I break this ghastly silence by telling father out loud here that he mustn’t forget what I told him that night in the attic? I’m going to be an architect. I’m not going to be any blooming printer. I’m going to be an architect. Why haven’t I mentioned it before? Why haven’t I talked about it all the time? Because I am an ass! Because there is no word for what I am! Damn it! I suppose I’m the person to choose what I’m going to be! I suppose it’s my business more than his. Besides, he can’t possibly refuse me. If I say flatly that I won’t be a printer he’s done. This idea of writing a letter is just like me! Coward! Coward! What’s my tongue for? Can’t I talk? Isn’t he bound to listen? All I have to do is to open my mouth. He’s sitting there. I’m sitting here. He can’t eat me. I’m in my rights. Now suppose I start on it as soon as Mrs Nixon has brought the pudding and pie in?”

And he waited anxiously to see whether he indeed would be able to make a start after the departure of Mrs Nixon.

### **Three.**

Hopeless! He could not bring himself to do it. It was strange! It was disgusting! ... No, he would be compelled to write the letter. Besides, the letter would be more effective. His father could not interrupt a letter by some loud illogical remark. Thus he salved his selfconceit. He also sought relief in reflecting savagely upon the speeches that had been made against him in the debate. He went through them all in his mind. There was the slimy idiot from Baines’s (it was in such terms that his thoughts ran) who gloried in never having read a word of Colenso, and called the assembled company to witness that nothing should ever induce him to read such a godless author, going about in the mask of a so-called Bishop. But had any of them read Colenso, except possibly Llewellyn Roberts, who in his Welsh way would pretend ignorance and then come out with a quotation and refer you to the exact page? Edwin himself had read very little of Colenso and that little only because a customer had ordered the second part of the “Pentateuch” and he had stolen it for a night. Colenso was not in the Free Library... What a world! What a debate! Still, he could not help dwelling with pleasure on Mr Roberts’s insistence on the brilliant quality of his brains. Astute as Mr Roberts was, the man was clearly in awe of Edwin’s brains! Why? To be honest, Edwin had never been deeply struck by his own brain power. And yet there must be something in it!

“Of course,” he reflected sardonically, “father doesn’t show the faintest interest in the debate. Yet he knew all about it, and that I had to open it.” But he was glad that his father showed no interest in the debate. Clara had mentioned it in the presence of Maggie, with her usual ironic intent, and Edwin had quickly shut her up.

#### **Four.**

In the afternoon, the sittingroom being made uninhabitable by his father’s gooseridden dozes, he went out for a walk; the weather was cold and fine. When he returned his father also had gone out; the two girls were lolling in the sittingroom. An immense fire, built up by Darius, was just ripe for the beginning of decay, and the room very warm. Clara was at the window, Maggie in Darius’s chair reading a novel of Charlotte M Yonge’s. On the table, open, was a bound volume of “The Family Treasury of Sunday Reading,” in which Clara had been perusing “The Chronicles of the SchönbergCotta Family” with feverish interest. Edwin had laughed at her ingenuous absorption in the adventures of the SchönbergCotta family, but the fact was that he had found them rather interesting, in spite of himself, while pretending the contrary. There was an atmosphere of high obstinate effort and heroic foreignness about the story which stimulated something secret in him that seldom responded to the provocation of a book; more easily would this secret something respond to a calm evening or a distant prospect, or the silence of early morning when by chance he looked out of his window.

The volume of “The Family Treasury,” though five years old, was a recent acquisition. It had come into the house through the total disappearance of a customer who had left the loose numbers to be bound in 1869. Edwin dropped sideways on to a chair at the table, spread out his feet to the right, pitched his left elbow a long distance to the left, and, his head resting on his left hand, turned over the pages with his right hand idly. His eye caught titles such as: “The Door was Shut,” “My Mother’s Voice,” “The Heather Mother,” “The Only Treasure,” “Religion and Business,” “Hope to the End,” “The Child of our Sunday School,” “Satan’s Devices,” and “Studies of Christian Life and Character, Hannah More.” Then he saw an article about some architecture in Rome, and he read: “In the Sistine picture there is the struggle of a great mind to reduce within the possibilities of art a subject that transcends it. That mind would have shown itself to be greater, truer, at least, in its judgement of the capabilities of art, and more reverent to have let it alone.” The seriousness of the whole magazine intimidated him into accepting this pronouncement for a moment, though his brief studies in various encyclopaedias had led him to believe that the Sistine Chapel (shown in an illustration in Cazenove) was high beyond any human criticism. His elbow slid on the surface of the table, and in recovering himself he sent “The Family Treasury” on the floor, wrong side up, with a great noise. Maggie did not move. Clara turned and protested sharply against this sacrilege, and Edwin, out of mere caprice, informed her that her precious magazine was

the most stinking silly 'pi' (pious) thing that ever was. With haughty and shocked gestures she gathered up the volume and took it out of the room.

"I say, Mag," Edwin muttered, still leaning his head on his hand, and staring blankly at the wall.

The fire dropped a little in the grate.

"What is it?" asked Maggie, without stirring or looking up.

"Has father said anything to you about me wanting to be an architect?" He spoke with an affectation of dreaminess.

"About you wanting to be an architect?" repeated Maggie in surprise.

"Yes," said Edwin. He knew perfectly well that his father would never have spoken to Maggie on such a subject. But he wanted to open a conversation.

"No fear!" said Maggie. And added in her kindest, most encouraging, eldersisterly tone: "Why?"

"Oh!" He hesitated, drawling, and then he told her a great deal of what was in his mind. And she carefully put the woolmarker in her book and shut it, and listened to him. And the fire dropped and dropped, comfortably. She did not understand him; obviously she thought his desire to be an architect exceedingly odd; but she sympathised. Her attitude was soothing and fortifying. After all (he reflected) Maggie's all rightthere's some sense in Maggie. He could 'get on' with Maggie. For a few moments he was happy and hopeful.

"I thought I'd write him a letter," he said. "You know how he is to talk to."

There was a pause.

"What d'ye think?" he questioned.

"I should," said Maggie.

"Then I shall!" he exclaimed. "How d'ye think he'll take it?"

"Well," said Maggie, "I don't see how he can do aught but take it all right... Depends how you put it, of course."

“Oh, you leave that to me!” said Edwin, with eager confidence. “I shall put it all right. You trust me for that!”

### **Five.**

Clara danced into the room, flowing over with infantile joy. She had been listening to part of the conversation behind the door.

“So he wants to be an architect! Architect! Architect!” She halfsang the word in a frenzy of ridicule. She really did dance, and waved her arms. Her eyes glittered, as if in rapture. These singular manifestations of her temperament were caused solely by the strangeness of the idea of Edwin wanting to be an architect. The strange sight of him with his hair cut short or in a new necktie affected her in a similar manner.

“Clara, go and put your pinafore on this instant!” said Maggie. “You know you oughtn’t to leave it off.”

“You needn’t be so hoitytoity, miss,” Clara retorted. But she moved to obey. When she reached the door she turned again and gleefully taunted Edwin. “And it’s all because he went for a walk yesterday with Mr Orgreave! I know! I know! You needn’t think I didn’t see you, because I did! Architect! Architect!”

She vanished, on all her springs, spitefully graceful.

“You might almost think that infernal kid was right bang off her head,” Edwin muttered crossly. (Still, it was extraordinary how that infernal kid hit on the truth.)

Maggie began to mend the fire.

“Oh, well!” murmured Maggie, conveying to Edwin that no importance must be attached to the chit’s chittishness.

He went up to the next flight of stairs to his attic. Dust on the table of his workattic! Shameful dust! He had not used that attic since Christmas, on the miserable plea that winter was cold and there was no fireplace! He blamed himself for his effeminacy. Where had flown his seriousness, his elaborate plans, his high purposes? A touch of winter had frightened them away. Yes, he blamed himself mercilessly. True it wasas that infernal kid had chanteda casual halfhour with Mr Orgreave was alone responsible for his awakeningat any rate, for his awakening at this particular moment. Still, he was awakethat was the great fact. He was tremendously awake. He had not been asleep; he had only been halfasleep. His intention of becoming an architect had never left him. But,

through weakness before his father, through a cowardly desire to avoid disturbance and postpone a crisis, he had let the weeks slide by. Now he was in a groove, in a canyon. He had to get out, and the sooner the better.

A piece of paper, soiled, was pinned on his drawingboard; one or two sketches lay about. He turned the drawingboard over, so that he might use it for a desk on which to write the letter. But he had no habit of writing letters. In the attic was to be found neither ink, pen, paper, nor envelope. He remembered a broken quire of sermon paper in his bedroom; he had used a few sheets of it for notes on Bishop Colenso. These notes had been written in the privacy and warmth of bed, in pencil. But the letter must be done in ink; the letter was too important for pencil; assuredly his father would take exception to pencil. He descended to his sister's room and borrowed Maggie's ink and a pen, and took an envelope, tripping like a thief. Then he sat down to the composition of the letter; but he was obliged to stop almost immediately in order to light the lamp.

### **Six.**

This is what he wrote:

“Dear Father, I dare say you will think it queer me writing you a letter like this, but it is the best thing I can do, and I hope you will excuse me. I dare say you will remember I told you that night when you came home late from Manchester here in the attic that I wanted to be an architect. You replied that what I wanted was business experience. If you say that I have not had enough business experience yet, I agree to that, but I want it to be understood that later on, when it is the proper time, I am to be an architect. You know I am very fond of architecture, and I feel that I must be an architect. I feel I shall not be happy in the printing business because I want to be an architect. I am now nearly seventeen. Perhaps it is too soon yet for me to be apprenticed to an architect, and so I can go on learning business habits. But I just want it to be understood. I am quite sure you wish me to be happy in life, and I shan't be happy if I am always regretting that I have not gone in for being an architect. I know I shall like architecture. Your affectionate son, Edwin Clayhanger.”

Then, as an afterthought, he put the date and his address at the top. He meditated a postscript asking for a reply, but decided that this was unnecessary. As he was addressing the envelope Mrs Nixon called out to him from below to come to tea. He was surprised to find that he had spent over an hour on the letter. He shivered and sneezed.

## Seven.

During tea he felt himself absurdly selfconscious, but nobody seemed to notice his condition. The whole family went to chapel. The letter lay in his pocket, and he might easily have slipped away to the postoffice with it, but he had had no opportunity to possess himself of a stamp. There was no need to send the letter through the post. He might get up early and put it among the morning's letters. He had decided, however, that it must arrive formally by the postman, and he would not alter his decision. Hence, after chapel, he took a match, and, creeping into the shop, procured a crimson stamp from his father's desk. Then he went forth, by the back way, alone into the streets. The adventure was not so hazardous as it seemed and as it felt. Darius was incurious by nature, though he had brief fevers of curiosity. Thus the life of the children was a demoralising mixture of rigid discipline and freedom. They were permitted nothing, but, as the years passed, they might take nearly anything. There was small chance of Darius discovering his son's excursion.

In crossing the road from chapel Edwin had opined to his father that the frost was breaking. He was now sure of it. The mud, no longer brittle, yielded to pressure, and there was a trace of dampness in the interstices of the pavement bricks. A thin raw mist was visible in huge spheres round the street lamps. The sky was dark. The few people whom he encountered seemed to be out upon mysterious errands, seemed to emerge strangely from one gloom and strangely to vanish into another. In the blind, black façades of the streets the publichouses blazed invitingly with gas; they alone were alive in the weekly death of the town; and they gleamed everywhere, at every corner; the town appeared to consist chiefly of publichouses. He dropped the letter into the box in the marketplace; he heard it fall. His heart beat. The deed was now irrevocable. He wondered what Monday held for him. The quiescent melancholy of the town invaded his spirit, and mingled with his own remorseful sorrow for the unstrenuous past, and his apprehensive solicitude about the future. It was not unpleasant, this brooding sadness, halfdespondency and halfhope. A man and a woman, arminarm, went by him as he stood unconscious of his conspicuousness under the gaslamp that lit the postoffice. They laughed the smothered laugh of intimacy to see a tall boy standing alone there, with no overcoat, gazing at naught. Edwin turned to go home. It occurred to him that nearly all the people he met were couples, arminarm. And he suddenly thought of Florence, the clogdancer. He had scarcely thought of her for months. The complexity of the interests of life, and the interweaving of its moods, fatigued his mind into an agreeably grave vacuity.

## **Chapter Seventeen.**

### **End of a Struggle.**

It was not one of his official bilious attacks that Darius had on the following day; he only yielded himself up in the complete grand manner when nature absolutely compelled. The goose had not formally beaten him, but neither had he formally beaten the goose. The battle was drawn, and this meant that Darius had a slight headache, a feeling of heavy disgust with the entire polity of the universe, and a disinclination for food. The first and third symptoms he hid as far as possible, from pride: at breakfast he toyed with bacon, from pride, hating bacon. The children knew from his eyes and his guilty gestures that he was not well, but they dared not refer to his condition; they were bound to pretend that the health of their father flourished in the highest perfection. And they were glad that things were no worse.

On the other hand Edwin had a sneezing cold which he could not conceal, and Darius inimically inquired what foolishness he had committed to have brought this on himself. Edwin replied that he knew of no cause for it. A deliberate lie! He knew that he had contracted a chill while writing a letter to his father in an unwarmed attic, and had intensified the chill by going forth to post the letter without his overcoat in a raw evening mist. Obviously, however, he could not have stated the truth. He was uncomfortable at the breakfasttable, but, after the first few moments, less so than during the disturbed night he had feared to be. His father had neither eaten him, nor jumped down his throat, nor performed any of those unpleasant miraculous feats which fathers usually do perform when infuriated by filial foolishness. The letter therefore had not been utterly disastrous; sometimes a letter would ruin a breakfast, for Mr Clayhanger, with no consideration for the success of meals, always opened his post before bite or sup. He had had the letter, and still he was ready to talk to his son in the ordinary grim tone of a goosemorrow. Which was to the good. Edwin was now convinced that he had done well to write the letter.

### **Two.**

But as the day passed, Edwin began to ask himself: "Has he had the letter?" There was no sign of the letter in his father's demeanour, which, while not such as to make it credible that he ever had moods of positive gay roguishness, was almost tolerable, considering his headache and his nausea. Letters occasionally were lost in the post, or delayed. Edwin thought it would be just his usual bad luck if that particular letter, that letter of all letters, should be lost. And the strange thing is that he could not prevent himself from hoping that it indeed was lost. He would prefer it to be lost rather than delayed. He felt that if the postman brought it by the afternoon delivery while he and his

father were in the shop together, he should drop down dead. The day continued to pass, and did pass. And the shop was closed. "He'll speak to me after supper," said Edwin. But Darius did not speak to him after supper. Darius put on his hat and overcoat and went out, saying no word except to advise the children to be getting to bed, all of them.

As soon as he was gone Edwin took a candle and returned to the shop. He was convinced now that the letter had not been delivered, but he wished to make conviction sure. He opened the desk. His letter was nearly the first document he saw. It looked affrighting, awful. He dared not read it, to see whether its wording was fortunate or unfortunate. He departed, mystified. Upstairs in his bedroom he had a new copy of an English translation of Victor Hugo's "Notre Dame," which had been ordered by Lawyer Lawton, but would not be called for till the following week, because Lawyer Lawton only called once a fortnight. He had meant to read that book, with due precautions, in bed. But he could not fix attention on it. Impossible for him to follow a single paragraph. He extinguished the candle. Then he heard his father come home. He thought that he scarcely slept all night.

### **Three.**

The next morning, Tuesday, the girls, between whom and their whispering friend Miss Ingamells something feminine was evidently afoot, left the breakfasttable sooner than usual, not without stifled giggles: upon occasion Maggie would surprisingly meet Clara and Miss Ingamells on their own plane; since Sunday afternoon she had shown no further interest in Edwin's important crisis; she seemed, so far as he could judge, to have fallen back into her customary state of busy apathy.

The man and the young man were alone together. Darius, in his satisfaction at having been delivered so easily from the goose, had taken an extra slice of bacon. Edwin's cold was now fully developed; and Maggie had told him to feed it.

"I suppose you got that letter I wrote you, father, about me going in for architecture," said Edwin. Then he blew his nose to hide his confusion. He was rather startled to hear himself saying those bold words. He thought that he was quite calm and in control of his impulses; but it was not so; his nerves were stretched to the utmost.

Darius said nothing. But Edwin could see his face darkening, and his lower lip heavily falling. He glowered, though not at Edwin. With eyes fixed on the window he glowered into vacancy. The pride went out of Edwin's heart.

"So ye'd leave the printing?" muttered Darius, when he had finished masticating. He spoke in a menacing voice thick with ferocious emotion.



“Well” said Edwin, quaking.

He thought he had never seen his father so ominously intimidating. He was terrorised as he looked at that ugly and dark countenance. He could not say any more. His voice left him. Thus his fear was physical as well as moral. He reflected: “Well, I expected a row, but I didn’t expect it would be as bad as this!” And once more he was completely puzzled and baffled by the enigma of his father.

#### **Four.**

He did not hold the key, and even had he held it he was too young, too inexperienced, to have used it. As with gathering passion the eyes of Darius assaulted the windowpane, Darius had a painful intense vision of that miracle, his own career. Edwin’s grand misfortune was that he was blind to the miracle. Edwin had never seen the little boy in the Bastille. But Darius saw him always, the infant who had begun life at a rope’s end. Every hour of Darius’s present existence was really an astounding marvel to Darius. He could not read the newspaper without thinking how wonderful it was that he should be able to read the newspaper. And it was wonderful! It was wonderful that he had three different suits of clothes, none of them with a single hole. It was wonderful that he had three children, all with complete outfits of good clothes. It was wonderful that he never had to think twice about buying coal, and that he could have more food than he needed. It was wonderful that he was not living in a tworoomed cottage. He never came into his house by the side entrance without feeling proud that the door gave on to a preliminary passage and not direct into a livingroom; he would never lose the idea that a lobby, however narrow, was the great distinguishing mark of wealth. It was wonderful that he had a piano, and that his girls could play it and could sing. It was wonderful that he had paid twentyeight shillings a term for his son’s schooling, in addition to bookmoney. Twentyeight shillings a term! And once a penny a week was considered enough, and twopence generous! Through sheer splendid wilful pride he had kept his son at school till the lad was sixteen, going on seventeen! Seventeen, not seven! He had had the sort of pride in his son that a man may have in an idle, elegant, and absurdly expensive woman. It even tickled him to hear his son called ‘Master Edwin,’ and then ‘Mister Edwin’; just as the fine ceremonious manners of his sisterinlaw Mrs Hamps tickled him. His marriage! With all its inevitable disillusion it had been wonderful, incredible. He looked back on it as a miracle. For he had married far above him, and had proved equal to the enormously difficult situation. Never had he made a fool of himself. He often took keen pleasure in speculating upon the demeanour of his father, his mother, his little sister, could they have seen him in his purple and in his grandeur. They were all dead. And those days were fading, fading, gone, with their unutterable, intolerable shame and

sadness, intolerable even in memory. And his wife dead too! All that remained was Mr Shushions.

And then his business? Darius's pride in the achievement of his business was simply indescribable. If he had not built up that particular connexion he had built up another one whose sale had enabled him to buy it. And he was waxing yearly. His supremacy as a printer could not be challenged in Bursley. Steam! A doublewindowed shop! A foreman to whom alone he paid thirty shillings a week! Four other employees! (Not to mention a domestic servant.) ... How had he done it? He did not know. Certainly he did not credit himself with brilliant faculties. He knew he was not brilliant; he knew that once or twice he had had luck. But he had the greatest confidence in his roughhewing common sense. The large curves of his career were correctly drawn. His common sense, his slow shrewdness, had been richly justified by events. They had been pitted against foes and look now at the little boy from the Bastille!

### **Five.**

To Darius there was no business quite like his own. He admitted that there were businesses much bigger, but they lacked the miraculous quality that his own had. They were not sacred. His was, genuinely. Once, in his triumphant and vain early manhood he had had a fancy for bulldogs; he had bred bulldogs; and one day he had sacrificed even that great delight at the call of his business; and now no one could guess that he knew the difference between a setter and a mastiff!

It was this sacred business (perpetually adored at the secret altar in Darius's heart), this miraculous business, and not another, that Edwin wanted to abandon, with scarcely a word; just casually!

True, Edwin had told him one night that he would like to be an architect. But Darius had attached no importance to the boyish remark. Darius had never even dreamed that Edwin would not go into the business. It would not have occurred to him to conceive such a possibility. And the boy had shown great aptitude. The boy had saved the printing office from disaster. And Darius had proved his satisfaction therein, not by words certainly, but beyond mistaking in his general demeanour towards Edwin. And after all that, a letter mind you, a letter! proposing with the most damnable insolent audacity that he should be an architect, because he would not be 'happy' in the printing business! ... An architect! Why an architect, specially? What in the name of God was there to attract in bricks and mortar? He thought the boy had gone off his head for a space. He could not think of any other explanation. He had not allowed the letter to upset him. By his armour of thick callousness, he had protected the tender places in his soul from being wounded. He had not decided how to phrase his answer to Edwin. He

had not even decided whether he would say anything at all, whether it would not be more dignified and impressive to make no remark whatever to Edwin, to let him slowly perceive, by silence, what a lamentable error he had committed.

And here was the boy lightly, cheekily, talking at breakfast about 'going in for architecture'! The armour of callousness was pierced. Darius felt the full force of the letter; and as he suffered, so he became terrible and tyrannic in his suffering. He meant to save his business, to put his business before anything. And he would have his own way. He would impose his will. And he would have treated argument as a final insult. All the heavy, obstinate, relentless force of his individuality was now channelled in one tremendous instinct.

### **Six.**

"Well, what?" he growled savagely, as Edwin halted.

In spite of his advanced age Edwin began to cry. Yes, the tears came out of his eyes.

"And now you begin blubbing!" said his father.

"You say naught for six months and then you start writing letters!" said his father.

"And what's made ye settle on architecting, I'd like to be knowing?" Darius went on.

Edwin was not able to answer this question. He had never put it to himself. Assuredly he could not, at the pistol's point, explain why he wanted to be an architect. He did not know. He announced this truth ingenuously

"I don't know!"

"I sh'd think not!" said his father. "D'ye think architecting'll be any better than this?" 'This' meant printing.

"I don't know"

"Ye don't know! Ye don't know!" Darius repeated testily. His testiness was only like foam on the great wave of his resentment.

"Mr Orgreave" Edwin began. It was unfortunate, because Darius had had a difficulty with Mr Orgreave, who was notoriously somewhat exacting in the matter of prices.

“Don’t talk to me about Mester Orgreave!” Darius almost shouted.

Edwin didn’t. He said to himself: “I am lost.”

“What’s this business o’ mine for, if it isn’t for you?” asked his father. “Architecting! There’s neither sense nor reason in it! Neither sense nor reason!”

He rose and walked out. Edwin was now sobbing. In a moment his father returned, and stood in the doorway.

“Ye’ve been doing well, I’ll say that, and I’ve shown it! I was beginning to have hopes of ye!” It was a great deal to say.

He departed.

“Perhaps if I hadn’t stopped his damned old machine from going through the floor, he’d have let me off!” Edwin muttered bitterly. “I’ve been too good, that’s what’s the matter with me!”

### **Seven.**

He saw how fantastic was the whole structure of his hopes. He wondered that he had ever conceived it even wildly possible that his father would consent to architecture as a career! To ask it was to ask absurdly too much of fate. He demolished, with a violent and resentful impulse, the structure of his hopes; stamped on it angrily. He was beaten. What could he do? He could do nothing against his father. He could no more change his father than the course of a river. He was beaten. He saw his case in its true light.

Mrs Nixon entered to clear the table. He turned away to hide his face, and strode passionately off. Two hours elapsed before he appeared in the shop. Nobody asked for him, but Mrs Nixon knew he was in the attic. At noon, Maggie, with a peculiar look, told him that Auntie Hamps had called and that he was to go and have dinner with her at one o’clock, and that his father consented. Obviously, Maggie knew the facts of the day. He was perturbed at the prospect of the visit. But he was glad; he thought he could not have lived through a dinner at the same table as Clara. He guessed that his auntie had been made aware of the situation and wished to talk to him.

## **Eight.**

“Your father came to see me in such a state last night!” said Auntie Hamps, after she had dealt with his frightful cold.

Edwin was astonished by the news. Then after all his father had been afraid! ... After all perhaps he had yielded too soon! If he had held out... If he had not been a baby! ... But it was too late. The incident was now closed.

Mrs Hamps was kind, but unusually firm in her tone; which reached a sort of benevolent severity.

“Your father had such high hopes of you. As I should say. He couldn’t imagine what on earth possessed you to write such a letter. And I’m sure I can’t. I hope you’re sorry. If you’d seen your father last night you would be, I’m sure.”

“But look here, auntie,” Edwin defended himself, sneezing and wiping his nose; and he spoke of his desire. Surely he was entitled to ask, to suggest! A son could not be expected to be exactly like his father. And so on.

No! no! She brushed all that aside. She scarcely listened to it.

“But think of the business! And just think of your father’s feelings!”

Edwin spoke no more. He saw that she was absolutely incapable of putting herself in his place. He could not have explained her attitude by saying that she had the vast unconscious cruelty which always goes with a perfect lack of imagination; but this was the explanation. He left her, saddened by the obvious conclusion that his auntie, whom he had always supported against his sisters, was part author of his undoing. She had undoubtedly much strengthened his father against him. He had a gleam of suspicion that his sisters had been right, and he wrong, about Mrs Hamps. Wonderful, the cruel ruthless insight of girls into some things!

## **Nine.**

Not till Saturday did the atmosphere of the Clayhanger household resume the normal. But earlier than that Edwin had already lost his resentment. It disappeared with his cold. He could not continue to bear illwill. He accepted his destiny of immense disappointment. He shouldered it. You may call him weak or you may call him strong. Maggie said nothing to him of the great affair. What could she have said? And the affair

was so great that even Clara did not dare to exercise upon it her peculiar faculties of ridicule. It abashed her by its magnitude.

On Saturday Darius said to his son, goodhumouredly

“Canst be trusted to pay wages?”

Edwin smiled.

At one o'clock he went across the yard to the printing office with a little bag of money. The younger apprentice was near the door scrubbing type with potash to cleanse it. The backs of his hands were horribly raw and bleeding with chaps, due to the frequent necessity of washing them in order to serve the machines, and the impossibility of drying them properly. Still, winter was ending now, and he only worked eleven hours a day, in an airy room, instead of nineteen hours in a cellar, like the little boy from the Bastille. He was a fortunate youth. The journeyman stood idle; as often, on Saturdays, the length of the journeyman's apron had been reduced by deliberate tearing during the week from three feet to about a footso imperious and sudden was the need for rags in the processes of printing. Big James was folding up his apron. They all saw that Edwin had the bag, and their faces relaxed.

“You're as good as the master now, Mr Edwin,” said Big James with ceremonious politeness and a fine gesture, when Edwin had finished paying.

“Am I?” he rejoined simply.

Everybody knew of the great affair. Big James's words were his gentle intimation to Edwin that everyone knew the great affair was now settled.

That night, for the first time, Edwin could read “Notre Dame” with understanding and pleasure. He plunged with soft joy into the river of the gigantic and formidable narrative. He reflected that after all the sources of happiness were not exhausted.