The Mill on the Floss

George Eliot

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Book I

\_Boy and Girl\_

Chapter I

Outside Dorlcote Mill

A wide plain, where the broadening Floss hurries on between its green

banks to the sea, and the loving tide, rushing to meet it, checks its

passage with an impetuous embrace. On this mighty tide the black

ships--laden with the fresh-scented fir-planks, with rounded sacks of

oil-bearing seed, or with the dark glitter of coal--are borne along to

the town of St. Ogg's, which shows its aged, fluted red roofs and the

broad gables of its wharves between the low wooded hill and the

river-brink, tingeing the water with a soft purple hue under the

transient glance of this February sun. Far away on each hand stretch

the rich pastures, and the patches of dark earth made ready for the

seed of broad-leaved green crops, or touched already with the tint of

the tender-bladed autumn-sown corn. There is a remnant still of last

year's golden clusters of beehive-ricks rising at intervals beyond the

hedgerows; and everywhere the hedgerows are studded with trees; the

distant ships seem to be lifting their masts and stretching their

red-brown sails close among the branches of the spreading ash. Just by

the red-roofed town the tributary Ripple flows with a lively current

into the Floss. How lovely the little river is, with its dark changing

wavelets! It seems to me like a living companion while I wander along

the bank, and listen to its low, placid voice, as to the voice of one

who is deaf and loving. I remember those large dipping willows. I

remember the stone bridge.

And this is Dorlcote Mill. I must stand a minute or two here on the

bridge and look at it, though the clouds are threatening, and it is

far on in the afternoon. Even in this leafless time of departing

February it is pleasant to look at,--perhaps the chill, damp season

adds a charm to the trimly kept, comfortable dwelling-house, as old as

the elms and chestnuts that shelter it from the northern blast. The

stream is brimful now, and lies high in this little withy plantation,

and half drowns the grassy fringe of the croft in front of the house.

As I look at the full stream, the vivid grass, the delicate

bright-green powder softening the outline of the great trunks and

branches that gleam from under the bare purple boughs, I am in love

with moistness, and envy the white ducks that are dipping their heads

far into the water here among the withes, unmindful of the awkward

appearance they make in the drier world above.

The rush of the water and the booming of the mill bring a dreamy

deafness, which seems to heighten the peacefulness of the scene. They

are like a great curtain of sound, shutting one out from the world

beyond. And now there is the thunder of the huge covered wagon coming

home with sacks of grain. That honest wagoner is thinking of his

dinner, getting sadly dry in the oven at this late hour; but he will

not touch it till he has fed his horses,--the strong, submissive,

meek-eyed beasts, who, I fancy, are looking mild reproach at him from

between their blinkers, that he should crack his whip at them in that

awful manner as if they needed that hint! See how they stretch their

shoulders up the slope toward the bridge, with all the more energy

because they are so near home. Look at their grand shaggy feet that

seem to grasp the firm earth, at the patient strength of their necks,

bowed under the heavy collar, at the mighty muscles of their

struggling haunches! I should like well to hear them neigh over their

hardly earned feed of corn, and see them, with their moist necks freed

from the harness, dipping their eager nostrils into the muddy pond.

Now they are on the bridge, and down they go again at a swifter pace,

and the arch of the covered wagon disappears at the turning behind the

trees.

Now I can turn my eyes toward the mill again, and watch the unresting

wheel sending out its diamond jets of water. That little girl is

watching it too; she has been standing on just the same spot at the

edge of the water ever since I paused on the bridge. And that queer

white cur with the brown ear seems to be leaping and barking in

ineffectual remonstrance with the wheel; perhaps he is jealous because

his playfellow in the beaver bonnet is so rapt in its movement. It is

time the little playfellow went in, I think; and there is a very

bright fire to tempt her: the red light shines out under the deepening

gray of the sky. It is time, too, for me to leave off resting my arms

on the cold stone of this bridge....

Ah, my arms are really benumbed. I have been pressing my elbows on the

arms of my chair, and dreaming that I was standing on the bridge in

front of Dorlcote Mill, as it looked one February afternoon many years

ago. Before I dozed off, I was going to tell you what Mr. and Mrs.

Tulliver were talking about, as they sat by the bright fire in the

left-hand parlor, on that very afternoon I have been dreaming of.

Chapter II

Mr. Tulliver, of Dorlcote Mill, Declares His Resolution about Tom

"What I want, you know," said Mr. Tulliver,--"what I want is to give

Tom a good eddication; an eddication as'll be a bread to him. That was

what I was thinking of when I gave notice for him to leave the academy

at Lady-day. I mean to put him to a downright good school at

Midsummer. The two years at th' academy 'ud ha' done well enough, if

I'd meant to make a miller and farmer of him, for he's had a fine

sight more schoolin' nor \_I\_ ever got. All the learnin' \_my\_ father

ever paid for was a bit o' birch at one end and the alphabet at th'

other. But I should like Tom to be a bit of a scholard, so as he might

be up to the tricks o' these fellows as talk fine and write with a

flourish. It 'ud be a help to me wi' these lawsuits, and arbitrations,

and things. I wouldn't make a downright lawyer o' the lad,--I should

be sorry for him to be a raskill,--but a sort o' engineer, or a

surveyor, or an auctioneer and vallyer, like Riley, or one o' them

smartish businesses as are all profits and no outlay, only for a big

watch-chain and a high stool. They're pretty nigh all one, and they're

not far off being even wi' the law, \_I\_ believe; for Riley looks

Lawyer Wakem i' the face as hard as one cat looks another. \_He's\_ none

frightened at him."

Mr. Tulliver was speaking to his wife, a blond comely woman in a

fan-shaped cap (I am afraid to think how long it is since fan-shaped

caps were worn, they must be so near coming in again. At that time,

when Mrs. Tulliver was nearly forty, they were new at St. Ogg's, and

considered sweet things).

"Well, Mr. Tulliver, you know best: \_I've\_ no objections. But hadn't I

better kill a couple o' fowl, and have th' aunts and uncles to dinner

next week, so as you may hear what sister Glegg and sister Pullet have

got to say about it? There's a couple o' fowl \_wants\_ killing!"

"You may kill every fowl i' the yard if you like, Bessy; but I shall

ask neither aunt nor uncle what I'm to do wi' my own lad," said Mr.

Tulliver, defiantly.

"Dear heart!" said Mrs. Tulliver, shocked at this sanguinary rhetoric,

"how can you talk so, Mr. Tulliver? But it's your way to speak

disrespectful o' my family; and sister Glegg throws all the blame

upo' me, though I'm sure I'm as innocent as the babe unborn. For

nobody's ever heard me say as it wasn't lucky for my children to have

aunts and uncles as can live independent. Howiver, if Tom's to go to a

new school, I should like him to go where I can wash him and mend him;

else he might as well have calico as linen, for they'd be one as

yallow as th' other before they'd been washed half-a-dozen times. And

then, when the box is goin' back'ard and forrard, I could send the lad

a cake, or a pork-pie, or an apple; for he can do with an extry bit,

bless him! whether they stint him at the meals or no. My children can

eat as much victuals as most, thank God!"

"Well, well, we won't send him out o' reach o' the carrier's cart, if

other things fit in," said Mr. Tulliver. "But you mustn't put a spoke

i' the wheel about the washin,' if we can't get a school near enough.

That's the fault I have to find wi' you, Bessy; if you see a stick i'

the road, you're allays thinkin' you can't step over it. You'd want me

not to hire a good wagoner, 'cause he'd got a mole on his face."

"Dear heart!" said Mrs. Tulliver, in mild surprise, "when did I iver

make objections to a man because he'd got a mole on his face? I'm sure

I'm rether fond o' the moles; for my brother, as is dead an' gone, had

a mole on his brow. But I can't remember your iver offering to hire a

wagoner with a mole, Mr. Tulliver. There was John Gibbs hadn't a mole

on his face no more nor you have, an' I was all for having you hire

\_him\_; an' so you did hire him, an' if he hadn't died o' th'

inflammation, as we paid Dr. Turnbull for attending him, he'd very

like ha' been drivin' the wagon now. He might have a mole somewhere

out o' sight, but how was I to know that, Mr. Tulliver?"

"No, no, Bessy; I didn't mean justly the mole; I meant it to stand for

summat else; but niver mind--it's puzzling work, talking is. What I'm

thinking on, is how to find the right sort o' school to send Tom to,

for I might be ta'en in again, as I've been wi' th' academy. I'll have

nothing to do wi' a 'cademy again: whativer school I send Tom to, it

sha'n't be a 'cademy; it shall be a place where the lads spend their

time i' summat else besides blacking the family's shoes, and getting

up the potatoes. It's an uncommon puzzling thing to know what school

to pick."

Mr. Tulliver paused a minute or two, and dived with both hands into

his breeches pockets as if he hoped to find some suggestion there.

Apparently he was not disappointed, for he presently said, "I know

what I'll do: I'll talk it over wi' Riley; he's coming to-morrow, t'

arbitrate about the dam."

"Well, Mr. Tulliver, I've put the sheets out for the best bed, and

Kezia's got 'em hanging at the fire. They aren't the best sheets, but

they're good enough for anybody to sleep in, be he who he will; for as

for them best Holland sheets, I should repent buying 'em, only they'll

do to lay us out in. An' if you was to die to-morrow, Mr. Tulliver,

they're mangled beautiful, an' all ready, an' smell o' lavender as it

'ud be a pleasure to lay 'em out; an' they lie at the left-hand corner

o' the big oak linen-chest at the back: not as I should trust anybody

to look 'em out but myself."

As Mrs. Tulliver uttered the last sentence, she drew a bright bunch of

keys from her pocket, and singled out one, rubbing her thumb and

finger up and down it with a placid smile while she looked at the

clear fire. If Mr. Tulliver had been a susceptible man in his conjugal

relation, he might have supposed that she drew out the key to aid her

imagination in anticipating the moment when he would be in a state to

justify the production of the best Holland sheets. Happily he was not

so; he was only susceptible in respect of his right to water-power;

moreover, he had the marital habit of not listening very closely, and

since his mention of Mr. Riley, had been apparently occupied in a

tactile examination of his woollen stockings.

"I think I've hit it, Bessy," was his first remark after a short

silence. "Riley's as likely a man as any to know o' some school; he's

had schooling himself, an' goes about to all sorts o' places,

arbitratin' and vallyin' and that. And we shall have time to talk it

over to-morrow night when the business is done. I want Tom to be such

a sort o' man as Riley, you know,--as can talk pretty nigh as well as

if it was all wrote out for him, and knows a good lot o' words as

don't mean much, so as you can't lay hold of 'em i' law; and a good

solid knowledge o' business too."

"Well," said Mrs. Tulliver, "so far as talking proper, and knowing

everything, and walking with a bend in his back, and setting his hair

up, I shouldn't mind the lad being brought up to that. But them

fine-talking men from the big towns mostly wear the false

shirt-fronts; they wear a frill till it's all a mess, and then hide it

with a bib; I know Riley does. And then, if Tom's to go and live at

Mudport, like Riley, he'll have a house with a kitchen hardly big

enough to turn in, an' niver get a fresh egg for his breakfast, an'

sleep up three pair o' stairs,--or four, for what I know,--and be

burnt to death before he can get down."

"No, no," said Mr. Tulliver, "I've no thoughts of his going to

Mudport: I mean him to set up his office at St. Ogg's, close by us,

an' live at home. But," continued Mr. Tulliver after a pause, "what

I'm a bit afraid on is, as Tom hasn't got the right sort o' brains for

a smart fellow. I doubt he's a bit slowish. He takes after your

family, Bessy."

"Yes, that he does," said Mrs. Tulliver, accepting the last

proposition entirely on its own merits; "he's wonderful for liking a

deal o' salt in his broth. That was my brother's way, and my father's

before him."

"It seems a bit a pity, though," said Mr. Tulliver, "as the lad should

take after the mother's side instead o' the little wench. That's the

worst on't wi' crossing o' breeds: you can never justly calkilate

what'll come on't. The little un takes after my side, now: she's twice

as 'cute as Tom. Too 'cute for a woman, I'm afraid," continued Mr.

Tulliver, turning his head dubiously first on one side and then on the

other. "It's no mischief much while she's a little un; but an

over-'cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep,--she'll fetch

none the bigger price for that."

"Yes, it \_is\_ a mischief while she's a little un, Mr. Tulliver, for it

runs to naughtiness. How to keep her in a clean pinafore two hours

together passes my cunning. An' now you put me i' mind," continued

Mrs. Tulliver, rising and going to the window, "I don't know where she

is now, an' it's pretty nigh tea-time. Ah, I thought so,--wanderin' up

an' down by the water, like a wild thing: She'll tumble in some day."

Mrs. Tulliver rapped the window sharply, beckoned, and shook her

head,--a process which she repeated more than once before she returned

to her chair.

"You talk o' 'cuteness, Mr. Tulliver," she observed as she sat down,

"but I'm sure the child's half an idiot i' some things; for if I send

her upstairs to fetch anything, she forgets what she's gone for, an'

perhaps 'ull sit down on the floor i' the sunshine an' plait her hair

an' sing to herself like a Bedlam creatur', all the while I'm waiting

for her downstairs. That niver run i' my family, thank God! no more

nor a brown skin as makes her look like a mulatter. I don't like to

fly i' the face o' Providence, but it seems hard as I should have but

one gell, an' her so comical."

"Pooh, nonsense!" said Mr. Tulliver; "she's a straight, black-eyed

wench as anybody need wish to see. I don't know i' what she's behind

other folks's children; and she can read almost as well as the

parson."

"But her hair won't curl all I can do with it, and she's so franzy

about having it put i' paper, and I've such work as never was to make

her stand and have it pinched with th' irons."

"Cut it off--cut it off short," said the father, rashly.

"How can you talk so, Mr. Tulliver? She's too big a gell--gone nine,

and tall of her age--to have her hair cut short; an' there's her

cousin Lucy's got a row o' curls round her head, an' not a hair out o'

place. It seems hard as my sister Deane should have that pretty child;

I'm sure Lucy takes more after me nor my own child does. Maggie,

Maggie," continued the mother, in a tone of half-coaxing fretfulness,

as this small mistake of nature entered the room, "where's the use o'

my telling you to keep away from the water? You'll tumble in and be

drownded some day, an' then you'll be sorry you didn't do as mother

told you."

Maggie's hair, as she threw off her bonnet, painfully confirmed her

mother's accusation. Mrs. Tulliver, desiring her daughter to have a

curled crop, "like other folks's children," had had it cut too short

in front to be pushed behind the ears; and as it was usually straight

an hour after it had been taken out of paper, Maggie was incessantly

tossing her head to keep the dark, heavy locks out of her gleaming

black eyes,--an action which gave her very much the air of a small

Shetland pony.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear, Maggie, what are you thinkin' of, to throw your

bonnet down there? Take it upstairs, there's a good gell, an' let your

hair be brushed, an' put your other pinafore on, an' change your

shoes, do, for shame; an' come an' go on with your patchwork, like a

little lady."

"Oh, mother," said Maggie, in a vehemently cross tone, "I don't \_want\_

to do my patchwork."

"What! not your pretty patchwork, to make a counterpane for your aunt

Glegg?"

"It's foolish work," said Maggie, with a toss of her mane,--"tearing

things to pieces to sew 'em together again. And I don't want to do

anything for my aunt Glegg. I don't like her."

Exit Maggie, dragging her bonnet by the string, while Mr. Tulliver

laughs audibly.

"I wonder at you, as you'll laugh at her, Mr. Tulliver," said the

mother, with feeble fretfulness in her tone. "You encourage her i'

naughtiness. An' her aunts will have it as it's me spoils her."

Mrs. Tulliver was what is called a good-tempered person,--never cried,

when she was a baby, on any slighter ground than hunger and pins; and

from the cradle upward had been healthy, fair, plump, and dull-witted;

in short, the flower of her family for beauty and amiability. But milk

and mildness are not the best things for keeping, and when they turn

only a little sour, they may disagree with young stomachs seriously. I

have often wondered whether those early Madonnas of Raphael, with the

blond faces and somewhat stupid expression, kept their placidity

undisturbed when their strong-limbed, strong-willed boys got a little

too old to do without clothing. I think they must have been given to

feeble remonstrance, getting more and more peevish as it became more

and more ineffectual.

Chapter III

Mr. Riley Gives His Advice Concerning a School for Tom

The gentleman in the ample white cravat and shirt-frill, taking his

brandy-and-water so pleasantly with his good friend Tulliver, is Mr.

Riley, a gentleman with a waxen complexion and fat hands, rather

highly educated for an auctioneer and appraiser, but large-hearted

enough to show a great deal of \_bonhomie\_ toward simple country

acquaintances of hospitable habits. Mr. Riley spoke of such

acquaintances kindly as "people of the old school."

The conversation had come to a pause. Mr. Tulliver, not without a

particular reason, had abstained from a seventh recital of the cool

retort by which Riley had shown himself too many for Dix, and how

Wakem had had his comb cut for once in his life, now the business of

the dam had been settled by arbitration, and how there never would

have been any dispute at all about the height of water if everybody

was what they should be, and Old Harry hadn't made the lawyers.

Mr. Tulliver was, on the whole, a man of safe traditional opinions;

but on one or two points he had trusted to his unassisted intellect,

and had arrived at several questionable conclusions; amongst the rest,

that rats, weevils, and lawyers were created by Old Harry. Unhappily

he had no one to tell him that this was rampant ManichÃ¦ism, else he

might have seen his error. But to-day it was clear that the good

principle was triumphant: this affair of the water-power had been a

tangled business somehow, for all it seemed--look at it one way--as

plain as water's water; but, big a puzzle as it was, it hadn't got the

better of Riley. Mr. Tulliver took his brandy-and-water a little

stronger than usual, and, for a man who might be supposed to have a

few hundreds lying idle at his banker's, was rather incautiously open

in expressing his high estimate of his friend's business talents.

But the dam was a subject of conversation that would keep; it could

always be taken up again at the same point, and exactly in the same

condition; and there was another subject, as you know, on which Mr.

Tulliver was in pressing want of Mr. Riley's advice. This was his

particular reason for remaining silent for a short space after his

last draught, and rubbing his knees in a meditative manner. He was not

a man to make an abrupt transition. This was a puzzling world, as he

often said, and if you drive your wagon in a hurry, you may light on

an awkward corner. Mr. Riley, meanwhile, was not impatient. Why should

he be? Even Hotspur, one would think, must have been patient in his

slippers on a warm hearth, taking copious snuff, and sipping

gratuitous brandy-and-water.

"There's a thing I've got i' my head," said Mr. Tulliver at last, in

rather a lower tone than usual, as he turned his head and looked

steadfastly at his companion.

"Ah!" said Mr. Riley, in a tone of mild interest. He was a man with

heavy waxen eyelids and high-arched eyebrows, looking exactly the same

under all circumstances. This immovability of face, and the habit of

taking a pinch of snuff before he gave an answer, made him trebly

oracular to Mr. Tulliver.

"It's a very particular thing," he went on; "it's about my boy Tom."

At the sound of this name, Maggie, who was seated on a low stool close

by the fire, with a large book open on her lap, shook her heavy hair

back and looked up eagerly. There were few sounds that roused Maggie

when she was dreaming over her book, but Tom's name served as well as

the shrillest whistle; in an instant she was on the watch, with

gleaming eyes, like a Skye terrier suspecting mischief, or at all

events determined to fly at any one who threatened it toward Tom.

"You see, I want to put him to a new school at Midsummer," said Mr.

Tulliver; "he's comin' away from the 'cademy at Lady-day, an' I shall

let him run loose for a quarter; but after that I want to send him to

a downright good school, where they'll make a scholard of him."

"Well," said Mr. Riley, "there's no greater advantage you can give him

than a good education. Not," he added, with polite significance,--"not

that a man can't be an excellent miller and farmer, and a shrewd,

sensible fellow into the bargain, without much help from the

schoolmaster."

"I believe you," said Mr. Tulliver, winking, and turning his head on

one side; "but that's where it is. I don't \_mean\_ Tom to be a miller

and farmer. I see no fun i' that. Why, if I made him a miller an'

farmer, he'd be expectin' to take to the mill an' the land, an'

a-hinting at me as it was time for me to lay by an' think o' my latter

end. Nay, nay, I've seen enough o' that wi' sons. I'll never pull my

coat off before I go to bed. I shall give Tom an eddication an' put

him to a business, as he may make a nest for himself, an' not want to

push me out o' mine. Pretty well if he gets it when I'm dead an' gone.

I sha'n't be put off wi' spoon-meat afore I've lost my teeth."

This was evidently a point on which Mr. Tulliver felt strongly; and

the impetus which had given unusual rapidity and emphasis to his

speech showed itself still unexhausted for some minutes afterward in a

defiant motion of the head from side to side, and an occasional "Nay,

nay," like a subsiding growl.

These angry symptoms were keenly observed by Maggie, and cut her to

the quick. Tom, it appeared, was supposed capable of turning his

father out of doors, and of making the future in some way tragic by

his wickedness. This was not to be borne; and Maggie jumped up from

her stool, forgetting all about her heavy book, which fell with a bang

within the fender, and going up between her father's knees, said, in a

half-crying, half-indignant voice,--

"Father, Tom wouldn't be naughty to you ever; I know he wouldn't."

Mrs. Tulliver was out of the room superintending a choice supper-dish,

and Mr. Tulliver's heart was touched; so Maggie was not scolded about

the book. Mr. Riley quietly picked it up and looked at it, while the

father laughed, with a certain tenderness in his hard-lined face, and

patted his little girl on the back, and then held her hands and kept

her between his knees.

"What! they mustn't say any harm o' Tom, eh?" said Mr. Tulliver,

looking at Maggie with a twinkling eye. Then, in a lower voice,

turning to Mr. Riley, as though Maggie couldn't hear, "She understands

what one's talking about so as never was. And you should hear her

read,--straight off, as if she knowed it all beforehand. And allays at

her book! But it's bad--it's bad," Mr. Tulliver added sadly, checking

this blamable exultation. "A woman's no business wi' being so clever;

it'll turn to trouble, I doubt. But bless you!"--here the exultation

was clearly recovering the mastery,--"she'll read the books and

understand 'em better nor half the folks as are growed up."

Maggie's cheeks began to flush with triumphant excitement. She thought

Mr. Riley would have a respect for her now; it had been evident that

he thought nothing of her before.

Mr. Riley was turning over the leaves of the book, and she could make

nothing of his face, with its high-arched eyebrows; but he presently

looked at her, and said,--

"Come, come and tell me something about this book; here are some

pictures,--I want to know what they mean."

Maggie, with deepening color, went without hesitation to Mr. Riley's

elbow and looked over the book, eagerly seizing one corner, and

tossing back her mane, while she said,--

"Oh, I'll tell you what that means. It's a dreadful picture, isn't it?

But I can't help looking at it. That old woman in the water's a

witch,--they've put her in to find out whether she's a witch or no;

and if she swims she's a witch, and if she's drowned--and killed, you

know--she's innocent, and not a witch, but only a poor silly old

woman. But what good would it do her then, you know, when she was

drowned? Only, I suppose, she'd go to heaven, and God would make it up

to her. And this dreadful blacksmith with his arms akimbo,

laughing,--oh, isn't he ugly?--I'll tell you what he is. He's the

Devil \_really\_" (here Maggie's voice became louder and more emphatic),

"and not a right blacksmith; for the Devil takes the shape of wicked

men, and walks about and sets people doing wicked things, and he's

oftener in the shape of a bad man than any other, because, you know,

if people saw he was the Devil, and he roared at 'em, they'd run away,

and he couldn't make 'em do what he pleased."

Mr. Tulliver had listened to this exposition of Maggie's with

petrifying wonder.

"Why, what book is it the wench has got hold on?" he burst out at

last.

"The 'History of the Devil,' by Daniel Defoe,--not quite the right

book for a little girl," said Mr. Riley. "How came it among your

books, Mr. Tulliver?"

Maggie looked hurt and discouraged, while her father said,--

"Why, it's one o' the books I bought at Partridge's sale. They was all

bound alike,--it's a good binding, you see,--and I thought they'd be

all good books. There's Jeremy Taylor's 'Holy Living and Dying' among

'em. I read in it often of a Sunday" (Mr. Tulliver felt somehow a

familiarity with that great writer, because his name was Jeremy); "and

there's a lot more of 'em,--sermons mostly, I think,--but they've all

got the same covers, and I thought they were all o' one sample, as you

may say. But it seems one mustn't judge by th' outside. This is a

puzzlin' world."

"Well," said Mr. Riley, in an admonitory, patronizing tone as he

patted Maggie on the head, "I advise you to put by the 'History of the

Devil,' and read some prettier book. Have you no prettier books?"

"Oh, yes," said Maggie, reviving a little in the desire to vindicate

the variety of her reading. "I know the reading in this book isn't

pretty; but I like the pictures, and I make stories to the pictures

out of my own head, you know. But I've got 'Ãsop's Fables,' and a book

about Kangaroos and things, and the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'"

"Ah, a beautiful book," said Mr. Riley; "you can't read a better."

"Well, but there's a great deal about the Devil in that," said Maggie,

triumphantly, "and I'll show you the picture of him in his true shape,

as he fought with Christian."

Maggie ran in an instant to the corner of the room, jumped on a chair,

and reached down from the small bookcase a shabby old copy of Bunyan,

which opened at once, without the least trouble of search, at the

picture she wanted.

"Here he is," she said, running back to Mr. Riley, "and Tom colored

him for me with his paints when he was at home last holidays,--the

body all black, you know, and the eyes red, like fire, because he's

all fire inside, and it shines out at his eyes."

"Go, go!" said Mr. Tulliver, peremptorily, beginning to feel rather

uncomfortable at these free remarks on the personal appearance of a

being powerful enough to create lawyers; "shut up the book, and let's

hear no more o' such talk. It is as I thought--the child 'ull learn

more mischief nor good wi' the books. Go, go and see after your

mother."

Maggie shut up the book at once, with a sense of disgrace, but not

being inclined to see after her mother, she compromised the matter by

going into a dark corner behind her father's chair, and nursing her

doll, toward which she had an occasional fit of fondness in Tom's

absence, neglecting its toilet, but lavishing so many warm kisses on

it that the waxen cheeks had a wasted, unhealthy appearance.

"Did you ever hear the like on't?" said Mr. Tulliver, as Maggie

retired. "It's a pity but what she'd been the lad,--she'd ha' been a

match for the lawyers, \_she\_ would. It's the wonderful'st thing"--here

he lowered his voice--"as I picked the mother because she wasn't o'er

'cute--bein' a good-looking woman too, an' come of a rare family for

managing; but I picked her from her sisters o' purpose, 'cause she was

a bit weak like; for I wasn't agoin' to be told the rights o' things

by my own fireside. But you see when a man's got brains himself,

there's no knowing where they'll run to; an' a pleasant sort o' soft

woman may go on breeding you stupid lads and 'cute wenches, till it's

like as if the world was turned topsy-turvy. It's an uncommon puzzlin'

thing."

Mr. Riley's gravity gave way, and he shook a little under the

application of his pinch of snuff before he said,--

"But your lad's not stupid, is he? I saw him, when I was here last,

busy making fishing-tackle; he seemed quite up to it."

"Well, he isn't not to say stupid,--he's got a notion o' things out o'

door, an' a sort o' common sense, as he'd lay hold o' things by the

right handle. But he's slow with his tongue, you see, and he reads but

poorly, and can't abide the books, and spells all wrong, they tell me,

an' as shy as can be wi' strangers, an' you never hear him say 'cute

things like the little wench. Now, what I want is to send him to a

school where they'll make him a bit nimble with his tongue and his

pen, and make a smart chap of him. I want my son to be even wi' these

fellows as have got the start o' me with having better schooling. Not

but what, if the world had been left as God made it, I could ha' seen

my way, and held my own wi' the best of 'em; but things have got so

twisted round and wrapped up i' unreasonable words, as aren't a bit

like 'em, as I'm clean at fault, often an' often. Everything winds

about so--the more straightforrad you are, the more you're puzzled."

Mr. Tulliver took a draught, swallowed it slowly, and shook his head

in a melancholy manner, conscious of exemplifying the truth that a

perfectly sane intellect is hardly at home in this insane world.

"You're quite in the right of it, Tulliver," observed Mr. Riley.

"Better spend an extra hundred or two on your son's education, than

leave it him in your will. I know I should have tried to do so by a

son of mine, if I'd had one, though, God knows, I haven't your ready

money to play with, Tulliver; and I have a houseful of daughters into

the bargain."

"I dare say, now, you know of a school as 'ud be just the thing for

Tom," said Mr. Tulliver, not diverted from his purpose by any sympathy

with Mr. Riley's deficiency of ready cash.

Mr. Riley took a pinch of snuff, and kept Mr. Tulliver in suspense by

a silence that seemed deliberative, before he said,--

"I know of a very fine chance for any one that's got the necessary

money and that's what you have, Tulliver. The fact is, I wouldn't

recommend any friend of mine to send a boy to a regular school, if he

could afford to do better. But if any one wanted his boy to get

superior instruction and training, where he would be the companion of

his master, and that master a first rate fellow, I know his man. I

wouldn't mention the chance to everybody, because I don't think

everybody would succeed in getting it, if he were to try; but I

mention it to you, Tulliver, between ourselves."

The fixed inquiring glance with which Mr. Tulliver had been watching

his friend's oracular face became quite eager.

"Ay, now, let's hear," he said, adjusting himself in his chair with

the complacency of a person who is thought worthy of important

communications.

"He's an Oxford man," said Mr. Riley, sententiously, shutting his

mouth close, and looking at Mr. Tulliver to observe the effect of this

stimulating information.

"What! a parson?" said Mr. Tulliver, rather doubtfully.

"Yes, and an M.A. The bishop, I understand, thinks very highly of him:

why, it was the bishop who got him his present curacy."

"Ah?" said Mr. Tulliver, to whom one thing was as wonderful as another

concerning these unfamiliar phenomena. "But what can he want wi' Tom,

then?"

"Why, the fact is, he's fond of teaching, and wishes to keep up his

studies, and a clergyman has but little opportunity for that in his

parochial duties. He's willing to take one or two boys as pupils to

fill up his time profitably. The boys would be quite of the

family,--the finest thing in the world for them; under Stelling's eye

continually."

"But do you think they'd give the poor lad twice o' pudding?" said

Mrs. Tulliver, who was now in her place again. "He's such a boy for

pudding as never was; an' a growing boy like that,--it's dreadful to

think o' their stintin' him."

"And what money 'ud he want?" said Mr. Tulliver, whose instinct told

him that the services of this admirable M.A. would bear a high price.

"Why, I know of a clergyman who asks a hundred and fifty with his

youngest pupils, and he's not to be mentioned with Stelling, the man I

speak of. I know, on good authority, that one of the chief people at

Oxford said, Stelling might get the highest honors if he chose. But he

didn't care about university honors; he's a quiet man--not noisy."

"Ah, a deal better--a deal better," said Mr. Tulliver; "but a hundred

and fifty's an uncommon price. I never thought o' paying so much as

that."

"A good education, let me tell you, Tulliver,--a good education is

cheap at the money. But Stelling is moderate in his terms; he's not a

grasping man. I've no doubt he'd take your boy at a hundred, and

that's what you wouldn't get many other clergymen to do. I'll write to

him about it, if you like."

Mr. Tulliver rubbed his knees, and looked at the carpet in a

meditative manner.

"But belike he's a bachelor," observed Mrs. Tulliver, in the interval;

"an' I've no opinion o' housekeepers. There was my brother, as is dead

an' gone, had a housekeeper once, an' she took half the feathers out

o' the best bed, an' packed 'em up an' sent 'em away. An' it's unknown

the linen she made away with--Stott her name was. It 'ud break my

heart to send Tom where there's a housekeeper, an' I hope you won't

think of it, Mr. Tulliver."

"You may set your mind at rest on that score, Mrs. Tulliver," said Mr.

Riley, "for Stelling is married to as nice a little woman as any man

need wish for a wife. There isn't a kinder little soul in the world; I

know her family well. She has very much your complexion,--light curly

hair. She comes of a good Mudport family, and it's not every offer

that would have been acceptable in that quarter. But Stelling's not an

every-day man; rather a particular fellow as to the people he chooses

to be connected with. But I \_think\_ he would have no objection to take

your son; I \_think\_ he would not, on my representation."

"I don't know what he could have \_against\_ the lad," said Mrs.

Tulliver, with a slight touch of motherly indignation; "a nice

fresh-skinned lad as anybody need wish to see."

"But there's one thing I'm thinking on," said Mr. Tulliver, turning

his head on one side and looking at Mr. Riley, after a long perusal of

the carpet. "Wouldn't a parson be almost too high-learnt to bring up a

lad to be a man o' business? My notion o' the parsons was as they'd

got a sort o' learning as lay mostly out o' sight. And that isn't what

I want for Tom. I want him to know figures, and write like print, and

see into things quick, and know what folks mean, and how to wrap

things up in words as aren't actionable. It's an uncommon fine thing,

that is," concluded Mr. Tulliver, shaking his head, "when you can let

a man know what you think of him without paying for it."

"Oh, my dear Tulliver," said Mr. Riley, "you're quite under a mistake

about the clergy; all the best schoolmasters are of the clergy. The

schoolmasters who are not clergymen are a very low set of men

generally."

"Ay, that Jacobs is, at the 'cademy," interposed Mr. Tulliver.

"To be sure,--men who have failed in other trades, most likely. Now, a

clergyman is a gentleman by profession and education; and besides

that, he has the knowledge that will ground a boy, and prepare him for

entering on any career with credit. There may be some clergymen who

are mere bookmen; but you may depend upon it, Stelling is not one of

them,--a man that's wide awake, let me tell you. Drop him a hint, and

that's enough. You talk of figures, now; you have only to say to

Stelling, 'I want my son to be a thorough arithmetician,' and you may

leave the rest to him."

Mr. Riley paused a moment, while Mr. Tulliver, some-what reassured as

to clerical tutorship, was inwardly rehearsing to an imaginary Mr.

Stelling the statement, "I want my son to know 'rethmetic."

"You see, my dear Tulliver," Mr. Riley continued, "when you get a

thoroughly educated man, like Stelling, he's at no loss to take up any

branch of instruction. When a workman knows the use of his tools, he

can make a door as well as a window."

"Ay, that's true," said Mr. Tulliver, almost convinced now that the

clergy must be the best of schoolmasters.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do for you," said Mr. Riley, "and I

wouldn't do it for everybody. I'll see Stelling's father-in-law, or

drop him a line when I get back to Mudport, to say that you wish to

place your boy with his son-in-law, and I dare say Stelling will write

to you, and send you his terms."

"But there's no hurry, is there?" said Mrs. Tulliver; "for I hope, Mr.

Tulliver, you won't let Tom begin at his new school before Midsummer.

He began at the 'cademy at the Lady-day quarter, and you see what

good's come of it."

"Ay, ay, Bessy, never brew wi' bad malt upo' Michael-masday, else

you'll have a poor tap," said Mr. Tulliver, winking and smiling at Mr.

Riley, with the natural pride of a man who has a buxom wife

conspicuously his inferior in intellect. "But it's true there's no

hurry; you've hit it there, Bessy."

"It might be as well not to defer the arrangement too long," said Mr.

Riley, quietly, "for Stelling may have propositions from other

parties, and I know he would not take more than two or three boarders,

if so many. If I were you, I think I would enter on the subject with

Stelling at once: there's no necessity for sending the boy before

Midsummer, but I would be on the safe side, and make sure that nobody

forestalls you."

"Ay, there's summat in that," said Mr. Tulliver.

"Father," broke in Maggie, who had stolen unperceived to her father's

elbow again, listening with parted lips, while she held her doll

topsy-turvy, and crushed its nose against the wood of the

chair,--"father, is it a long way off where Tom is to go? Sha'n't we

ever go to see him?"

"I don't know, my wench," said the father, tenderly. "Ask Mr. Riley;

he knows."

Maggie came round promptly in front of Mr. Riley, and said, "How far

is it, please, sir?"

"Oh, a long, long way off," that gentleman answered, being of opinion

that children, when they are not naughty, should always be spoken to

jocosely. "You must borrow the seven-leagued boots to get to him."

"That's nonsense!" said Maggie, tossing her head haughtily, and

turning away, with the tears springing in her eyes. She began to

dislike Mr. Riley; it was evident he thought her silly and of no

consequence.

"Hush, Maggie! for shame of you, asking questions and chattering,"

said her mother. "Come and sit down on your little stool, and hold

your tongue, do. But," added Mrs. Tulliver, who had her own alarm

awakened, "is it so far off as I couldn't wash him and mend him?"

"About fifteen miles; that's all," said Mr. Riley. "You can drive

there and back in a day quite comfortably. Or--Stelling is a

hospitable, pleasant man--he'd be glad to have you stay."

"But it's too far off for the linen, I doubt," said Mrs. Tulliver,

sadly.

The entrance of supper opportunely adjourned this difficulty, and

relieved Mr. Riley from the labor of suggesting some solution or

compromise,--a labor which he would otherwise doubtless have

undertaken; for, as you perceive, he was a man of very obliging

manners. And he had really given himself the trouble of recommending

Mr. Stelling to his friend Tulliver without any positive expectation

of a solid, definite advantage resulting to himself, notwithstanding

the subtle indications to the contrary which might have misled a

too-sagacious observer. For there is nothing more widely misleading

than sagacity if it happens to get on a wrong scent; and sagacity,

persuaded that men usually act and speak from distinct motives, with a

consciously proposed end in view, is certain to waste its energies on

imaginary game.

Plotting covetousness and deliberate contrivance, in order to compass

a selfish end, are nowhere abundant but in the world of the dramatist:

they demand too intense a mental action for many of our

fellow-parishioners to be guilty of them. It is easy enough to spoil

the lives of our neighbors without taking so much trouble; we can do

it by lazy acquiescence and lazy omission, by trivial falsities for

which we hardly know a reason, by small frauds neutralized by small

extravagances, by maladroit flatteries, and clumsily improvised

insinuations. We live from hand to mouth, most of us, with a small

family of immediate desires; we do little else than snatch a morsel to

satisfy the hungry brood, rarely thinking of seed-corn or the next

year's crop.

Mr. Riley was a man of business, and not cold toward his own interest,

yet even he was more under the influence of small promptings than of

far-sighted designs. He had no private understanding with the Rev.

Walter Stelling; on the contrary, he knew very little of that M.A. and

his acquirements,--not quite enough, perhaps, to warrant so strong a

recommendation of him as he had given to his friend Tulliver. But he

believed Mr. Stelling to be an excellent classic, for Gadsby had said

so, and Gadsby's first cousin was an Oxford tutor; which was better

ground for the belief even than his own immediate observation would

have been, for though Mr. Riley had received a tincture of the

classics at the great Mudport Free School, and had a sense of

understanding Latin generally, his comprehension of any particular

Latin was not ready. Doubtless there remained a subtle aroma from his

juvenile contact with the "De Senectute" and the fourth book of the

"Ãneid," but it had ceased to be distinctly recognizable as classical,

and was only perceived in the higher finish and force of his

auctioneering style. Then, Stelling was an Oxford man, and the Oxford

men were always--no, no, it was the Cambridge men who were always good

mathematicians. But a man who had had a university education could

teach anything he liked; especially a man like Stelling, who had made

a speech at a Mudport dinner on a political occasion, and had

acquitted himself so well that it was generally remarked, this

son-in-law of Timpson's was a sharp fellow. It was to be expected of a

Mudport man, from the parish of St. Ursula, that he would not omit to

do a good turn to a son-in-law of Timpson's, for Timpson was one of

the most useful and influential men in the parish, and had a good deal

of business, which he knew how to put into the right hands. Mr. Riley

liked such men, quite apart from any money which might be diverted,

through their good judgment, from less worthy pockets into his own;

and it would be a satisfaction to him to say to Timpson on his return

home, "I've secured a good pupil for your son-in-law." Timpson had a

large family of daughters; Mr. Riley felt for him; besides, Louisa

Timpson's face, with its light curls, had been a familiar object to

him over the pew wainscot on a Sunday for nearly fifteen years; it was

natural her husband should be a commendable tutor. Moreover, Mr. Riley

knew of no other schoolmaster whom he had any ground for recommending

in preference; why, then, should he not recommend Stelling? His friend

Tulliver had asked him for an opinion; it is always chilling, in

friendly intercourse, to say you have no opinion to give. And if you

deliver an opinion at all, it is mere stupidity not to do it with an

air of conviction and well-founded knowledge. You make it your own in

uttering it, and naturally get fond of it. Thus Mr. Riley, knowing no

harm of Stelling to begin with, and wishing him well, so far as he had

any wishes at all concerning him, had no sooner recommended him than

he began to think with admiration of a man recommended on such high

authority, and would soon have gathered so warm an interest on the

subject, that if Mr. Tulliver had in the end declined to send Tom to

Stelling, Mr. Riley would have thought his "friend of the old school"

a thoroughly pig-headed fellow.

If you blame Mr. Riley very severely for giving a recommendation on

such slight grounds, I must say you are rather hard upon him. Why

should an auctioneer and appraiser thirty years ago, who had as good

as forgotten his free-school Latin, be expected to manifest a delicate

scrupulosity which is not always exhibited by gentlemen of the learned

professions, even in our present advanced stage of morality?

Besides, a man with the milk of human kindness in him can scarcely

abstain from doing a good-natured action, and one cannot be

good-natured all round. Nature herself occasionally quarters an

inconvenient parasite on an animal toward whom she has otherwise no

ill will. What then? We admire her care for the parasite. If Mr. Riley

had shrunk from giving a recommendation that was not based on valid

evidence, he would not have helped Mr. Stelling to a paying pupil, and

that would not have been so well for the reverend gentleman. Consider,

too, that all the pleasant little dim ideas and complacencies--of

standing well with Timpson, of dispensing advice when he was asked for

it, of impressing his friend Tulliver with additional respect, of

saying something, and saying it emphatically, with other inappreciably

minute ingredients that went along with the warm hearth and the

brandy-and-water to make up Mr. Riley's consciousness on this

occasion--would have been a mere blank.

Chapter IV

Tom Is Expected

It was a heavy disappointment to Maggie that she was not allowed to go

with her father in the gig when he went to fetch Tom home from the

academy; but the morning was too wet, Mrs. Tulliver said, for a little

girl to go out in her best bonnet. Maggie took the opposite view very

strongly, and it was a direct consequence of this difference of

opinion that when her mother was in the act of brushing out the

reluctant black crop Maggie suddenly rushed from under her hands and

dipped her head in a basin of water standing near, in the vindictive

determination that there should be no more chance of curls that day.

"Maggie, Maggie!" exclaimed Mrs. Tulliver, sitting stout and helpless

with the brushes on her lap, "what is to become of you if you're so

naughty? I'll tell your aunt Glegg and your aunt Pullet when they come

next week, and they'll never love you any more. Oh dear, oh dear! look

at your clean pinafore, wet from top to bottom. Folks 'ull think it's

a judgment on me as I've got such a child,--they'll think I've done

summat wicked."

Before this remonstrance was finished, Maggie was already out of

hearing, making her way toward the great attic that run under the old

high-pitched roof, shaking the water from her black locks as she ran,

like a Skye terrier escaped from his bath. This attic was Maggie's

favorite retreat on a wet day, when the weather was not too cold; here

she fretted out all her ill humors, and talked aloud to the worm-eaten

floors and the worm-eaten shelves, and the dark rafters festooned with

cobwebs; and here she kept a Fetish which she punished for all her

misfortunes. This was the trunk of a large wooden doll, which once

stared with the roundest of eyes above the reddest of cheeks; but was

now entirely defaced by a long career of vicarious suffering. Three

nails driven into the head commemorated as many crises in Maggie's

nine years of earthly struggle; that luxury of vengeance having been

suggested to her by the picture of Jael destroying Sisera in the old

Bible. The last nail had been driven in with a fiercer stroke than

usual, for the Fetish on that occasion represented aunt Glegg. But

immediately afterward Maggie had reflected that if she drove many

nails in she would not be so well able to fancy that the head was hurt

when she knocked it against the wall, nor to comfort it, and make

believe to poultice it, when her fury was abated; for even aunt Glegg

would be pitiable when she had been hurt very much, and thoroughly

humiliated, so as to beg her niece's pardon. Since then she had driven

no more nails in, but had soothed herself by alternately grinding and

beating the wooden head against the rough brick of the great chimneys

that made two square pillars supporting the roof. That was what she

did this morning on reaching the attic, sobbing all the while with a

passion that expelled every other form of consciousness,--even the

memory of the grievance that had caused it. As at last the sobs were

getting quieter, and the grinding less fierce, a sudden beam of

sunshine, falling through the wire lattice across the worm-eaten

shelves, made her throw away the Fetish and run to the window. The sun

was really breaking out; the sound of the mill seemed cheerful again;

the granary doors were open; and there was Yap, the queer

white-and-brown terrier, with one ear turned back, trotting about and

sniffing vaguely, as if he were in search of a companion. It was

irresistible. Maggie tossed her hair back and ran downstairs, seized

her bonnet without putting it on, peeped, and then dashed along the

passage lest she should encounter her mother, and was quickly out in

the yard, whirling round like a Pythoness, and singing as she whirled,

"Yap, Yap, Tom's coming home!" while Yap danced and barked round her,

as much as to say, if there was any noise wanted he was the dog for

it.

"Hegh, hegh, Miss! you'll make yourself giddy, an' tumble down i' the

dirt," said Luke, the head miller, a tall, broad-shouldered man of

forty, black-eyed and black-haired, subdued by a general mealiness,

like an auricula.

Maggie paused in her whirling and said, staggering a little, "Oh no,

it doesn't make me giddy, Luke; may I go into the mill with you?"

Maggie loved to linger in the great spaces of the mill, and often came

out with her black hair powdered to a soft whiteness that made her

dark eyes flash out with new fire. The resolute din, the unresting

motion of the great stones, giving her a dim, delicious awe as at the

presence of an uncontrollable force; the meal forever pouring,

pouring; the fine white powder softening all surfaces, and making the

very spidernets look like a faery lace-work; the sweet, pure scent of

the meal,--all helped to make Maggie feel that the mill was a little

world apart from her outside every-day life. The spiders were

especially a subject of speculation with her. She wondered if they had

any relatives outside the mill, for in that case there must be a

painful difficulty in their family intercourse,--a fat and floury

spider, accustomed to take his fly well dusted with meal, must suffer

a little at a cousin's table where the fly was \_au naturel\_, and the

lady spiders must be mutually shocked at each other's appearance. But

the part of the mill she liked best was the topmost story,--the

corn-hutch, where there were the great heaps of grain, which she could

sit on and slide down continually. She was in the habit of taking this

recreation as she conversed with Luke, to whom she was very

communicative, wishing him to think well of her understanding, as her

father did.

Perhaps she felt it necessary to recover her position with him on the

present occasion for, as she sat sliding on the heap of grain near

which he was busying himself, she said, at that shrill pitch which was

requisite in mill-society,--

"I think you never read any book but the Bible, did you, Luke?"

"Nay, Miss, an' not much o' that," said Luke, with great frankness.

"I'm no reader, I aren't."

"But if I lent you one of my books, Luke? I've not got any \_very\_

pretty books that would be easy for you to read; but there's 'Pug's

Tour of Europe,'--that would tell you all about the different sorts of

people in the world, and if you didn't understand the reading, the

pictures would help you; they show the looks and ways of the people,

and what they do. There are the Dutchmen, very fat, and smoking, you

know, and one sitting on a barrel."

"Nay, Miss, I'n no opinion o' Dutchmen. There ben't much good i'

knowin' about \_them\_."

"But they're our fellow-creatures, Luke; we ought to know about our

fellow-creatures."

"Not much o' fellow-creaturs, I think, Miss; all I know--my old

master, as war a knowin' man, used to say, says he, 'If e'er I sow my

wheat wi'out brinin', I'm a Dutchman,' says he; an' that war as much

as to say as a Dutchman war a fool, or next door. Nay, nay, I aren't

goin' to bother mysen about Dutchmen. There's fools enoo, an' rogues

enoo, wi'out lookin' i' books for 'em."

"Oh, well," said Maggie, rather foiled by Luke's unexpectedly decided

views about Dutchmen, "perhaps you would like 'Animated Nature'

better; that's not Dutchmen, you know, but elephants and kangaroos,

and the civet-cat, and the sunfish, and a bird sitting on its tail,--I

forget its name. There are countries full of those creatures, instead

of horses and cows, you know. Shouldn't you like to know about them,

Luke?"

"Nay, Miss, I'n got to keep count o' the flour an' corn; I can't do

wi' knowin' so many things besides my work. That's what brings folks

to the gallows,--knowin' everything but what they'n got to get their

bread by. An' they're mostly lies, I think, what's printed i' the

books: them printed sheets are, anyhow, as the men cry i' the

streets."

"Why, you're like my brother Tom, Luke," said Maggie, wishing to turn

the conversation agreeably; "Tom's not fond of reading. I love Tom so

dearly, Luke,--better than anybody else in the world. When he grows up

I shall keep his house, and we shall always live together. I can tell

him everything he doesn't know. But I think Tom's clever, for all he

doesn't like books; he makes beautiful whipcord and rabbit-pens."

"Ah," said Luke, "but he'll be fine an' vexed, as the rabbits are all

dead."

"Dead!" screamed Maggie, jumping up from her sliding seat on the corn.

"Oh dear, Luke! What! the lop-eared one, and the spotted doe that Tom

spent all his money to buy?"

"As dead as moles," said Luke, fetching his comparison from the

unmistakable corpses nailed to the stable wall.

"Oh dear, Luke," said Maggie, in a piteous tone, while the big tears

rolled down her cheek; "Tom told me to take care of 'em, and I forgot.

What \_shall\_ I do?"

"Well, you see, Miss, they were in that far tool-house, an' it was

nobody's business to see to 'em. I reckon Master Tom told Harry to

feed 'em, but there's no countin' on Harry; \_he's\_ an offal creatur as

iver come about the primises, he is. He remembers nothing but his own

inside--an' I wish it 'ud gripe him."

"Oh, Luke, Tom told me to be sure and remember the rabbits every day;

but how could I, when they didn't come into my head, you know? Oh, he

will be so angry with me, I know he will, and so sorry about his

rabbits, and so am I sorry. Oh, what \_shall\_ I do?"

"Don't you fret, Miss," said Luke, soothingly; "they're nash things,

them lop-eared rabbits; they'd happen ha' died, if they'd been fed.

Things out o' natur niver thrive: God A'mighty doesn't like 'em. He

made the rabbits' ears to lie back, an' it's nothin' but contrairiness

to make 'em hing down like a mastiff dog's. Master Tom 'ull know

better nor buy such things another time. Don't you fret, Miss. Will

you come along home wi' me, and see my wife? I'm a-goin' this minute."

The invitation offered an agreeable distraction to Maggie's grief, and

her tears gradually subsided as she trotted along by Luke's side to

his pleasant cottage, which stood with its apple and pear trees, and

with the added dignity of a lean-to pigsty, at the other end of the

Mill fields. Mrs. Moggs, Luke's wife, was a decidedly agreeable

acquaintance. She exhibited her hospitality in bread and treacle, and

possessed various works of art. Maggie actually forgot that she had

any special cause of sadness this morning, as she stood on a chair to

look at a remarkable series of pictures representing the Prodigal Son

in the costume of Sir Charles Grandison, except that, as might have

been expected from his defective moral character, he had not, like

that accomplished hero, the taste and strength of mind to dispense

with a wig. But the indefinable weight the dead rabbits had left on

her mind caused her to feel more than usual pity for the career of

this weak young man, particularly when she looked at the picture where

he leaned against a tree with a flaccid appearance, his knee-breeches

unbuttoned and his wig awry, while the swine apparently of some

foreign breed, seemed to insult him by their good spirits over their

feast of husks.

"I'm very glad his father took him back again, aren't you, Luke?" she

said. "For he was very sorry, you know, and wouldn't do wrong again."

"Eh, Miss," said Luke, "he'd be no great shakes, I doubt, let's

feyther do what he would for him."

That was a painful thought to Maggie, and she wished much that the

subsequent history of the young man had not been left a blank.

Chapter V

Tom Comes Home

Tom was to arrive early in the afternoon, and there was another

fluttering heart besides Maggie's when it was late enough for the

sound of the gig-wheels to be expected; for if Mrs. Tulliver had a

strong feeling, it was fondness for her boy. At last the sound

came,--that quick light bowling of the gig-wheels,--and in spite of

the wind, which was blowing the clouds about, and was not likely to

respect Mrs. Tulliver's curls and cap-strings, she came outside the

door, and even held her hand on Maggie's offending head, forgetting

all the griefs of the morning.

"There he is, my sweet lad! But, Lord ha' mercy! he's got never a

collar on; it's been lost on the road, I'll be bound, and spoilt the

set."

Mrs. Tulliver stood with her arms open; Maggie jumped first on one leg

and then on the other; while Tom descended from the gig, and said,

with masculine reticence as to the tender emotions, "Hallo! Yap--what!

are you there?"

Nevertheless he submitted to be kissed willingly enough, though Maggie

hung on his neck in rather a strangling fashion, while his blue-gray

eyes wandered toward the croft and the lambs and the river, where he

promised himself that he would begin to fish the first thing to-morrow

morning. He was one of those lads that grow everywhere in England, and

at twelve or thirteen years of age look as much alike as goslings,--a

lad with light-brown hair, cheeks of cream and roses, full lips,

indeterminate nose and eyebrows,--a physiognomy in which it seems

impossible to discern anything but the generic character to boyhood;

as different as possible from poor Maggie's phiz, which Nature seemed

to have moulded and colored with the most decided intention. But that

same Nature has the deep cunning which hides itself under the

appearance of openness, so that simple people think they can see

through her quite well, and all the while she is secretly preparing a

refutation of their confident prophecies. Under these average boyish

physiognomies that she seems to turn off by the gross, she conceals

some of her most rigid, inflexible purposes, some of her most

unmodifiable characters; and the dark-eyed, demonstrative, rebellious

girl may after all turn out to be a passive being compared with this

pink-and-white bit of masculinity with the indeterminate features.

"Maggie," said Tom, confidentially, taking her into a corner, as soon

as his mother was gone out to examine his box and the warm parlor had

taken off the chill he had felt from the long drive, "you don't know

what I've got in \_my\_ pockets," nodding his head up and down as a

means of rousing her sense of mystery.

"No," said Maggie. "How stodgy they look, Tom! Is it marls (marbles)

or cobnuts?" Maggie's heart sank a little, because Tom always said it

was "no good" playing with \_her\_ at those games, she played so badly.

"Marls! no; I've swopped all my marls with the little fellows, and

cobnuts are no fun, you silly, only when the nuts are green. But see

here!" He drew something half out of his right-hand pocket.

"What is it?" said Maggie, in a whisper. "I can see nothing but a bit

of yellow."

"Why, it's--a--new--guess, Maggie!"

"Oh, I \_can't\_ guess, Tom," said Maggie, impatiently.

"Don't be a spitfire, else I won't tell you," said Tom, thrusting his

hand back into his pocket and looking determined.

"No, Tom," said Maggie, imploringly, laying hold of the arm that was

held stiffly in the pocket. "I'm not cross, Tom; it was only because I

can't bear guessing. \_Please\_ be good to me."

Tom's arm slowly relaxed, and he said, "Well, then, it's a new

fish-line--two new uns,--one for you, Maggie, all to yourself. I

wouldn't go halves in the toffee and gingerbread on purpose to save

the money; and Gibson and Spouncer fought with me because I wouldn't.

And here's hooks; see here--I say, \_won't\_ we go and fish to-morrow

down by the Round Pool? And you shall catch your own fish, Maggie and

put the worms on, and everything; won't it be fun?"

Maggie's answer was to throw her arms round Tom's neck and hug him,

and hold her cheek against his without speaking, while he slowly

unwound some of the line, saying, after a pause,--

"Wasn't I a good brother, now, to buy you a line all to yourself? You

know, I needn't have bought it, if I hadn't liked."

"Yes, very, very good--I \_do\_ love you, Tom."

Tom had put the line back in his pocket, and was looking at the hooks

one by one, before he spoke again.

"And the fellows fought me, because I wouldn't give in about the

toffee."

"Oh, dear! I wish they wouldn't fight at your school, Tom. Didn't it

hurt you?"

"Hurt me? no," said Tom, putting up the hooks again, taking out a

large pocket-knife, and slowly opening the largest blade, which he

looked at meditatively as he rubbed his finger along it. Then he

added,--

"I gave Spouncer a black eye, I know; that's what he got by wanting to

leather \_me;\_ I wasn't going to go halves because anybody leathered

me."

"Oh, how brave you are, Tom! I think you're like Samson. If there came

a lion roaring at me, I think you'd fight him, wouldn't you, Tom?"

"How can a lion come roaring at you, you silly thing? There's no

lions, only in the shows."

"No; but if we were in the lion countries--I mean in Africa, where

it's very hot; the lions eat people there. I can show it you in the

book where I read it."

"Well, I should get a gun and shoot him."

"But if you hadn't got a gun,--we might have gone out, you know, not

thinking, just as we go fishing; and then a great lion might run

toward us roaring, and we couldn't get away from him. What should you

do, Tom?"

Tom paused, and at last turned away contemptuously, saying, "But the

lion \_isn't\_ coming. What's the use of talking?"

"But I like to fancy how it would be," said Maggie, following him.

"Just think what you would do, Tom."

"Oh, don't bother, Maggie! you're such a silly. I shall go and see my

rabbits."

Maggie's heart began to flutter with fear. She dared not tell the sad

truth at once, but she walked after Tom in trembling silence as he

went out, thinking how she could tell him the news so as to soften at

once his sorrow and his anger; for Maggie dreaded Tom's anger of all

things; it was quite a different anger from her own.

"Tom," she said, timidly, when they were out of doors, "how much money

did you give for your rabbits?"

"Two half-crowns and a sixpence," said Tom, promptly.

"I think I've got a great deal more than that in my steel purse

upstairs. I'll ask mother to give it you."

"What for?" said Tom. "I don't want \_your\_ money, you silly thing.

I've got a great deal more money than you, because I'm a boy. I always

have half-sovereigns and sovereigns for my Christmas boxes because I

shall be a man, and you only have five-shilling pieces, because you're

only a girl."

"Well, but, Tom--if mother would let me give you two half-crowns and a

sixpence out of my purse to put into your pocket and spend, you know,

and buy some more rabbits with it?"

"More rabbits? I don't want any more."

"Oh, but, Tom, they're all dead."

Tom stopped immediately in his walk and turned round toward Maggie.

"You forgot to feed 'em, then, and Harry forgot?" he said, his color

heightening for a moment, but soon subsiding. "I'll pitch into Harry.

I'll have him turned away. And I don't love you, Maggie. You sha'n't

go fishing with me to-morrow. I told you to go and see the rabbits

every day." He walked on again.

"Yes, but I forgot--and I couldn't help it, indeed, Tom. I'm so very

sorry," said Maggie, while the tears rushed fast.

"You're a naughty girl," said Tom, severely, "and I'm sorry I bought

you the fish-line. I don't love you."

"Oh, Tom, it's very cruel," sobbed Maggie. "I'd forgive you, if \_you\_

forgot anything--I wouldn't mind what you did--I'd forgive you and

love you."

"Yes, you're silly; but I never \_do\_ forget things, \_I\_ don't."

"Oh, please forgive me, Tom; my heart will break," said Maggie,

shaking with sobs, clinging to Tom's arm, and laying her wet cheek on

his shoulder.

Tom shook her off, and stopped again, saying in a peremptory tone,

"Now, Maggie, you just listen. Aren't I a good brother to you?"

"Ye-ye-es," sobbed Maggie, her chin rising and falling convulsedly.

"Didn't I think about your fish-line all this quarter, and mean to buy

it, and saved my money o' purpose, and wouldn't go halves in the

toffee, and Spouncer fought me because I wouldn't?"

"Ye-ye-es--and I--lo-lo-love you so, Tom."

"But you're a naughty girl. Last holidays you licked the paint off my

lozenge-box, and the holidays before that you let the boat drag my

fish-line down when I'd set you to watch it, and you pushed your head

through my kite, all for nothing."

"But I didn't mean," said Maggie; "I couldn't help it."

"Yes, you could," said Tom, "if you'd minded what you were doing. And

you're a naughty girl, and you sha'n't go fishing with me to-morrow."

With this terrible conclusion, Tom ran away from Maggie toward the

mill, meaning to greet Luke there, and complain to him of Harry.

Maggie stood motionless, except from her sobs, for a minute or two;

then she turned round and ran into the house, and up to her attic,

where she sat on the floor and laid her head against the worm-eaten

shelf, with a crushing sense of misery. Tom was come home, and she had

thought how happy she should be; and now he was cruel to her. What use

was anything if Tom didn't love her? Oh, he was very cruel! Hadn't she

wanted to give him the money, and said how very sorry she was? She

knew she was naughty to her mother, but she had never been naughty to

Tom--had never \_meant\_ to be naughty to him.

"Oh, he is cruel!" Maggie sobbed aloud, finding a wretched pleasure in

the hollow resonance that came through the long empty space of the

attic. She never thought of beating or grinding her Fetish; she was

too miserable to be angry.

These bitter sorrows of childhood! when sorrow is all new and strange,

when hope has not yet got wings to fly beyond the days and weeks, and

the space from summer to summer seems measureless.

Maggie soon thought she had been hours in the attic, and it must be

tea-time, and they were all having their tea, and not thinking of her.

Well, then, she would stay up there and starve herself,--hide herself

behind the tub, and stay there all night,--and then they would all be

frightened, and Tom would be sorry. Thus Maggie thought in the pride

of her heart, as she crept behind the tub; but presently she began to

cry again at the idea that they didn't mind her being there. If she

went down again to Tom now--would he forgive her? Perhaps her father

would be there, and he would take her part. But then she wanted Tom to

forgive her because he loved her, not because his father told him. No,

she would never go down if Tom didn't come to fetch her. This

resolution lasted in great intensity for five dark minutes behind the

tub; but then the need of being loved--the strongest need in poor

Maggie's nature--began to wrestle with her pride, and soon threw it.

She crept from behind her tub into the twilight of the long attic, but

just then she heard a quick foot-step on the stairs.

Tom had been too much interested in his talk with Luke, in going the

round of the premises, walking in and out where he pleased, and

whittling sticks without any particular reason,--except that he didn't

whittle sticks at school,--to think of Maggie and the effect his anger

had produced on her. He meant to punish her, and that business having

been performed, he occupied himself with other matters, like a

practical person. But when he had been called in to tea, his father

said, "Why, where's the little wench?" and Mrs. Tulliver, almost at

the same moment, said, "Where's your little sister?"--both of them

having supposed that Maggie and Tom had been together all the

afternoon.

"I don't know," said Tom. He didn't want to "tell" of Maggie, though

he was angry with her; for Tom Tulliver was a lad of honor.

"What! hasn't she been playing with you all this while?" said the

father. "She'd been thinking o' nothing but your coming home."

"I haven't seen her this two hours," says Tom, commencing on the

plumcake.

"Goodness heart; she's got drownded!" exclaimed Mrs. Tulliver, rising

from her seat and running to the window.

"How could you let her do so?" she added, as became a fearful woman,

accusing she didn't know whom of she didn't know what.

"Nay, nay, she's none drownded," said Mr. Tulliver. "You've been

naughty to her, I doubt, Tom?"

"I'm sure I haven't, father," said Tom, indignantly. "I think she's in

the house."

"Perhaps up in that attic," said Mrs. Tulliver, "a-singing and talking

to herself, and forgetting all about meal-times."

"You go and fetch her down, Tom," said Mr. Tulliver, rather

sharply,--his perspicacity or his fatherly fondness for Maggie making

him suspect that the lad had been hard upon "the little un," else she

would never have left his side. "And be good to her, do you hear? Else

I'll let you know better."

Tom never disobeyed his father, for Mr. Tulliver was a peremptory man,

and, as he said, would never let anybody get hold of his whip-hand;

but he went out rather sullenly, carrying his piece of plumcake, and

not intending to reprieve Maggie's punishment, which was no more than

she deserved. Tom was only thirteen, and had no decided views in

grammar and arithmetic, regarding them for the most part as open

questions, but he was particularly clear and positive on one

point,--namely, that he would punish everybody who deserved it. Why,

he wouldn't have minded being punished himself if he deserved it; but,

then, he never \_did\_ deserve it.

It was Tom's step, then, that Maggie heard on the stairs, when her

need of love had triumphed over her pride, and she was going down with

her swollen eyes and dishevelled hair to beg for pity. At least her

father would stroke her head and say, "Never mind, my wench." It is a

wonderful subduer, this need of love,--this hunger of the heart,--as

peremptory as that other hunger by which Nature forces us to submit to

the yoke, and change the face of the world.

But she knew Tom's step, and her heart began to beat violently with

the sudden shock of hope. He only stood still at the top of the stairs

and said, "Maggie, you're to come down." But she rushed to him and

clung round his neck, sobbing, "Oh, Tom, please forgive me--I can't

bear it--I will always be good--always remember things--do love

me--please, dear Tom!"

We learn to restrain ourselves as we get older. We keep apart when we

have quarrelled, express ourselves in well-bred phrases, and in this

way preserve a dignified alienation, showing much firmness on one

side, and swallowing much grief on the other. We no longer approximate

in our behavior to the mere impulsiveness of the lower animals, but

conduct ourselves in every respect like members of a highly civilized

society. Maggie and Tom were still very much like young animals, and

so she could rub her cheek against his, and kiss his ear in a random

sobbing way; and there were tender fibres in the lad that had been

used to answer to Maggie's fondling, so that he behaved with a

weakness quite inconsistent with his resolution to punish her as much

as she deserved. He actually began to kiss her in return, and say,--

"Don't cry, then, Magsie; here, eat a bit o' cake."

Maggie's sobs began to subside, and she put out her mouth for the cake

and bit a piece; and then Tom bit a piece, just for company, and they

ate together and rubbed each other's cheeks and brows and noses

together, while they ate, with a humiliating resemblance to two

friendly ponies.

"Come along, Magsie, and have tea," said Tom at last, when there was

no more cake except what was down-stairs.

So ended the sorrows of this day, and the next morning Maggie was

trotting with her own fishing-rod in one hand and a handle of the

basket in the other, stepping always, by a peculiar gift, in the

muddiest places, and looking darkly radiant from under her

beaver-bonnet because Tom was good to her. She had told Tom, however,

that she should like him to put the worms on the hook for her,

although she accepted his word when he assured her that worms couldn't

feel (it was Tom's private opinion that it didn't much matter if they

did). He knew all about worms, and fish, and those things; and what

birds were mischievous, and how padlocks opened, and which way the

handles of the gates were to be lifted. Maggie thought this sort of

knowledge was very wonderful,--much more difficult than remembering

what was in the books; and she was rather in awe of Tom's superiority,

for he was the only person who called her knowledge "stuff," and did

not feel surprised at her cleverness. Tom, indeed, was of opinion that

Maggie was a silly little thing; all girls were silly,--they couldn't

throw a stone so as to hit anything, couldn't do anything with a

pocket-knife, and were frightened at frogs. Still, he was very fond of

his sister, and meant always to take care of her, make her his

housekeeper, and punish her when she did wrong.

They were on their way to the Round Pool,--that wonderful pool, which

the floods had made a long while ago. No one knew how deep it was; and

it was mysterious, too, that it should be almost a perfect round,

framed in with willows and tall reeds, so that the water was only to

be seen when you got close to the brink. The sight of the old favorite

spot always heightened Tom's good humor, and he spoke to Maggie in the

most amicable whispers, as he opened the precious basket and prepared

their tackle. He threw her line for her, and put the rod into her

hand. Maggie thought it probable that the small fish would come to her

hook, and the large ones to Tom's. But she had forgotten all about the

fish, and was looking dreamily at the glassy water, when Tom said, in

a loud whisper, "Look, look, Maggie!" and came running to prevent her

from snatching her line away.

Maggie was frightened lest she had been doing something wrong, as

usual, but presently Tom drew out her line and brought a large tench

bouncing on the grass.

Tom was excited.

"O Magsie, you little duck! Empty the basket."

Maggie was not conscious of unusual merit, but it was enough that Tom

called her Magsie, and was pleased with her. There was nothing to mar

her delight in the whispers and the dreamy silences, when she listened

to the light dripping sounds of the rising fish, and the gentle

rustling, as if the willows and the reeds and the water had their

happy whisperings also. Maggie thought it would make a very nice

heaven to sit by the pool in that way, and never be scolded. She never

knew she had a bite till Tom told her; but she liked fishing very

much.

It was one of their happy mornings. They trotted along and sat down

together, with no thought that life would ever change much for them;

they would only get bigger and not go to school, and it would always

be like the holidays; they would always live together and be fond of

each other. And the mill with its booming; the great chestnut-tree

under which they played at houses; their own little river, the Ripple,

where the banks seemed like home, and Tom was always seeing the

water-rats, while Maggie gathered the purple plumy tops of the reeds,

which she forgot and dropped afterward; above all, the great Floss,

along which they wandered with a sense of travel, to see the rushing

spring-tide, the awful Eagle, come up like a hungry monster, or to see

the Great Ash which had once wailed and groaned like a man, these

things would always be just the same to them. Tom thought people were

at a disadvantage who lived on any other spot of the globe; and

Maggie, when she read about Christiana passing "the river over which

there is no bridge," always saw the Floss between the green pastures

by the Great Ash.

Life did change for Tom and Maggie; and yet they were not wrong in

believing that the thoughts and loves of these first years would

always make part of their lives. We could never have loved the earth

so well if we had had no childhood in it,--if it were not the earth

where the same flowers come up again every spring that we used to

gather with our tiny fingers as we sat lisping to ourselves on the

grass; the same hips and haws on the autumn's hedgerows; the same

redbreasts that we used to call "God's birds," because they did no

harm to the precious crops. What novelty is worth that sweet monotony

where everything is known, and \_loved\_ because it is known?

The wood I walk in on this mild May day, with the young yellow-brown

foliage of the oaks between me and the blue sky, the white

star-flowers and the blue-eyed speedwell and the ground ivy at my

feet, what grove of tropic palms, what strange ferns or splendid

broad-petalled blossoms, could ever thrill such deep and delicate

fibres within me as this home scene? These familiar flowers, these

well-remembered bird-notes, this sky, with its fitful brightness,

these furrowed and grassy fields, each with a sort of personality

given to it by the capricious hedgerows,--such things as these are the

mother-tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all

the subtle, inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our

childhood left behind them. Our delight in the sunshine on the

deep-bladed grass to-day might be no more than the faint perception of

wearied souls, if it were not for the sunshine and the grass in the

far-off years which still live in us, and transform our perception

into love.

Chapter VI

The Aunts and Uncles Are Coming

It was Easter week, and Mrs. Tulliver's cheesecakes were more

exquisitely light than usual. "A puff o' wind 'ud make 'em blow about

like feathers," Kezia the housemaid said, feeling proud to live under

a mistress who could make such pastry; so that no season or

circumstances could have been more propitious for a family party, even

if it had not been advisable to consult sister Glegg and sister Pullet

about Tom's going to school.

"I'd as lief not invite sister Deane this time," said Mrs. Tulliver,

"for she's as jealous and having as can be, and's allays trying to

make the worst o' my poor children to their aunts and uncles."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Tulliver, "ask her to come. I never hardly get a

bit o' talk with Deane now; we haven't had him this six months. What's

it matter what she says? My children need be beholding to nobody."

"That's what you allays say, Mr. Tulliver; but I'm sure there's nobody

o' your side, neither aunt nor uncle, to leave 'em so much as a

five-pound note for a leggicy. And there's sister Glegg, and sister

Pullet too, saving money unknown, for they put by all their own

interest and butter-money too; their husbands buy 'em everything."

Mrs. Tulliver was a mild woman, but even a sheep will face about a

little when she has lambs.

"Tchuh!" said Mr. Tulliver. "It takes a big loaf when there's many to

breakfast. What signifies your sisters' bits o' money when they've got

half-a-dozen nevvies and nieces to divide it among? And your sister

Deane won't get 'em to leave all to one, I reckon, and make the

country cry shame on 'em when they are dead?"

"I don't know what she won't get 'em to do," said Mrs. Tulliver, "for

my children are so awk'ard wi' their aunts and uncles. Maggie's ten

times naughtier when they come than she is other days, and Tom doesn't

like 'em, bless him!--though it's more nat'ral in a boy than a gell.

And there's Lucy Dean's such a good child,--you may set her on a

stool, and there she'll sit for an hour together, and never offer to

get off. I can't help loving the child as if she was my own; and I'm

sure she's more like \_my\_ child than sister Deane's, for she'd allays

a very poor color for one of our family, sister Deane had."

"Well, well, if you're fond o' the child, ask her father and mother to

bring her with 'em. And won't you ask their aunt and uncle Moss too,

and some o' \_their\_ children?"

"Oh, dear, Mr. Tulliver, why, there'd be eight people besides the

children, and I must put two more leaves i' the table, besides

reaching down more o' the dinner-service; and you know as well as I do

as \_my\_ sisters and \_your\_ sister don't suit well together."

"Well, well, do as you like, Bessy," said Mr. Tulliver, taking up his

hat and walking out to the mill. Few wives were more submissive than

Mrs. Tulliver on all points unconnected with her family relations; but

she had been a Miss Dodson, and the Dodsons were a very respectable

family indeed,--as much looked up to as any in their own parish, or

the next to it. The Miss Dodsons had always been thought to hold up

their heads very high, and no one was surprised the two eldest had

married so well,--not at an early age, for that was not the practice

of the Dodson family. There were particular ways of doing everything

in that family: particular ways of bleaching the linen, of making the

cowslip wine, curing the hams, and keeping the bottled gooseberries;

so that no daughter of that house could be indifferent to the

privilege of having been born a Dodson, rather than a Gibson or a

Watson. Funerals were always conducted with peculiar propriety in the

Dodson family: the hat-bands were never of a blue shade, the gloves

never split at the thumb, everybody was a mourner who ought to be, and

there were always scarfs for the bearers. When one of the family was

in trouble or sickness, all the rest went to visit the unfortunate

member, usually at the same time, and did not shrink from uttering the

most disagreeable truths that correct family feeling dictated; if the

illness or trouble was the sufferer's own fault, it was not in the

practice of the Dodson family to shrink from saying so. In short,

there was in this family a peculiar tradition as to what was the right

thing in household management and social demeanor, and the only bitter

circumstance attending this superiority was a painful inability to

approve the condiments or the conduct of families ungoverned by the

Dodson tradition. A female Dodson, when in "strange houses," always

ate dry bread with her tea, and declined any sort of preserves, having

no confidence in the butter, and thinking that the preserves had

probably begun to ferment from want of due sugar and boiling. There

were some Dodsons less like the family than others, that was admitted;

but in so far as they were "kin," they were of necessity better than

those who were "no kin." And it is remarkable that while no individual

Dodson was satisfied with any other individual Dodson, each was

satisfied, not only with him or her self, but with the Dodsons

collectively. The feeblest member of a family--the one who has the

least character--is often the merest epitome of the family habits and

traditions; and Mrs. Tulliver was a thorough Dodson, though a mild

one, as small-beer, so long as it is anything, is only describable as

very weak ale: and though she had groaned a little in her youth under

the yoke of her elder sisters, and still shed occasional tears at

their sisterly reproaches, it was not in Mrs. Tulliver to be an

innovator on the family ideas. She was thankful to have been a Dodson,

and to have one child who took after her own family, at least in his

features and complexion, in liking salt and in eating beans, which a

Tulliver never did.

In other respects the true Dodson was partly latent in Tom, and he was

as far from appreciating his "kin" on the mother's side as Maggie

herself, generally absconding for the day with a large supply of the

most portable food, when he received timely warning that his aunts and

uncles were coming,--a moral symptom from which his aunt Glegg deduced

the gloomiest views of his future. It was rather hard on Maggie that

Tom always absconded without letting her into the secret, but the

weaker sex are acknowledged to be serious \_impedimenta\_ in cases of

flight.

On Wednesday, the day before the aunts and uncles were coming, there

were such various and suggestive scents, as of plumcakes in the oven

and jellies in the hot state, mingled with the aroma of gravy, that it

was impossible to feel altogether gloomy: there was hope in the air.

Tom and Maggie made several inroads into the kitchen, and, like other

marauders, were induced to keep aloof for a time only by being allowed

to carry away a sufficient load of booty.

"Tom," said Maggie, as they sat on the boughs of the elder-tree,

eating their jam-puffs, "shall you run away to-morrow?"

"No," said Tom, slowly, when he had finished his puff, and was eying

the third, which was to be divided between them,--"no, I sha'n't."

"Why, Tom? Because Lucy's coming?"

"No," said Tom, opening his pocket-knife and holding it over the puff,

with his head on one side in a dubitative manner. (It was a difficult

problem to divide that very irregular polygon into two equal parts.)

"What do \_I\_ care about Lucy? She's only a girl,--\_she\_ can't play at

bandy."

"Is it the tipsy-cake, then?" said Maggie, exerting her hypothetic

powers, while she leaned forward toward Tom with her eyes fixed on the

hovering knife.

"No, you silly, that'll be good the day after. It's the pudden. I know

what the pudden's to be,--apricot roll-up--O my buttons!"

With this interjection, the knife descended on the puff, and it was in

two, but the result was not satisfactory to Tom, for he still eyed the

halves doubtfully. At last he said,--

"Shut your eyes, Maggie."

"What for?"

"You never mind what for. Shut 'em when I tell you."

Maggie obeyed.

"Now, which'll you have, Maggie,--right hand or left?"

"I'll have that with the jam run out," said Maggie, keeping her eyes

shut to please Tom.

"Why, you don't like that, you silly. You may have it if it comes to

you fair, but I sha'n't give it you without. Right or left,--you

choose, now. Ha-a-a!" said Tom, in a tone of exasperation, as Maggie

peeped. "You keep your eyes shut, now, else you sha'n't have any."

Maggie's power of sacrifice did not extend so far; indeed, I fear she

cared less that Tom should enjoy the utmost possible amount of puff,

than that he should be pleased with her for giving him the best bit.

So she shut her eyes quite close, till Tom told her to "say which,"

and then she said, "Left hand."

"You've got it," said Tom, in rather a bitter tone.

"What! the bit with the jam run out?"

"No; here, take it," said Tom, firmly, handing, decidedly the best

piece to Maggie.

"Oh, please, Tom, have it; I don't mind--I like the other; please take

this."

"No, I sha'n't," said Tom, almost crossly, beginning on his own

inferior piece.

Maggie, thinking it was no use to contend further, began too, and ate

up her half puff with considerable relish as well as rapidity. But Tom

had finished first, and had to look on while Maggie ate her last

morsel or two, feeling in himself a capacity for more. Maggie didn't

know Tom was looking at her; she was seesawing on the elder-bough,

lost to almost everything but a vague sense of jam and idleness.

"Oh, you greedy thing!" said Tom, when she had swallowed the last

morsel. He was conscious of having acted very fairly, and thought she

ought to have considered this, and made up to him for it. He would

have refused a bit of hers beforehand, but one is naturally at a

different point of view before and after one's own share of puff is

swallowed.

Maggie turned quite pale. "Oh, Tom, why didn't you ask me?"

"I wasn't going to ask you for a bit, you greedy. You might have

thought of it without, when you knew I gave you the best bit."

"But I wanted you to have it; you know I did," said Maggie, in an

injured tone.

"Yes, but I wasn't going to do what wasn't fair, like Spouncer. He

always takes the best bit, if you don't punch him for it; and if you

choose the best with your eyes shut, he changes his hands. But if I go

halves, I'll go 'em fair; only I wouldn't be a greedy."

With this cutting innuendo, Tom jumped down from his bough, and threw

a stone with a "hoigh!" as a friendly attention to Yap, who had also

been looking on while the eatables vanished, with an agitation of his

ears and feelings which could hardly have been without bitterness. Yet

the excellent dog accepted Tom's attention with as much alacrity as if

he had been treated quite generously.

But Maggie, gifted with that superior power of misery which

distinguishes the human being, and places him at a proud distance from

the most melancholy chimpanzee, sat still on her bough, and gave

herself up to the keen sense of unmerited reproach. She would have

given the world not to have eaten all her puff, and to have saved some

of it for Tom. Not but that the puff was very nice, for Maggie's

palate was not at all obtuse, but she would have gone without it many

times over, sooner than Tom should call her greedy and be cross with

her. And he had said he wouldn't have it, and she ate it without

thinking; how could she help it? The tears flowed so plentifully that

Maggie saw nothing around her for the next ten minutes; but by that

time resentment began to give way to the desire of reconciliation, and

she jumped from her bough to look for Tom. He was no longer in the

paddock behind the rickyard; where was he likely to be gone, and Yap

with him? Maggie ran to the high bank against the great holly-tree,

where she could see far away toward the Floss. There was Tom; but her

heart sank again as she saw how far off he was on his way to the great

river, and that he had another companion besides Yap,--naughty Bob

Jakin, whose official, if not natural, function of frightening the

birds was just now at a standstill. Maggie felt sure that Bob was

wicked, without very distinctly knowing why; unless it was because

Bob's mother was a dreadfully large fat woman, who lived at a queer

round house down the river; and once, when Maggie and Tom had wandered

thither, there rushed out a brindled dog that wouldn't stop barking;

and when Bob's mother came out after it, and screamed above the

barking to tell them not to be frightened, Maggie thought she was

scolding them fiercely, and her heart beat with terror. Maggie thought

it very likely that the round house had snakes on the floor, and bats

in the bedroom; for she had seen Bob take off his cap to show Tom a

little snake that was inside it, and another time he had a handful of

young bats: altogether, he was an irregular character, perhaps even

slightly diabolical, judging from his intimacy with snakes and bats;

and to crown all, when Tom had Bob for a companion, he didn't mind

about Maggie, and would never let her go with him.

It must be owned that Tom was fond of Bob's company. How could it be

otherwise? Bob knew, directly he saw a bird's egg, whether it was a

swallow's, or a tomtit's, or a yellow-hammer's; he found out all the

wasps' nests, and could set all sort of traps; he could climb the

trees like a squirrel, and had quite a magical power of detecting

hedgehogs and stoats; and he had courage to do things that were rather

naughty, such as making gaps in the hedgerows, throwing stones after

the sheep, and killing a cat that was wandering \_incognito\_.

Such qualities in an inferior, who could always be treated with

authority in spite of his superior knowingness, had necessarily a

fatal fascination for Tom; and every holiday-time Maggie was sure to

have days of grief because he had gone off with Bob.

Well! there was no hope for it; he was gone now, and Maggie could

think of no comfort but to sit down by the hollow, or wander by the

hedgerow, and fancy it was all different, refashioning her little

world into just what she should like it to be.

Maggie's was a troublous life, and this was the form in which she took

her opium.

Meanwhile Tom, forgetting all about Maggie and the sting of reproach

which he had left in her heart, was hurrying along with Bob, whom he

had met accidentally, to the scene of a great rat-catching in a

neighboring barn. Bob knew all about this particular affair, and spoke

of the sport with an enthusiasm which no one who is not either

divested of all manly feeling, or pitiably ignorant of rat-catching,

can fail to imagine. For a person suspected of preternatural

wickedness, Bob was really not so very villanous-looking; there was

even something agreeable in his snub-nosed face, with its close-curled

border of red hair. But then his trousers were always rolled up at the

knee, for the convenience of wading on the slightest notice; and his

virtue, supposing it to exist, was undeniably "virtue in rags," which,

on the authority even of bilious philosophers, who think all

well-dressed merit overpaid, is notoriously likely to remain

unrecognized (perhaps because it is seen so seldom).

"I know the chap as owns the ferrets," said Bob, in a hoarse treble

voice, as he shuffled along, keeping his blue eyes fixed on the river,

like an amphibious animal who foresaw occasion for darting in. "He

lives up the Kennel Yard at Sut Ogg's, he does. He's the biggest

rot-catcher anywhere, he is. I'd sooner, be a rot-catcher nor

anything, I would. The moles is nothing to the rots. But Lors! you mun

ha' ferrets. Dogs is no good. Why, there's that dog, now!" Bob

continued, pointing with an air of disgust toward Yap, "he's no more

good wi' a rot nor nothin'. I see it myself, I did, at the

rot-catchin' i' your feyther's barn."

Yap, feeling the withering influence of this scorn, tucked his tail in

and shrank close to Tom's leg, who felt a little hurt for him, but had

not the superhuman courage to seem behindhand with Bob in contempt for

a dog who made so poor a figure.

"No, no," he said, "Yap's no good at sport. I'll have regular good

dogs for rats and everything, when I've done school."

"Hev ferrets, Measter Tom," said Bob, eagerly,--"them white ferrets

wi' pink eyes; Lors, you might catch your own rots, an' you might put

a rot in a cage wi' a ferret, an' see 'em fight, you might. That's

what I'd do, I know, an' it 'ud be better fun a'most nor seein' two

chaps fight,--if it wasn't them chaps as sold cakes an' oranges at the

Fair, as the things flew out o' their baskets, an' some o' the cakes

was smashed--But they tasted just as good," added Bob, by way of note

or addendum, after a moment's pause.

"But, I say, Bob," said Tom, in a tone of deliberation, "ferrets are

nasty biting things,--they'll bite a fellow without being set on."

"Lors! why that's the beauty on 'em. If a chap lays hold o' your

ferret, he won't be long before he hollows out a good un, \_he\_ won't."

At this moment a striking incident made the boys pause suddenly in

their walk. It was the plunging of some small body in the water from

among the neighboring bulrushes; if it was not a water-rat, Bob

intimated that he was ready to undergo the most unpleasant

consequences.

"Hoigh! Yap,--hoigh! there he is," said Tom, clapping his hands, as

the little black snout made its arrowy course to the opposite bank.

"Seize him, lad! seize him!"

Yap agitated his ears and wrinkled his brows, but declined to plunge,

trying whether barking would not answer the purpose just as well.

"Ugh! you coward!" said Tom, and kicked him over, feeling humiliated

as a sportsman to possess so poor-spirited an animal. Bob abstained

from remark and passed on, choosing, however, to walk in the shallow

edge of the overflowing river by way of change.

"He's none so full now, the Floss isn't," said Bob, as he kicked the

water up before him, with an agreeable sense of being insolent to it.

"Why, last 'ear, the meadows was all one sheet o' water, they was."

"Ay, but," said Tom, whose mind was prone to see an opposition between

statements that were really accordant,--"but there was a big flood

once, when the Round Pool was made. \_I\_ know there was, 'cause father

says so. And the sheep and cows all drowned, and the boats went all

over the fields ever such a way."

"\_I\_ don't care about a flood comin'," said Bob; "I don't mind the

water, no more nor the land. I'd swim, \_I\_ would."

"Ah, but if you got nothing to eat for ever so long?" said Tom, his

imagination becoming quite active under the stimulus of that dread.

"When I'm a man, I shall make a boat with a wooden house on the top of

it, like Noah's ark, and keep plenty to eat in it,--rabbits and

things,--all ready. And then if the flood came, you know, Bob, I

shouldn't mind. And I'd take you in, if I saw you swimming," he added,

in the tone of a benevolent patron.

"I aren't frighted," said Bob, to whom hunger did not appear so

appalling. "But I'd get in an' knock the rabbits on th' head when you

wanted to eat 'em."

"Ah, and I should have halfpence, and we'd play at heads-and-tails,"

said Tom, not contemplating the possibility that this recreation might

have fewer charms for his mature age. "I'd divide fair to begin with,

and then we'd see who'd win."

"I've got a halfpenny o' my own," said Bob, proudly, coming out of the

water and tossing his halfpenny in the air. "Yeads or tails?"

"Tails," said Tom, instantly fired with the desire to win.

"It's yeads," said Bob, hastily, snatching up the halfpenny as it

fell.

"It wasn't," said Tom, loudly and peremptorily. "You give me the

halfpenny; I've won it fair."

"I sha'n't," said Bob, holding it tight in his pocket.

"Then I'll make you; see if I don't," said Tom.

"Yes, I can."

"You can't make me do nothing, you can't," said Bob.

"No, you can't."

"I'm master."

"I don't care for you."

"But I'll make you care, you cheat," said Tom, collaring Bob and

shaking him.

"You get out wi' you," said Bob, giving Tom a kick.

Tom's blood was thoroughly up: he went at Bob with a lunge and threw

him down, but Bob seized hold and kept it like a cat, and pulled Tom

down after him. They struggled fiercely on the ground for a moment or

two, till Tom, pinning Bob down by the shoulders, thought he had the

mastery.

"\_You\_, say you'll give me the halfpenny now," he said, with

difficulty, while he exerted himself to keep the command of Bob's

arms.

But at this moment Yap, who had been running on before, returned

barking to the scene of action, and saw a favorable opportunity for

biting Bob's bare leg not only with inpunity but with honor. The pain

from Yap's teeth, instead of surprising Bob into a relaxation of his

hold, gave it a fiercer tenacity, and with a new exertion of his force

he pushed Tom backward and got uppermost. But now Yap, who could get

no sufficient purchase before, set his teeth in a new place, so that

Bob, harassed in this way, let go his hold of Tom, and, almost

throttling Yap, flung him into the river. By this time Tom was up

again, and before Bob had quite recovered his balance after the act of

swinging Yap, Tom fell upon him, threw him down, and got his knees

firmly on Bob's chest.

"You give me the halfpenny now," said Tom.

"Take it," said Bob, sulkily.

"No, I sha'n't take it; you give it me."

Bob took the halfpenny out of his pocket, and threw it away from him

on the ground.

Tom loosed his hold, and left Bob to rise.

"There the halfpenny lies," he said. "I don't want your halfpenny; I

wouldn't have kept it. But you wanted to cheat; I hate a cheat. I

sha'n't go along with you any more," he added, turning round homeward,

not without casting a regret toward the rat-catching and other

pleasures which he must relinquish along with Bob's society.

"You may let it alone, then," Bob called out after him. "I shall cheat

if I like; there's no fun i' playing else; and I know where there's a

goldfinch's nest, but I'll take care \_you\_ don't. An' you're a nasty

fightin' turkey-cock, you are----"

Tom walked on without looking around, and Yap followed his example,

the cold bath having moderated his passions.

"Go along wi' you, then, wi' your drowned dog; I wouldn't own such a

dog--\_I\_ wouldn't," said Bob, getting louder, in a last effort to

sustain his defiance. But Tom was not to be provoked into turning

round, and Bob's voice began to falter a little as he said,--

"An' I'n gi'en you everything, an' showed you everything, an' niver

wanted nothin' from you. An' there's your horn-handed knife, then as

you gi'en me." Here Bob flung the knife as far as he could after Tom's

retreating footsteps. But it produced no effect, except the sense in

Bob's mind that there was a terrible void in his lot, now that knife

was gone.

He stood still till Tom had passed through the gate and disappeared

behind the hedge. The knife would do not good on the ground there; it

wouldn't vex Tom; and pride or resentment was a feeble passion in

Bob's mind compared with the love of a pocket-knife. His very fingers

sent entreating thrills that he would go and clutch that familiar

rough buck's-horn handle, which they had so often grasped for mere

affection, as it lay idle in his pocket. And there were two blades,

and they had just been sharpened! What is life without a pocket-knife

to him who has once tasted a higher existence? No; to throw the handle

after the hatchet is a comprehensible act of desperation, but to throw

one's pocket-knife after an implacable friend is clearly in every

sense a hyperbole, or throwing beyond the mark. So Bob shuffled back

to the spot where the beloved knife lay in the dirt, and felt quite a

new pleasure in clutching it again after the temporary separation, in

opening one blade after the other, and feeling their edge with his

well-hardened thumb. Poor Bob! he was not sensitive on the point of

honor, not a chivalrous character. That fine moral aroma would not

have been thought much of by the public opinion of Kennel Yard, which

was the very focus or heart of Bob's world, even if it could have made

itself perceptible there; yet, for all that, he was not utterly a

sneak and a thief as our friend Tom had hastily decided.

But Tom, you perceive, was rather a Rhadamanthine personage, having

more than the usual share of boy's justice in him,--the justice that

desires to hurt culprits as much as they deserve to be hurt, and is

troubled with no doubts concerning the exact amount of their deserts.

Maggie saw a cloud on his brow when he came home, which checked her

joy at his coming so much sooner than she had expected, and she dared

hardly speak to him as he stood silently throwing the small

gravel-stones into the mill-dam. It is not pleasant to give up a

rat-catching when you have set your mind on it. But if Tom had told

his strongest feeling at that moment, he would have said, "I'd do just

the same again." That was his usual mode of viewing his past actions;

whereas Maggie was always wishing she had done something different.

Chapter VII

Enter the Aunts and Uncles

The Dodsons were certainly a handsome family, and Mrs. Glegg was not

the least handsome of the sisters. As she sat in Mrs. Tulliver's

arm-chair, no impartial observer could have denied that for a woman of

fifty she had a very comely face and figure, though Tom and Maggie

considered their aunt Glegg as the type of ugliness. It is true she

despised the advantages of costume, for though, as she often observed,

no woman had better clothes, it was not her way to wear her new things

out before her old ones. Other women, if they liked, might have their

best thread-lace in every wash; but when Mrs. Glegg died, it would be

found that she had better lace laid by in the right-hand drawer of her

wardrobe in the Spotted Chamber than ever Mrs. Wooll of St. Ogg's had

bought in her life, although Mrs. Wooll wore her lace before it was

paid for. So of her curled fronts: Mrs. Glegg had doubtless the

glossiest and crispest brown curls in her drawers, as well as curls in

various degrees of fuzzy laxness; but to look out on the week-day

world from under a crisp and glossy front would be to introduce a most

dreamlike and unpleasant confusion between the sacred and the secular.

Occasionally, indeed, Mrs. Glegg wore one of her third-best fronts on

a week-day visit, but not at a sister's house; especially not at Mrs.

Tulliver's, who, since her marriage, had hurt her sister's feelings

greatly by wearing her own hair, though, as Mrs. Glegg observed to

Mrs. Deane, a mother of a family, like Bessy, with a husband always

going to law, might have been expected to know better. But Bessy was

always weak!

So if Mrs. Glegg's front to-day was more fuzzy and lax than usual, she

had a design under it: she intended the most pointed and cutting

allusion to Mrs. Tulliver's bunches of blond curls, separated from

each other by a due wave of smoothness on each side of the parting.

Mrs. Tulliver had shed tears several times at sister Glegg's

unkindness on the subject of these unmatronly curls, but the

consciousness of looking the handsomer for them naturally administered

support. Mrs. Glegg chose to wear her bonnet in the house

to-day,--untied and tilted slightly, of course--a frequent practice of

hers when she was on a visit, and happened to be in a severe humor:

she didn't know what draughts there might be in strange houses. For

the same reason she wore a small sable tippet, which reached just to

her shoulders, and was very far from meeting across her well-formed

chest, while her long neck was protected by a \_chevaux-de-frise\_ of

miscellaneous frilling. One would need to be learned in the fashions

of those times to know how far in the rear of them Mrs. Glegg's

slate-colored silk gown must have been; but from certain

constellations of small yellow spots upon it, and a mouldy odor about

it suggestive of a damp clothes-chest, it was probable that it

belonged to a stratum of garments just old enough to have come

recently into wear.

Mrs. Glegg held her large gold watch in her hand with the many-doubled

chain round her fingers, and observed to Mrs. Tulliver, who had just

returned from a visit to the kitchen, that whatever it might be by

other people's clocks and watches, it was gone half-past twelve by

hers.

"I don't know what ails sister Pullet," she continued. "It used to be

the way in our family for one to be as early as another,--I'm sure it

was so in my poor father's time,--and not for one sister to sit half

an hour before the others came. But if the ways o' the family are

altered, it sha'n't be \_my\_ fault; \_I'll\_ never be the one to come

into a house when all the rest are going away. I wonder \_at\_ sister

Deane,--she used to be more like me. But if you'll take my advice,

Bessy, you'll put the dinner forrard a bit, sooner than put it back,

because folks are late as ought to ha' known better."

"Oh dear, there's no fear but what they'll be all here in time,

sister," said Mrs. Tulliver, in her mild-peevish tone. "The dinner

won't be ready till half-past one. But if it's long for you to wait,

let me fetch you a cheesecake and a glass o' wine."

"Well, Bessy!" said Mrs. Glegg, with a bitter smile and a scarcely

perceptible toss of her head, "I should ha' thought you'd known your

own sister better. I never \_did\_ eat between meals, and I'm not going

to begin. Not but what I hate that nonsense of having your dinner at

half-past one, when you might have it at one. You was never brought up

in that way, Bessy."

"Why, Jane, what can I do? Mr. Tulliver doesn't like his dinner before

two o'clock, but I put it half an hour earlier because o' you."

"Yes, yes, I know how it is with husbands,--they're for putting

everything off; they'll put the dinner off till after tea, if they've

got wives as are weak enough to give in to such work; but it's a pity

for you, Bessy, as you haven't got more strength o' mind. It'll be

well if your children don't suffer for it. And I hope you've not gone

and got a great dinner for us,--going to expense for your sisters, as

'ud sooner eat a crust o' dry bread nor help to ruin you with

extravagance. I wonder you don't take pattern by your sister Deane;

she's far more sensible. And here you've got two children to provide

for, and your husband's spent your fortin i' going to law, and's

likely to spend his own too. A boiled joint, as you could make broth

of for the kitchen," Mrs. Glegg added, in a tone of emphatic protest,

"and a plain pudding, with a spoonful o' sugar, and no spice, 'ud be

far more becoming."

With sister Glegg in this humor, there was a cheerful prospect for the

day. Mrs. Tulliver never went the length of quarrelling with her, any

more than a water-fowl that puts out its leg in a deprecating manner

can be said to quarrel with a boy who throws stones. But this point of

the dinner was a tender one, and not at all new, so that Mrs. Tulliver

could make the same answer she had often made before.

"Mr. Tulliver says he always \_will\_ have a good dinner for his friends

while he can pay for it," she said; "and he's a right to do as he

likes in his own house, sister."

"Well, Bessy, \_I\_ can't leave your children enough out o' my savings

to keep 'em from ruin. And you mustn't look to having any o' Mr.

Glegg's money, for it's well if I don't go first,--he comes of a

long-lived family; and if he was to die and leave me well for my life,

he'd tie all the money up to go back to his own kin."

The sound of wheels while Mrs. Glegg was speaking was an interruption

highly welcome to Mrs. Tulliver, who hastened out to receive sister

Pullet; it must be sister Pullet, because the sound was that of a

four-wheel.

Mrs. Glegg tossed her head and looked rather sour about the mouth at

the thought of the "four-wheel." She had a strong opinion on that

subject.

Sister Pullet was in tears when the one-horse chaise stopped before

Mrs. Tulliver's door, and it was apparently requisite that she should

shed a few more before getting out; for though her husband and Mrs.

Tulliver stood ready to support her, she sat still and shook her head

sadly, as she looked through her tears at the vague distance.

"Why, whativer is the matter, sister?" said Mrs. Tulliver. She was not

an imaginative woman, but it occurred to her that the large

toilet-glass in sister Pullet's best bedroom was possibly broken for

the second time.

There was no reply but a further shake of the head, as Mrs. Pullet

slowly rose and got down from the chaise, not without casting a glance

at Mr. Pullet to see that he was guarding her handsome silk dress from

injury. Mr. Pullet was a small man, with a high nose, small twinkling

eyes, and thin lips, in a fresh-looking suit of black and a white

cravat, that seemed to have been tied very tight on some higher

principle than that of mere personal ease. He bore about the same

relation to his tall, good-looking wife, with her balloon sleeves,

abundant mantle, and a large befeathered and beribboned bonnet, as a

small fishing-smack bears to a brig with all its sails spread.

It is a pathetic sight and a striking example of the complexity

introduced into the emotions by a high state of civilization, the

sight of a fashionably dressed female in grief. From the sorrow of a

Hottentot to that of a woman in large buckram sleeves, with several

bracelets on each arm, an architectural bonnet, and delicate ribbon

strings, what a long series of gradations! In the enlightened child of

civilization the abandonment characteristic of grief is checked and

varied in the subtlest manner, so as to present an interesting problem

to the analytic mind. If, with a crushed heart and eyes half blinded

by the mist of tears, she were to walk with a too-devious step through

a door-place, she might crush her buckram sleeves too, and the deep

consciousness of this possibility produces a composition of forces by

which she takes a line that just clears the door-post. Perceiving that

the tears are hurrying fast, she unpins her strings and throws them

languidly backward, a touching gesture, indicative, even in the

deepest gloom, of the hope in future dry moments when cap-strings will

once more have a charm. As the tears subside a little, and with her

head leaning backward at the angle that will not injure her bonnet,

she endures that terrible moment when grief, which has made all things

else a weariness, has itself become weary; she looks down pensively at

her bracelets, and adjusts their clasps with that pretty studied

fortuity which would be gratifying to her mind if it were once more in

a calm and healthy state.

Mrs. Pullet brushed each door-post with great nicety, about the

latitude of her shoulders (at that period a woman was truly ridiculous

to an instructed eye if she did not measure a yard and a half across

the shoulders), and having done that sent the muscles of her face in

quest of fresh tears as she advanced into the parlor where Mrs. Glegg

was seated.

"Well, sister, you're late; what's the matter?" said Mrs. Glegg,

rather sharply, as they shook hands.

Mrs. Pullet sat down, lifting up her mantle carefully behind, before

she answered,--

"She's gone," unconsciously using an impressive figure of rhetoric.

"It isn't the glass this time, then," thought Mrs. Tulliver.

"Died the day before yesterday," continued Mrs. Pullet; "an' her legs

was as thick as my body,"' she added, with deep sadness, after a

pause. "They'd tapped her no end o' times, and the water--they say you

might ha' swum in it, if you'd liked."

"Well, Sophy, it's a mercy she's gone, then, whoever she may be," said

Mrs. Glegg, with the promptitude and emphasis of a mind naturally

clear and decided; "but I can't think who you're talking of, for my

part."

"But \_I\_ know," said Mrs. Pullet, sighing and shaking her head; "and

there isn't another such a dropsy in the parish. \_I\_ know as it's old

Mrs. Sutton o' the Twentylands."

"Well, she's no kin o' yours, nor much acquaintance as I've ever

heared of," said Mrs. Glegg, who always cried just as much as was

proper when anything happened to her own "kin," but not on other

occasions.

"She's so much acquaintance as I've seen her legs when they was like

bladders. And an old lady as had doubled her money over and over

again, and kept it all in her own management to the last, and had her

pocket with her keys in under her pillow constant. There isn't many

old \_par\_ish'ners like her, I doubt."

"And they say she'd took as much physic as 'ud fill a wagon," observed

Mr. Pullet.

"Ah!" sighed Mrs. Pullet, "she'd another complaint ever so many years

before she had the dropsy, and the doctors couldn't make out what it

was. And she said to me, when I went to see her last Christmas, she

said, 'Mrs. Pullet, if ever you have the dropsy, you'll think o' me.'

She \_did\_ say so," added Mrs. Pullet, beginning to cry bitterly again;

"those were her very words. And she's to be buried o' Saturday, and

Pullet's bid to the funeral."

"Sophy," said Mrs. Glegg, unable any longer to contain her spirit of

rational remonstrance,--"Sophy, I wonder \_at\_ you, fretting and

injuring your health about people as don't belong to you. Your poor

father never did so, nor your aunt Frances neither, nor any o' the

family as I ever heard of. You couldn't fret no more than this, if

we'd heared as our cousin Abbott had died sudden without making his

will."

Mrs. Pullet was silent, having to finish her crying, and rather

flattered than indignant at being upbraided for crying too much. It

was not everybody who could afford to cry so much about their

neighbors who had left them nothing; but Mrs. Pullet had married a

gentleman farmer, and had leisure and money to carry her crying and

everything else to the highest pitch of respectability.

"Mrs. Sutton didn't die without making her will, though," said Mr.

Pullet, with a confused sense that he was saying something to sanction

his wife's tears; "ours is a rich parish, but they say there's nobody

else to leave as many thousands behind 'em as Mrs. Sutton. And she's

left no leggicies to speak on,--left it all in a lump to her husband's

nevvy."

"There wasn't much good i' being so rich, then," said Mrs. Glegg, "if

she'd got none but husband's kin to leave it to. It's poor work when

that's all you've got to pinch yourself for. Not as I'm one o' those

as 'ud like to die without leaving more money out at interest than

other folks had reckoned; but it's a poor tale when it must go out o'

your own family."

"I'm sure, sister," said Mrs. Pullet, who had recovered sufficiently

to take off her veil and fold it carefully, "it's a nice sort o' man

as Mrs. Sutton has left her money to, for he's troubled with the

asthmy, and goes to bed every night at eight o'clock. He told me about

it himself--as free as could be--one Sunday when he came to our

church. He wears a hareskin on his chest, and has a trembling in his

talk,--quite a gentleman sort o' man. I told him there wasn't many

months in the year as I wasn't under the doctor's hands. And he said,

'Mrs. Pullet, I can feel for you.' That was what he said,--the very

words. Ah!" sighed Mrs. Pullet, shaking her head at the idea that

there were but few who could enter fully into her experiences in pink

mixture and white mixture, strong stuff in small bottles, and weak

stuff in large bottles, damp boluses at a shilling, and draughts at

eighteenpence. "Sister, I may as well go and take my bonnet off now.

Did you see as the cap-box was put out?" she added, turning to her

husband.

Mr. Pullet, by an unaccountable lapse of memory, had forgotten it, and

hastened out, with a stricken conscience, to remedy the omission.

"They'll bring it upstairs, sister," said Mrs. Tulliver, wishing to go

at once, lest Mrs. Glegg should begin to explain her feelings about

Sophy's being the first Dodson who ever ruined her constitution with

doctor's stuff.

Mrs. Tulliver was fond of going upstairs with her sister Pullet, and

looking thoroughly at her cap before she put it on her head, and

discussing millinery in general. This was part of Bessy's weakness

that stirred Mrs. Glegg's sisterly compassion: Bessy went far too well

dressed, considering; and she was too proud to dress her child in the

good clothing her sister Glegg gave her from the primeval strata of

her wardrobe; it was a sin and a shame to buy anything to dress that

child, if it wasn't a pair of shoes. In this particular, however, Mrs.

Glegg did her sister Bessy some injustice, for Mrs. Tulliver had

really made great efforts to induce Maggie to wear a leghorn bonnet

and a dyed silk frock made out of her aunt Glegg's, but the results

had been such that Mrs. Tulliver was obliged to bury them in her

maternal bosom; for Maggie, declaring that the frock smelt of nasty

dye, had taken an opportunity of basting it together with the roast

beef the first Sunday she wore it, and finding this scheme answer, she

had subsequently pumped on the bonnet with its green ribbons, so as to

give it a general resemblance to a sage cheese garnished with withered

lettuces. I must urge in excuse for Maggie, that Tom had laughed at

her in the bonnet, and said she looked like an old Judy. Aunt Pullet,

too, made presents of clothes, but these were always pretty enough to

please Maggie as well as her mother. Of all her sisters, Mrs. Tulliver

certainly preferred her sister Pullet, not without a return of

preference; but Mrs. Pullet was sorry Bessy had those naughty, awkward

children; she would do the best she could by them, but it was a pity

they weren't as good and as pretty as sister Deane's child. Maggie and

Tom, on their part, thought their aunt Pullet tolerable, chiefly

because she was not their aunt Glegg. Tom always declined to go more

than once during his holidays to see either of them. Both his uncles

tipped him that once, of course; but at his aunt Pullet's there were a

great many toads to pelt in the cellar-area, so that he preferred the

visit to her. Maggie shuddered at the toads, and dreamed of them

horribly, but she liked her uncle Pullet's musical snuff-box. Still,

it was agreed by the sisters, in Mrs. Tulliver's absence, that the

Tulliver blood did not mix well with the Dodson blood; that, in fact,

poor Bessy's children were Tullivers, and that Tom, notwithstanding he

had the Dodson complexion, was likely to be as "contrairy" as his

father. As for Maggie, she was the picture of her aunt Moss, Mr.

Tulliver's sister,--a large-boned woman, who had married as poorly as

could be; had no china, and had a husband who had much ado to pay his

rent. But when Mrs. Pullet was alone with Mrs. Tulliver upstairs, the

remarks were naturally to the disadvantage of Mrs. Glegg, and they

agreed, in confidence, that there was no knowing what sort of fright

sister Jane would come out next. But their \_tÃªte-Ã -tÃªte\_ was curtailed

by the appearance of Mrs. Deane with little Lucy; and Mrs. Tulliver

had to look on with a silent pang while Lucy's blond curls were

adjusted. It was quite unaccountable that Mrs. Deane, the thinnest and

sallowest of all the Miss Dodsons, should have had this child, who

might have been taken for Mrs. Tulliver's any day. And Maggie always

looked twice as dark as usual when she was by the side of Lucy.

She did to-day, when she and Tom came in from the garden with their

father and their uncle Glegg. Maggie had thrown her bonnet off very

carelessly, and coming in with her hair rough as well as out of curl,

rushed at once to Lucy, who was standing by her mother's knee.

Certainly the contrast between the cousins was conspicuous, and to

superficial eyes was very much to the disadvantage of Maggie though a

connoisseur might have seen "points" in her which had a higher promise

for maturity than Lucy's natty completeness. It was like the contrast

between a rough, dark, overgrown puppy and a white kitten. Lucy put up

the neatest little rosebud mouth to be kissed; everything about her

was neat,--her little round neck, with the row of coral beads; her

little straight nose, not at all snubby; her little clear eyebrows,

rather darker than her curls, to match hazel eyes, which looked up

with shy pleasure at Maggie, taller by the head, though scarcely a

year older. Maggie always looked at Lucy with delight.

She was fond of fancying a world where the people never got any larger

than children of their own age, and she made the queen of it just like

Lucy, with a little crown on her head, and a little sceptre in her

hand--only the queen was Maggie herself in Lucy's form.

"Oh, Lucy," she burst out, after kissing her, "you'll stay with Tom

and me, won't you? Oh, kiss her, Tom."

Tom, too, had come up to Lucy, but he was not going to kiss her--no;

he came up to her with Maggie, because it seemed easier, on the whole,

than saying, "How do you do?" to all those aunts and uncles. He stood

looking at nothing in particular, with the blushing, awkward air and

semi-smile which are common to shy boys when in company,--very much as

if they had come into the world by mistake, and found it in a degree

of undress that was quite embarrassing.

"Heyday!" said aunt Glegg, with loud emphasis. "Do little boys and

gells come into a room without taking notice of their uncles and

aunts? That wasn't the way when \_I\_ was a little gell."

"Go and speak to your aunts and uncles, my dears," said Mrs. Tulliver,

looking anxious and melancholy. She wanted to whisper to Maggie a

command to go and have her hair brushed.

"Well, and how do you do? And I hope you're good children, are you?"

said Aunt Glegg, in the same loud, emphatic way, as she took their

hands, hurting them with her large rings, and kissing their cheeks

much against their desire. "Look up, Tom, look up. Boys as go to

boarding-schools should hold their heads up. Look at me now." Tom

declined that pleasure apparently, for he tried to draw his hand away.

"Put your hair behind your ears, Maggie, and keep your frock on your

shoulder."

Aunt Glegg always spoke to them in this loud, emphatic way, as if she

considered them deaf, or perhaps rather idiotic; it was a means, she

thought, of making them feel that they were accountable creatures, and

might be a salutary check on naughty tendencies. Bessy's children were

so spoiled--they'd need have somebody to make them feel their duty.

"Well, my dears," said aunt Pullet, in a compassionate voice, "you

grow wonderful fast. I doubt they'll outgrow their strength," she

added, looking over their heads, with a melancholy expression, at

their mother. "I think the gell has too much hair. I'd have it thinned

and cut shorter, sister, if I was you; it isn't good for her health.

It's that as makes her skin so brown, I shouldn't wonder. Don't you

think so, sister Deane?"

"I can't say, I'm sure, sister," said Mrs. Deane, shutting her lips

close again, and looking at Maggie with a critical eye.

"No, no," said Mr. Tulliver, "the child's healthy enough; there's

nothing ails her. There's red wheat as well as white, for that matter,

and some like the dark grain best. But it 'ud be as well if Bessy 'ud

have the child's hair cut, so as it 'ud lie smooth."

A dreadful resolve was gathering in Maggie's breast, but it was

arrested by the desire to know from her aunt Deane whether she would

leave Lucy behind. Aunt Deane would hardly ever let Lucy come to see

them. After various reasons for refusal, Mrs. Deane appealed to Lucy

herself.

"You wouldn't like to stay behind without mother, should you, Lucy?"

"Yes, please, mother," said Lucy, timidly, blushing very pink all over

her little neck.

"Well done, Lucy! Let her stay, Mrs. Deane, let her stay," said Mr.

Deane, a large but alert-looking man, with a type of \_physique\_ to be

seen in all ranks of English society,--bald crown, red whiskers, full

forehead, and general solidity without heaviness. You may see noblemen

like Mr. Deane, and you may see grocers or day-laborers like him; but

the keenness of his brown eyes was less common than his contour.

He held a silver snuff-box very tightly in his hand, and now and then

exchanged a pinch with Mr. Tulliver, whose box was only

silver-mounted, so that it was naturally a joke between them that Mr.

Tulliver wanted to exchange snuff-boxes also. Mr. Deane's box had been

given him by the superior partners in the firm to which he belonged,

at the same time that they gave him a share in the business, in

acknowledgment of his valuable services as manager. No man was thought

more highly of in St. Ogg's than Mr. Deane; and some persons were even

of opinion that Miss Susan Dodson, who was once held to have made the

worst match of all the Dodson sisters, might one day ride in a better

carriage, and live in a better house, even than her sister Pullet.

There was no knowing where a man would stop, who had got his foot into

a great mill-owning, shipowning business like that of Guest & Co.,

with a banking concern attached. And Mrs. Deane, as her intimate

female friends observed, was proud and "having" enough; \_she\_ wouldn't

let her husband stand still in the world for want of spurring.

"Maggie," said Mrs. Tulliver, beckoning Maggie to her, and whispering

in her ear, as soon as this point of Lucy's staying was settled, "go

and get your hair brushed, do, for shame. I told you not to come in

without going to Martha first, you know I did."

"Tom come out with me," whispered Maggie, pulling his sleeve as she

passed him; and Tom followed willingly enough.

"Come upstairs with me, Tom," she whispered, when they were outside

the door. "There's something I want to do before dinner."

"There's no time to play at anything before dinner," said Tom, whose

imagination was impatient of any intermediate prospect.

"Oh yes, there is time for this; \_do\_ come, Tom."

Tom followed Maggie upstairs into her mother's room, and saw her go at

once to a drawer, from which she took out a large pair of scissors.

"What are they for, Maggie?" said Tom, feeling his curiosity awakened.

Maggie answered by seizing her front locks and cutting them straight

across the middle of her forehead.

"Oh, my buttons! Maggie, you'll catch it!" exclaimed Tom; "you'd

better not cut any more off."

Snip! went the great scissors again while Tom was speaking, and he

couldn't help feeling it was rather good fun; Maggie would look so

queer.

"Here, Tom, cut it behind for me," said Maggie, excited by her own

daring, and anxious to finish the deed.

"You'll catch it, you know," said Tom, nodding his head in an

admonitory manner, and hesitating a little as he took the scissors.

"Never mind, make haste!" said Maggie, giving a little stamp with her

foot. Her cheeks were quite flushed.

The black locks were so thick, nothing could be more tempting to a lad

who had already tasted the forbidden pleasure of cutting the pony's

mane. I speak to those who know the satisfaction of making a pair of

scissors meet through a duly resisting mass of hair. One delicious

grinding snip, and then another and another, and the hinder-locks fell

heavily on the floor, and Maggie stood cropped in a jagged, uneven

manner, but with a sense of clearness and freedom, as if she had

emerged from a wood into the open plain.

"Oh, Maggie," said Tom, jumping round her, and slapping his knees as

he laughed, "Oh, my buttons! what a queer thing you look! Look at

yourself in the glass; you look like the idiot we throw out nutshells

to at school."

Maggie felt an unexpected pang. She had thought beforehand chiefly at

her own deliverance from her teasing hair and teasing remarks about

it, and something also of the triumph she should have over her mother

and her aunts by this very decided course of action; she didn't want

her hair to look pretty,--that was out of the question,--she only

wanted people to think her a clever little girl, and not to find fault

with her. But now, when Tom began to laugh at her, and say she was

like an idiot, the affair had quite a new aspect. She looked in the

glass, and still Tom laughed and clapped his hands, and Maggie's

cheeks began to pale, and her lips to tremble a little.

"Oh, Maggie, you'll have to go down to dinner directly," said Tom.

"Oh, my!"

"Don't laugh at me, Tom," said Maggie, in a passionate tone, with an

outburst of angry tears, stamping, and giving him a push.

"Now, then, spitfire!" said Tom. "What did you cut it off for, then? I

shall go down: I can smell the dinner going in."

He hurried downstairs and left poor Maggie to that bitter sense of the

irrevocable which was almost an every-day experience of her small

soul. She could see clearly enough, now the thing was done, that it

was very foolish, and that she should have to hear and think more

about her hair than ever; for Maggie rushed to her deeds with

passionate impulse, and then saw not only their consequences, but what

would have happened if they had not been done, with all the detail and

exaggerated circumstance of an active imagination. Tom never did the

same sort of foolish things as Maggie, having a wonderful instinctive

discernment of what would turn to his advantage or disadvantage; and

so it happened, that though he was much more wilful and inflexible

than Maggie, his mother hardly ever called him naughty. But if Tom did

make a mistake of that sort, he espoused it, and stood by it: he

"didn't mind." If he broke the lash of his father's gigwhip by lashing

the gate, he couldn't help it,--the whip shouldn't have got caught in

the hinge. If Tom Tulliver whipped a gate, he was convinced, not that

the whipping of gates by all boys was a justifiable act, but that he,

Tom Tulliver, was justifiable in whipping that particular gate, and he

wasn't going to be sorry. But Maggie, as she stood crying before the

glass, felt it impossible that she should go down to dinner and endure

the severe eyes and severe words of her aunts, while Tom and Lucy, and

Martha, who waited at table, and perhaps her father and her uncles,

would laugh at her; for if Tom had laughed at her, of course every one

else would; and if she had only let her hair alone, she could have sat

with Tom and Lucy, and had the apricot pudding and the custard! What

could she do but sob? She sat as helpless and despairing among her

black locks as Ajax among the slaughtered sheep. Very trivial,

perhaps, this anguish seems to weather-worn mortals who have to think

of Christmas bills, dead loves, and broken friendships; but it was not

less bitter to Maggie--perhaps it was even more bitter--than what we

are fond of calling antithetically the real troubles of mature life.

"Ah, my child, you will have real troubles to fret about by and by,"

is the consolation we have almost all of us had administered to us in

our childhood, and have repeated to other children since we have been

grown up. We have all of us sobbed so piteously, standing with tiny

bare legs above our little socks, when we lost sight of our mother or

nurse in some strange place; but we can no longer recall the poignancy

of that moment and weep over it, as we do over the remembered

sufferings of five or ten years ago. Every one of those keen moments

has left its trace, and lives in us still, but such traces have blent

themselves irrecoverably with the firmer texture of our youth and

manhood; and so it comes that we can look on at the troubles of our

children with a smiling disbelief in the reality of their pain. Is

there any one who can recover the experience of his childhood, not

merely with a memory \_of\_ what he did and what happened to him, of

what he liked and disliked when he was in frock and trousers, but with

an intimate penetration, a revived consciousness of what he felt then,

when it was so long from one Midsummer to another; what he felt when

his school fellows shut him out of their game because he would pitch

the ball wrong out of mere wilfulness; or on a rainy day in the

holidays, when he didn't know how to amuse himself, and fell from

idleness into mischief, from mischief into defiance, and from defiance

into sulkiness; or when his mother absolutely refused to let him have

a tailed coat that "half," although every other boy of his age had

gone into tails already? Surely if we could recall that early

bitterness, and the dim guesses, the strangely perspectiveless

conception of life, that gave the bitterness its intensity, we should

not pooh-pooh the griefs of our children.

"Miss Maggie, you're to come down this minute," said Kezia, entering

the room hurriedly. "Lawks! what have you been a-doing? I never \_see\_

such a fright!"

"Don't, Kezia," said Maggie, angrily. "Go away!"

"But I tell you you're to come down, Miss, this minute; your mother

says so," said Kezia, going up to Maggie and taking her by the hand to

raise her from the floor.

"Get away, Kezia; I don't want any dinner," said Maggie, resisting

Kezia's arm. "I sha'n't come."

"Oh, well, I can't stay. I've got to wait at dinner," said Kezia,

going out again.

"Maggie, you little silly," said Tom, peeping into the room ten

minutes after, "why don't you come and have your dinner? There's lots

o' goodies, and mother says you're to come. What are you crying for,

you little spooney?"

Oh, it was dreadful! Tom was so hard and unconcerned; if \_he\_ had been

crying on the floor, Maggie would have cried too. And there was the

dinner, so nice; and she was \_so\_ hungry. It was very bitter.

But Tom was not altogether hard. He was not inclined to cry, and did

not feel that Maggie's grief spoiled his prospect of the sweets; but

he went and put his head near her, and said in a lower, comforting

tone,--

"Won't you come, then, Magsie? Shall I bring you a bit o' pudding when

I've had mine, and a custard and things?"

"Ye-e-es," said Maggie, beginning to feel life a little more

tolerable.

"Very well," said Tom, going away. But he turned again at the door and

said, "But you'd better come, you know. There's the dessert,--nuts,

you know, and cowslip wine."

Maggie's tears had ceased, and she looked reflective as Tom left her.

His good nature had taken off the keenest edge of her suffering, and

nuts with cowslip wine began to assert their legitimate influence.

Slowly she rose from amongst her scattered locks, and slowly she made

her way downstairs. Then she stood leaning with one shoulder against

the frame of the dining-parlour door, peeping in when it was ajar. She

saw Tom and Lucy with an empty chair between them, and there were the

custards on a side-table; it was too much. She slipped in and went

toward the empty chair. But she had no sooner sat down than she

repented and wished herself back again.

Mrs. Tulliver gave a little scream as she saw her, and felt such a

"turn" that she dropped the large gravy-spoon into the dish, with the

most serious results to the table-cloth. For Kezia had not betrayed

the reason of Maggie's refusal to come down, not liking to give her

mistress a shock in the moment of carving, and Mrs. Tulliver thought

there was nothing worse in question than a fit of perverseness, which

was inflicting its own punishment by depriving Maggie of half her

dinner.

Mrs. Tulliver's scream made all eyes turn towards the same point as

her own, and Maggie's cheeks and ears began to burn, while uncle

Glegg, a kind-looking, white-haired old gentleman, said,--

"Heyday! what little gell's this? Why, I don't know her. Is it some

little gell you've picked up in the road, Kezia?"

"Why, she's gone and cut her hair herself," said Mr. Tulliver in an

undertone to Mr. Deane, laughing with much enjoyment. Did you ever

know such a little hussy as it is?"

"Why, little miss, you've made yourself look very funny," said Uncle

Pullet, and perhaps he never in his life made an observation which was

felt to be so lacerating.

"Fie, for shame!" said aunt Glegg, in her loudest, severest tone of

reproof. "Little gells as cut their own hair should be whipped and fed

on bread and water,--not come and sit down with their aunts and

uncles."

"Ay, ay," said uncle Glegg, meaning to give a playful turn to this

denunciation, "she must be sent to jail, I think, and they'll cut the

rest of her hair off there, and make it all even."

"She's more like a gypsy nor ever," said aunt Pullet, in a pitying

tone; "it's very bad luck, sister, as the gell should be so brown; the

boy's fair enough. I doubt it'll stand in her way i' life to be so

brown."

"She's a naughty child, as'll break her mother's heart," said Mrs.

Tulliver, with the tears in her eyes.

Maggie seemed to be listening to a chorus of reproach and derision.

Her first flush came from anger, which gave her a transient power of

defiance, and Tom thought she was braving it out, supported by the

recent appearance of the pudding and custard. Under this impression,

he whispered, "Oh, my! Maggie, I told you you'd catch it." He meant to

be friendly, but Maggie felt convinced that Tom was rejoicing in her

ignominy. Her feeble power of defiance left her in an instant, her

heart swelled, and getting up from her chair, she ran to her father,

hid her face on his shoulder, and burst out into loud sobbing.

"Come, come, my wench," said her father, soothingly, putting his arm

round her, "never mind; you was i' the right to cut it off if it

plagued you; give over crying; father'll take your part."

Delicious words of tenderness! Maggie never forgot any of these

moments when her father "took her part"; she kept them in her heart,

and thought of them long years after, when every one else said that

her father had done very ill by his children.

"How your husband does spoil that child, Bessy!" said Mrs. Glegg, in a

loud "aside," to Mrs. Tulliver. "It'll be the ruin of her, if you

don't take care. \_My\_ father never brought his children up so, else we

should ha' been a different sort o' family to what we are."

Mrs. Tulliver's domestic sorrows seemed at this moment to have reached

the point at which insensibility begins. She took no notice of her

sister's remark, but threw back her capstrings and dispensed the

pudding, in mute resignation.

With the dessert there came entire deliverance for Maggie, for the

children were told they might have their nuts and wine in the

summer-house, since the day was so mild; and they scampered out among

the budding bushes of the garden with the alacrity of small animals

getting from under a burning glass.

Mrs. Tulliver had her special reason for this permission: now the

dinner was despatched, and every one's mind disengaged, it was the

right moment to communicate Mr. Tulliver's intention concerning Tom,

and it would be as well for Tom himself to be absent. The children

were used to hear themselves talked of as freely as if they were

birds, and could understand nothing, however they might stretch their

necks and listen; but on this occasion Mrs. Tulliver manifested an

unusual discretion, because she had recently had evidence that the

going to school to a clergyman was a sore point with Tom, who looked

at it as very much on a par with going to school to a constable. Mrs.

Tulliver had a sighing sense that her husband would do as he liked,

whatever sister Glegg said, or sister Pullet either; but at least they

would not be able to say, if the thing turned out ill, that Bessy had

fallen in with her husband's folly without letting her own friends

know a word about it.

"Mr. Tulliver," she said, interrupting her husband in his talk with

Mr. Deane, "it's time now to tell the children's aunts and uncles what

you're thinking of doing with Tom, isn't it?"

"Very well," said Mr. Tulliver, rather sharply, "I've no objections to

tell anybody what I mean to do with him. I've settled," he added,

looking toward Mr. Glegg and Mr. Deane,--"I've settled to send him to

a Mr. Stelling, a parson, down at King's Lorton, there,--an uncommon

clever fellow, I understand, as'll put him up to most things."

There was a rustling demonstration of surprise in the company, such as

you may have observed in a country congregation when they hear an

allusion to their week-day affairs from the pulpit. It was equally

astonishing to the aunts and uncles to find a parson introduced into

Mr. Tulliver's family arrangements. As for uncle Pullet, he could

hardly have been more thoroughly obfuscated if Mr. Tulliver had said

that he was going to send Tom to the Lord Chancellor; for uncle Pullet

belonged to that extinct class of British yeoman who, dressed in good

broadcloth, paid high rates and taxes, went to church, and ate a

particularly good dinner on Sunday, without dreaming that the British

constitution in Church and State had a traceable origin any more than

the solar system and the fixed stars.

It is melancholy, but true, that Mr. Pullet had the most confused idea

of a bishop as a sort of a baronet, who might or might not be a

clergyman; and as the rector of his own parish was a man of high

family and fortune, the idea that a clergyman could be a schoolmaster

was too remote from Mr. Pullet's experience to be readily conceivable.

I know it is difficult for people in these instructed times to believe

in uncle Pullet's ignorance; but let them reflect on the remarkable

results of a great natural faculty under favoring circumstances. And

uncle Pullet had a great natural faculty for ignorance. He was the

first to give utterance to his astonishment.

"Why, what can you be going to send him to a parson for?" he said,

with an amazed twinkling in his eyes, looking at Mr. Glegg and Mr.

Deane, to see if they showed any signs of comprehension.

"Why, because the parsons are the best schoolmasters, by what I can

make out," said poor Mr. Tulliver, who, in the maze of this puzzling

world, laid hold of any clue with great readiness and tenacity.

"Jacobs at th' academy's no parson, and he's done very bad by the boy;

and I made up my mind, if I send him to school again, it should be to

somebody different to Jacobs. And this Mr. Stelling, by what I can

make out, is the sort o' man I want. And I mean my boy to go to him at

Midsummer," he concluded, in a tone of decision, tapping his snuff-box

and taking a pinch.

"You'll have to pay a swinging half-yearly bill, then, eh, Tulliver?

The clergymen have highish notions, in general," said Mr. Deane,

taking snuff vigorously, as he always did when wishing to maintain a

neutral position.

"What! do you think the parson'll teach him to know a good sample o'

wheat when he sees it, neighbor Tulliver?" said Mr. Glegg, who was

fond of his jest, and having retired from business, felt that it was

not only allowable but becoming in him to take a playful view of

things.

"Why, you see, I've got a plan i' my head about Tom," said Mr.

Tulliver, pausing after that statement and lifting up his glass.

"Well, if I may be allowed to speak, and it's seldom as I am," said

Mrs. Glegg, with a tone of bitter meaning, "I should like to know what

good is to come to the boy by bringin' him up above his fortin."

"Why," said Mr. Tulliver, not looking at Mrs. Glegg, but at the male

part of his audience, "you see, I've made up my mind not to bring Tom

up to my own business. I've had my thoughts about it all along, and I

made up my mind by what I saw with Garnett and \_his\_ son. I mean to

put him to some business as he can go into without capital, and I want

to give him an eddication as he'll be even wi' the lawyers and folks,

and put me up to a notion now an' then."

Mrs. Glegg emitted a long sort of guttural sound with closed lips,

that smiled in mingled pity and scorn.

"It 'ud be a fine deal better for some people," she said, after that

introductory note, "if they'd let the lawyers alone."

"Is he at the head of a grammar school, then, this clergyman, such as

that at Market Bewley?" said Mr. Deane.

"No, nothing of that," said Mr. Tulliver. "He won't take more than two

or three pupils, and so he'll have the more time to attend to 'em, you

know."

"Ah, and get his eddication done the sooner; they can't learn much at

a time when there's so many of 'em," said uncle Pullet, feeling that

he was getting quite an insight into this difficult matter.

"But he'll want the more pay, I doubt," said Mr. Glegg.

"Ay, ay, a cool hundred a year, that's all," said Mr. Tulliver, with

some pride at his own spirited course. "But then, you know, it's an

investment; Tom's eddication 'ull be so much capital to him."

"Ay, there's something in that," said Mr. Glegg. "Well well, neighbor

Tulliver, you may be right, you may be right:

'When land is gone and money's spent,

Then learning is most excellent.'

"I remember seeing those two lines wrote on a window at Buxton. But us

that have got no learning had better keep our money, eh, neighbor

Pullet?" Mr. Glegg rubbed his knees, and looked very pleasant.

"Mr. Glegg, I wonder \_at\_ you," said his wife. "It's very unbecoming

in a man o' your age and belongings."

"What's unbecoming, Mrs. G.?" said Mr. Glegg, winking pleasantly at

the company. "My new blue coat as I've got on?"

"I pity your weakness, Mr. Glegg. I say it's unbecoming to be making a

joke when you see your own kin going headlongs to ruin."

"If you mean me by that," said Mr. Tulliver, considerably nettled,

"you needn't trouble yourself to fret about me. I can manage my own

affairs without troubling other folks."

"Bless me!" said Mr. Deane, judiciously introducing a new idea, "why,

now I come to think of it, somebody said Wakem was going to send \_his\_

son--the deformed lad--to a clergyman, didn't they, Susan?" (appealing

to his wife).

"I can give no account of it, I'm sure," said Mrs. Deane, closing her

lips very tightly again. Mrs. Deane was not a woman to take part in a

scene where missiles were flying.

"Well," said Mr. Tulliver, speaking all the more cheerfully, that Mrs.

Glegg might see he didn't mind her, "if Wakem thinks o' sending his

son to a clergyman, depend on it I shall make no mistake i' sending

Tom to one. Wakem's as big a scoundrel as Old Harry ever made, but he

knows the length of every man's foot he's got to deal with. Ay, ay,

tell me who's Wakem's butcher, and I'll tell you where to get your

meat."

"But lawyer Wakem's son's got a hump-back," said Mrs. Pullet, who felt

as if the whole business had a funereal aspect; "it's more nat'ral to

send \_him\_ to a clergyman."

"Yes," said Mr. Glegg, interpreting Mrs. Pullet's observation with

erroneous plausibility, "you must consider that, neighbor Tulliver;

Wakem's son isn't likely to follow any business. Wakem 'ull make a

gentleman of him, poor fellow."

"Mr. Glegg," said Mrs. G., in a tone which implied that her

indignation would fizz and ooze a little, though she was determined to

keep it corked up, "you'd far better hold your tongue. Mr. Tulliver

doesn't want to know your opinion nor mine either. There's folks in

the world as know better than everybody else."

"Why, I should think that's you, if we're to trust your own tale,"

said Mr. Tulliver, beginning to boil up again.

"Oh, \_I\_ say nothing," said Mrs. Glegg, sarcastically. "My advice has

never been asked, and I don't give it."

"It'll be the first time, then," said Mr. Tulliver. "It's the only

thing you're over-ready at giving."

"I've been over-ready at lending, then, if I haven't been over-ready

at giving," said Mrs. Glegg. "There's folks I've lent money to, as

perhaps I shall repent o' lending money to kin."

"Come, come, come," said Mr. Glegg, soothingly. But Mr. Tulliver was

not to be hindered of his retort.

"You've got a bond for it, I reckon," he said; "and you've had your

five per cent, kin or no kin."

"Sister," said Mrs. Tulliver, pleadingly, "drink your wine, and let me

give you some almonds and raisins."

"Bessy, I'm sorry for you," said Mrs. Glegg, very much with the

feeling of a cur that seizes the opportunity of diverting his bark

toward the man who carries no stick. "It's poor work talking o'

almonds and raisins."

"Lors, sister Glegg, don't be so quarrelsome," said Mrs. Pullet,

beginning to cry a little. "You may be struck with a fit, getting so

red in the face after dinner, and we are but just out o' mourning, all

of us,--and all wi' gowns craped alike and just put by; it's very bad

among sisters."

"I should think it \_is\_ bad," said Mrs. Glegg. "Things are come to a

fine pass when one sister invites the other to her house o' purpose to

quarrel with her and abuse her."

"Softly, softly, Jane; be reasonable, be reasonable," said Mr. Glegg.

But while he was speaking, Mr. Tulliver, who had by no means said

enough to satisfy his anger, burst out again.

"Who wants to quarrel with you?" he said. "It's you as can't let

people alone, but must be gnawing at 'em forever. \_I\_ should never

want to quarrel with any woman if she kept her place."

"My place, indeed!" said Mrs. Glegg, getting rather more shrill.

"There's your betters, Mr. Tulliver, as are dead and in their grave,

treated me with a different sort o' respect to what you do; \_though\_

I've got a husband as'll sit by and see me abused by them as 'ud never

ha' had the chance if there hadn't been them in our family as married

worse than they might ha' done."

"If you talk o' that," said Mr. Tulliver, "my family's as good as

yours, and better, for it hasn't got a damned ill-tempered woman in

it!"

"Well," said Mrs. Glegg, rising from her chair, "I don't know whether

you think it's a fine thing to sit by and hear me swore at, Mr. Glegg;

but I'm not going to stay a minute longer in this house. You can stay

behind, and come home with the gig, and I'll walk home."

"Dear heart, dear heart!" said Mr. Glegg in a melancholy tone, as he

followed his wife out of the room.

"Mr. Tulliver, how could you talk so?" said Mrs. Tulliver, with the

tears in her eyes.

"Let her go," said Mr. Tulliver, too hot to be damped by any amount of

tears. "Let her go, and the sooner the better; she won't be trying to

domineer over \_me\_ again in a hurry."

"Sister Pullet," said Mrs. Tulliver, helplessly, "do you think it 'ud

be any use for you to go after her and try to pacify her?"

"Better not, better not," said Mr. Deane. "You'll make it up another

day."

"Then, sisters, shall we go and look at the children?" said Mrs.

Tulliver, drying her eyes.

No proposition could have been more seasonable. Mr. Tulliver felt very

much as if the air had been cleared of obtrusive flies now the women

were out of the room. There were few things he liked better than a

chat with Mr. Deane, whose close application to business allowed the

pleasure very rarely. Mr. Deane, he considered, was the "knowingest"

man of his acquaintance, and he had besides a ready causticity of

tongue that made an agreeable supplement to Mr. Tulliver's own

tendency that way, which had remained in rather an inarticulate

condition. And now the women were gone, they could carry on their

serious talk without frivolous interruption. They could exchange their

views concerning the Duke of Wellington, whose conduct in the Catholic

Question had thrown such an entirely new light on his character; and

speak slightingly of his conduct at the battle of Waterloo, which he

would never have won if there hadn't been a great many Englishmen at

his back, not to speak of Blucher and the Prussians, who, as Mr.

Tulliver had heard from a person of particular knowledge in that

matter, had come up in the very nick of time; though here there was a

slight dissidence, Mr. Deane remarking that he was not disposed to

give much credit to the Prussians,--the build of their vessels,

together with the unsatisfactory character of transactions in Dantzic

beer, inclining him to form rather a low view of Prussian pluck

generally. Rather beaten on this ground, Mr. Tulliver proceeded to

express his fears that the country could never again be what it used

to be; but Mr. Deane, attached to a firm of which the returns were on

the increase, naturally took a more lively view of the present, and

had some details to give concerning the state of the imports,

especially in hides and spelter, which soothed Mr. Tulliver's

imagination by throwing into more distant perspective the period when

the country would become utterly the prey of Papists and Radicals, and

there would be no more chance for honest men.

Uncle Pullet sat by and listened with twinkling eyes to these high

matters. He didn't understand politics himself,--thought they were a

natural gift,--but by what he could make out, this Duke of Wellington

was no better than he should be.

Chapter VIII

Mr. Tulliver Shows His Weaker Side

"Suppose sister Glegg should call her money in; it 'ud be very awkward

for you to have to raise five hundred pounds now," said Mrs. Tulliver

to her husband that evening, as she took a plaintive review of the

day.

Mrs. Tulliver had lived thirteen years with her husband, yet she

retained in all the freshness of her early married life a facility of

saying things which drove him in the opposite direction to the one she

desired. Some minds are wonderful for keeping their bloom in this way,

as a patriarchal goldfish apparently retains to the last its youthful

illusion that it can swim in a straight line beyond the encircling

glass. Mrs. Tulliver was an amiable fish of this kind, and after

running her head against the same resisting medium for thirteen years

would go at it again to-day with undulled alacrity.

This observation of hers tended directly to convince Mr. Tulliver that

it would not be at all awkward for him to raise five hundred pounds;

and when Mrs. Tulliver became rather pressing to know \_how\_ he would

raise it without mortgaging the mill and the house which he had said

he never \_would\_ mortgage, since nowadays people were none so ready to

lend money without security, Mr. Tulliver, getting warm, declared that

Mrs. Glegg might do as she liked about calling in her money, he should

pay it in whether or not. He was not going to be beholden to his

wife's sisters. When a man had married into a family where there was a

whole litter of women, he might have plenty to put up with if he

chose. But Mr. Tulliver did \_not\_ choose.

Mrs. Tulliver cried a little in a trickling, quiet way as she put on

her nightcap; but presently sank into a comfortable sleep, lulled by

the thought that she would talk everything over with her sister Pullet

to-morrow, when she was to take the children to Garum Firs to tea. Not

that she looked forward to any distinct issue from that talk; but it

seemed impossible that past events should be so obstinate as to remain

unmodified when they were complained against.

Her husband lay awake rather longer, for he too was thinking of a

visit he would pay on the morrow; and his ideas on the subject were

not of so vague and soothing a kind as those of his amiable partner.

Mr. Tulliver, when under the influence of a strong feeling, had a

promptitude in action that may seem inconsistent with that painful

sense of the complicated, puzzling nature of human affairs under which

his more dispassionate deliberations were conducted; but it is really

not improbable that there was a direct relation between these

apparently contradictory phenomena, since I have observed that for

getting a strong impression that a skein is tangled there is nothing

like snatching hastily at a single thread. It was owing to this

promptitude that Mr. Tulliver was on horseback soon after dinner the

next day (he was not dyspeptic) on his way to Basset to see his sister

Moss and her husband. For having made up his mind irrevocably that he

would pay Mrs. Glegg her loan of five hundred pounds, it naturally

occurred to him that he had a promissory note for three hundred pounds

lent to his brother-in-law Moss; and if the said brother-in-law could

manage to pay in the money within a given time, it would go far to

lessen the fallacious air of inconvenience which Mr. Tulliver's

spirited step might have worn in the eyes of weak people who require

to know precisely \_how\_ a thing is to be done before they are strongly

confident that it will be easy.

For Mr. Tulliver was in a position neither new nor striking, but, like

other every-day things, sure to have a cumulative effect that will be

felt in the long run: he was held to be a much more substantial man

than he really was. And as we are all apt to believe what the world

believes about us, it was his habit to think of failure and ruin with

the same sort of remote pity with which a spare, long-necked man hears

that his plethoric short-necked neighbor is stricken with apoplexy. He

had been always used to hear pleasant jokes about his advantages as a

man who worked his own mill, and owned a pretty bit of land; and these

jokes naturally kept up his sense that he was a man of considerable

substance. They gave a pleasant flavor to his glass on a market-day,

and if it had not been for the recurrence of half-yearly payments, Mr.

Tulliver would really have forgotten that there was a mortgage of two

thousand pounds on his very desirable freehold. That was not

altogether his own fault, since one of the thousand pounds was his

sister's fortune, which he had to pay on her marriage; and a man who

has neighbors that \_will\_ go to law with him is not likely to pay off

his mortgages, especially if he enjoys the good opinion of

acquaintances who want to borrow a hundred pounds on security too

lofty to be represented by parchment. Our friend Mr. Tulliver had a

good-natured fibre in him, and did not like to give harsh refusals

even to his sister, who had not only come in to the world in that

superfluous way characteristic of sisters, creating a necessity for

mortgages, but had quite thrown herself away in marriage, and had

crowned her mistakes by having an eighth baby. On this point Mr.

Tulliver was conscious of being a little weak; but he apologized to

himself by saying that poor Gritty had been a good-looking wench

before she married Moss; he would sometimes say this even with a

slight tremulousness in his voice. But this morning he was in a mood

more becoming a man of business, and in the course of his ride along

the Basset lanes, with their deep ruts,--lying so far away from a

market-town that the labor of drawing produce and manure was enough to

take away the best part of the profits on such poor land as that

parish was made of,--he got up a due amount of irritation against Moss

as a man without capital, who, if murrain and blight were abroad, was

sure to have his share of them, and who, the more you tried to help

him out of the mud, would sink the further in. It would do him good

rather than harm, now, if he were obliged to raise this three hundred

pounds; it would make him look about him better, and not act so

foolishly about his wool this year as he did the last; in fact, Mr.

Tulliver had been too easy with his brother-in-law, and because he had

let the interest run on for two years, Moss was likely enough to think

that he should never be troubled about the principal. But Mr. Tulliver

was determined not to encourage such shuffling people any longer; and

a ride along the Basset lanes was not likely to enervate a man's

resolution by softening his temper. The deep-trodden hoof-marks, made

in the muddiest days of winter, gave him a shake now and then which

suggested a rash but stimulating snarl at the father of lawyers, who,

whether by means of his hoof or otherwise, had doubtless something to

do with this state of the roads; and the abundance of foul land and

neglected fences that met his eye, though they made no part of his

brother Moss's farm, strongly contributed to his dissatisfaction with

that unlucky agriculturist. If this wasn't Moss's fallow, it might

have been; Basset was all alike; it was a beggarly parish, in Mr.

Tulliver's opinion, and his opinion was certainly not groundless.

Basset had a poor soil, poor roads, a poor non-resident landlord, a

poor non-resident vicar, and rather less than half a curate, also

poor. If any one strongly impressed with the power of the human mind

to triumph over circumstances will contend that the parishioners of

Basset might nevertheless have been a very superior class of people, I

have nothing to urge against that abstract proposition; I only know

that, in point of fact, the Basset mind was in strict keeping with its

circumstances. The muddy lanes, green or clayey, that seemed to the

unaccustomed eye to lead nowhere but into each other, did really lead,

with patience, to a distant high-road; but there were many feet in

Basset which they led more frequently to a centre of dissipation,

spoken of formerly as the "Markis o' Granby," but among intimates as

"Dickison's." A large low room with a sanded floor; a cold scent of

tobacco, modified by undetected beer-dregs; Mr. Dickison leaning

against the door-post with a melancholy pimpled face, looking as

irrelevant to the daylight as a last night's guttered candle,--all

this may not seem a very seductive form of temptation; but the

majority of men in Basset found it fatally alluring when encountered

on their road toward four o'clock on a wintry afternoon; and if any

wife in Basset wished to indicate that her husband was not a

pleasure-seeking man, she could hardly do it more emphatically than by

saying that he didn't spend a shilling at Dickison's from one

Whitsuntide to another. Mrs. Moss had said so of \_her\_ husband more

than once, when her brother was in a mood to find fault with him, as

he certainly was to-day. And nothing could be less pacifying to Mr.

Tulliver than the behavior of the farmyard gate, which he no sooner

attempted to push open with his riding-stick than it acted as gates

without the upper hinge are known to do, to the peril of shins,

whether equine or human. He was about to get down and lead his horse

through the damp dirt of the hollow farmyard, shadowed drearily by the

large half-timbered buildings, up to the long line of tumble-down

dwelling-houses standing on a raised causeway; but the timely

appearance of a cowboy saved him that frustration of a plan he had

determined on,--namely, not to get down from his horse during this

visit. If a man means to be hard, let him keep in his saddle and speak

from that height, above the level of pleading eyes, and with the

command of a distant horizon. Mrs. Moss heard the sound of the horse's

feet, and, when her brother rode up, was already outside the kitchen

door, with a half-weary smile on her face, and a black-eyed baby in

her arms. Mrs. Moss's face bore a faded resemblance to her brother's;

baby's little fat hand, pressed against her cheek, seemed to show more

strikingly that the cheek was faded.

"Brother, I'm glad to see you," she said, in an affectionate tone. "I

didn't look for you to-day. How do you do?"

"Oh, pretty well, Mrs. Moss, pretty well," answered the brother, with

cool deliberation, as if it were rather too forward of her to ask that

question. She knew at once that her brother was not in a good humor;

he never called her Mrs. Moss except when he was angry, and when they

were in company. But she thought it was in the order of nature that

people who were poorly off should be snubbed. Mrs. Moss did not take

her stand on the equality of the human race; she was a patient,

prolific, loving-hearted woman.

"Your husband isn't in the house, I suppose?" added Mr. Tulliver after

a grave pause, during which four children had run out, like chickens

whose mother has been suddenly in eclipse behind the hen-coop.

"No," said Mrs. Moss, "but he's only in the potato-field yonders.

Georgy, run to the Far Close in a minute, and tell father your uncle's

come. You'll get down, brother, won't you, and take something?"

"No, no; I can't get down. I must be going home again directly," said

Mr. Tulliver, looking at the distance.

"And how's Mrs. Tulliver and the children?" said Mrs. Moss, humbly,

not daring to press her invitation.

"Oh, pretty well. Tom's going to a new school at Midsummer,--a deal of

expense to me. It's bad work for me, lying out o' my money."

"I wish you'd be so good as let the children come and see their

cousins some day. My little uns want to see their cousin Maggie so as

never was. And me her godmother, and so fond of her; there's nobody

'ud make a bigger fuss with her, according to what they've got. And I

know she likes to come, for she's a loving child, and how quick and

clever she is, to be sure!"

If Mrs. Moss had been one of the most astute women in the world,

instead of being one of the simplest, she could have thought of

nothing more likely to propitiate her brother than this praise of

Maggie. He seldom found any one volunteering praise of "the little

wench"; it was usually left entirely to himself to insist on her

merits. But Maggie always appeared in the most amiable light at her

aunt Moss's; it was her Alsatia, where she was out of the reach of

law,--if she upset anything, dirtied her shoes, or tore her frock,

these things were matters of course at her aunt Moss's. In spite of

himself, Mr. Tulliver's eyes got milder, and he did not look away from

his sister as he said,--

"Ay; she's fonder o' you than o' the other aunts, I think. She takes

after our family: not a bit of her mother's in her."

"Moss says she's just like what I used to be," said Mrs. Moss, "though

I was never so quick and fond o' the books. But I think my Lizzy's

like her; \_she's\_ sharp. Come here, Lizzy, my dear, and let your uncle

see you; he hardly knows you, you grow so fast."

Lizzy, a black-eyed child of seven, looked very shy when her mother

drew her forward, for the small Mosses were much in awe of their uncle

from Dorlcote Mill. She was inferior enough to Maggie in fire and

strength of expression to make the resemblance between the two

entirely flattering to Mr. Tulliver's fatherly love.

"Ay, they're a bit alike," he said, looking kindly at the little

figure in the soiled pinafore. "They both take after our mother.

You've got enough o' gells, Gritty," he added, in a tone half

compassionate, half reproachful.

"Four of 'em, bless 'em!" said Mrs. Moss, with a sigh, stroking

Lizzy's hair on each side of her forehead; "as many as there's boys.

They've got a brother apiece."

"Ah, but they must turn out and fend for themselves," said Mr.

Tulliver, feeling that his severity was relaxing and trying to brace

it by throwing out a wholesome hint "They mustn't look to hanging on

their brothers."

"No; but I hope their brothers 'ull love the poor things, and remember

they came o' one father and mother; the lads 'ull never be the poorer

for that," said Mrs. Moss, flashing out with hurried timidity, like a

half-smothered fire.

Mr. Tulliver gave his horse a little stroke on the flank, then checked

it, and said angrily, "Stand still with you!" much to the astonishment

of that innocent animal.

"And the more there is of 'em, the more they must love one another,"

Mrs. Moss went on, looking at her children with a didactic purpose.

But she turned toward her brother again to say, "Not but what I hope

your boy 'ull allays be good to his sister, though there's but two of

'em, like you and me, brother."

The arrow went straight to Mr. Tulliver's heart. He had not a rapid

imagination, but the thought of Maggie was very near to him, and he

was not long in seeing his relation to his own sister side by side

with Tom's relation to Maggie. Would the little wench ever be poorly

off, and Tom rather hard upon her?

"Ay, ay, Gritty," said the miller, with a new softness in his tone;

"but I've allays done what I could for you," he added, as if

vindicating himself from a reproach.

"I'm not denying that, brother, and I'm noways ungrateful," said poor

Mrs. Moss, too fagged by toil and children to have strength left for

any pride. "But here's the father. What a while you've been, Moss!"

"While, do you call it?" said Mr. Moss, feeling out of breath and

injured. "I've been running all the way. Won't you 'light, Mr.

Tulliver?"

"Well, I'll just get down and have a bit o' talk with you in the

garden," said Mr. Tulliver, thinking that he should be more likely to

show a due spirit of resolve if his sister were not present.

He got down, and passed with Mr. Moss into the garden, toward an old

yew-tree arbor, while his sister stood tapping her baby on the back

and looking wistfully after them.

Their entrance into the yew-tree arbor surprised several fowls that

were recreating themselves by scratching deep holes in the dusty

ground, and at once took flight with much pother and cackling. Mr.

Tulliver sat down on the bench, and tapping the ground curiously here

and there with his stick, as if he suspected some hollowness, opened

the conversation by observing, with something like a snarl in his

tone,--

"Why, you've got wheat again in that Corner Close, I see; and never a

bit o' dressing on it. You'll do no good with it this year."

Mr. Moss, who, when he married Miss Tulliver, had been regarded as the

buck of Basset, now wore a beard nearly a week old, and had the

depressed, unexpectant air of a machine-horse. He answered in a

patient-grumbling tone, "Why, poor farmers like me must do as they

can; they must leave it to them as have got money to play with, to put

half as much into the ground as they mean to get out of it."

"I don't know who should have money to play with, if it isn't them as

can borrow money without paying interest," said Mr. Tulliver, who

wished to get into a slight quarrel; it was the most natural and easy

introduction to calling in money.

"I know I'm behind with the interest," said Mr. Moss, "but I was so

unlucky wi' the wool last year; and what with the Missis being laid up

so, things have gone awk'arder nor usual."

"Ay," snarled Mr. Tulliver, "there's folks as things 'ull allays go

awk'ard with; empty sacks 'ull never stand upright."

"Well, I don't know what fault you've got to find wi' me, Mr.

Tulliver," said Mr. Moss, deprecatingly; "I know there isn't a

day-laborer works harder."

"What's the use o' that," said Mr. Tulliver, sharply, "when a man

marries, and's got no capital to work his farm but his wife's bit o'

fortin? I was against it from the first; but you'd neither of you

listen to me. And I can't lie out o' my money any longer, for I've got

to pay five hundred o' Mrs. Glegg's, and there'll be Tom an expense to

me. I should find myself short, even saying I'd got back all as is my

own. You must look about and see how you can pay me the three hundred

pound."

"Well, if that's what you mean," said Mr. Moss, looking blankly before

him, "we'd better be sold up, and ha' done with it; I must part wi'

every head o' stock I've got, to pay you and the landlord too."

Poor relations are undeniably irritating,--their existence is so

entirely uncalled for on our part, and they are almost always very

faulty people. Mr. Tulliver had succeeded in getting quite as much

irritated with Mr. Moss as he had desired, and he was able to say

angrily, rising from his seat,--

"Well, you must do as you can. \_I\_ can't find money for everybody else

as well as myself. I must look to my own business and my own family. I

can't lie out o' my money any longer. You must raise it as quick as

you can."

Mr. Tulliver walked abruptly out of the arbor as he uttered the last

sentence, and, without looking round at Mr. Moss, went on to the

kitchen door, where the eldest boy was holding his horse, and his

sister was waiting in a state of wondering alarm, which was not

without its alleviations, for baby was making pleasant gurgling

sounds, and performing a great deal of finger practice on the faded

face. Mrs. Moss had eight children, but could never overcome her

regret that the twins had not lived. Mr. Moss thought their removal

was not without its consolations. "Won't you come in, brother?" she

said, looking anxiously at her husband, who was walking slowly up,

while Mr. Tulliver had his foot already in the stirrup.

"No, no; good-by," said he, turning his horse's head, and riding away.

No man could feel more resolute till he got outside the yard gate, and

a little way along the deep-rutted lane; but before he reached the

next turning, which would take him out of sight of the dilapidated

farm-buildings, he appeared to be smitten by some sudden thought. He

checked his horse, and made it stand still in the same spot for two or

three minutes, during which he turned his head from side to side in a

melancholy way, as if he were looking at some painful object on more

sides than one. Evidently, after his fit of promptitude, Mr. Tulliver

was relapsing into the sense that this is a puzzling world. He turned

his horse, and rode slowly back, giving vent to the climax of feeling

which had determined this movement by saying aloud, as he struck his

horse, "Poor little wench! she'll have nobody but Tom, belike, when

I'm gone."

Mr. Tulliver's return into the yard was descried by several young

Mosses, who immediately ran in with the exciting news to their mother,

so that Mrs. Moss was again on the door-step when her brother rode up.

She had been crying, but was rocking baby to sleep in her arms now,

and made no ostentatious show of sorrow as her brother looked at her,

but merely said:

"The father's gone to the field, again, if you want him, brother."

"No, Gritty, no," said Mr. Tulliver, in a gentle tone. "Don't you

fret,--that's all,--I'll make a shift without the money a bit, only

you must be as clever and contriving as you can."

Mrs. Moss's tears came again at this unexpected kindness, and she

could say nothing.

"Come, come!--the little wench shall come and see you. I'll bring her

and Tom some day before he goes to school. You mustn't fret. I'll

allays be a good brother to you."

"Thank you for that word, brother," said Mrs. Moss, drying her tears;

then turning to Lizzy, she said, "Run now, and fetch the colored egg

for cousin Maggie." Lizzy ran in, and quickly reappeared with a small

paper parcel.

"It's boiled hard, brother, and colored with thrums, very pretty; it

was done o' purpose for Maggie. Will you please to carry it in your

pocket?"

"Ay, ay," said Mr. Tulliver, putting it carefully in his side pocket.

"Good-by."

And so the respectable miller returned along the Basset lanes rather

more puzzled than before as to ways and means, but still with the

sense of a danger escaped. It had come across his mind that if he were

hard upon his sister, it might somehow tend to make Tom hard upon

Maggie at some distant day, when her father was no longer there to

take her part; for simple people, like our friend Mr. Tulliver, are

apt to clothe unimpeachable feelings in erroneous ideas, and this was

his confused way of explaining to himself that his love and anxiety

for "the little wench" had given him a new sensibility toward his

sister.

Chapter IX

To Garum Firs

While the possible troubles of Maggie's future were occupying her

father's mind, she herself was tasting only the bitterness of the

present. Childhood has no forebodings; but then, it is soothed by no

memories of outlived sorrow.

The fact was, the day had begun ill with Maggie. The pleasure of

having Lucy to look at, and the prospect of the afternoon visit to

Garum Firs, where she would hear uncle Pullet's musical box, had been

marred as early as eleven o'clock by the advent of the hair-dresser

from St. Ogg's, who had spoken in the severest terms of the condition

in which he had found her hair, holding up one jagged lock after

another and saying, "See here! tut, tut, tut!" in a tone of mingled

disgust and pity, which to Maggie's imagination was equivalent to the

strongest expression of public opinion. Mr. Rappit, the hair-dresser,

with his well-anointed coronal locks tending wavily upward, like the

simulated pyramid of flame on a monumental urn, seemed to her at that

moment the most formidable of her contemporaries, into whose street at

St. Ogg's she would carefully refrain from entering through the rest

of her life.

Moreover, the preparation for a visit being always a serious affair in

the Dodson family, Martha was enjoined to have Mrs. Tulliver's room

ready an hour earlier than usual, that the laying out of the best

clothes might not be deferred till the last moment, as was sometimes

the case in families of lax views, where the ribbon-strings were never

rolled up, where there was little or no wrapping in silver paper, and

where the sense that the Sunday clothes could be got at quite easily

produced no shock to the mind. Already, at twelve o'clock, Mrs.

Tulliver had on her visiting costume, with a protective apparatus of

brown holland, as if she had been a piece of satin furniture in danger

of flies; Maggie was frowning and twisting her shoulders, that she

might if possible shrink away from the prickliest of tuckers, while

her mother was remonstrating, "Don't, Maggie, my dear; don't make

yourself so ugly!" and Tom's cheeks were looking particularly

brilliant as a relief to his best blue suit, which he wore with

becoming calmness, having, after a little wrangling, effected what was

always the one point of interest to him in his toilet: he had

transferred all the contents of his every-day pockets to those

actually in wear.

As for Lucy, she was just as pretty and neat as she had been

yesterday; no accidents ever happened to her clothes, and she was

never uncomfortable in them, so that she looked with wondering pity at

Maggie, pouting and writhing under the exasperating tucker. Maggie

would certainly have torn it off, if she had not been checked by the

remembrance of her recent humiliation about her hair; as it was, she

confined herself to fretting and twisting, and behaving peevishly

about the card-houses which they were allowed to build till dinner, as

a suitable amusement for boys and girls in their best clothes. Tom

could build perfect pyramids of houses; but Maggie's would never bear

the laying on the roof. It was always so with the things that Maggie

made; and Tom had deduced the conclusion that no girls could ever make

anything. But it happened that Lucy proved wonderfully clever at

building; she handled the cards so lightly, and moved so gently, that

Tom condescended to admire her houses as well as his own, the more

readily because she had asked him to teach her. Maggie, too, would

have admired Lucy's houses, and would have given up her own

unsuccessful building to contemplate them, without ill temper, if her

tucker had not made her peevish, and if Tom had not inconsiderately

laughed when her houses fell, and told her she was "a stupid."

"Don't laugh at me, Tom!" she burst out angrily; "I'm not a stupid. I

know a great many things you don't."

"Oh, I dare say, Miss Spitfire! I'd never be such a cross thing as

you, making faces like that. Lucy doesn't do so. I like Lucy better

than you; \_I\_ wish Lucy was \_my\_ sister."

"Then it's very wicked and cruel of you to wish so," said Maggie,

starting up hurriedly from her place on the floor, and upsetting Tom's

wonderful pagoda. She really did not mean it, but the circumstantial

evidence was against her, and Tom turned white with anger, but said

nothing; he would have struck her, only he knew it was cowardly to

strike a girl, and Tom Tulliver was quite determined he would never do

anything cowardly.

Maggie stood in dismay and terror, while Tom got up from the floor and

walked away, pale, from the scattered ruins of his pagoda, and Lucy

looked on mutely, like a kitten pausing from its lapping.

"Oh, Tom," said Maggie, at last, going half-way toward him, "I didn't

mean to knock it down, indeed, indeed I didn't."

Tom took no notice of her, but took, instead, two or three hard peas

out of his pocket, and shot them with his thumbnail against the

window, vaguely at first, but presently with the distinct aim of

hitting a superannuated blue-bottle which was exposing its imbecility

in the spring sunshine, clearly against the views of Nature, who had

provided Tom and the peas for the speedy destruction of this weak

individual.

Thus the morning had been made heavy to Maggie, and Tom's persistent

coldness to her all through their walk spoiled the fresh air and

sunshine for her. He called Lucy to look at the half-built bird's nest

without caring to show it Maggie, and peeled a willow switch for Lucy

and himself, without offering one to Maggie. Lucy had said, "Maggie,

shouldn't \_you\_ like one?" but Tom was deaf.

Still, the sight of the peacock opportunely spreading his tail on the

stackyard wall, just as they reached Garum Firs, was enough to divert

the mind temporarily from personal grievances. And this was only the

beginning of beautiful sights at Garum Firs. All the farmyard life was

wonderful there,--bantams, speckled and top-knotted; Friesland hens,

with their feathers all turned the wrong way; Guinea-fowls that flew

and screamed and dropped their pretty spotted feathers; pouter-pigeons

and a tame magpie; nay, a goat, and a wonderful brindled dog, half

mastiff, half bull-dog, as large as a lion. Then there were white

railings and white gates all about, and glittering weathercocks of

various design, and garden-walks paved with pebbles in beautiful

patterns,--nothing was quite common at Garum Firs; and Tom thought

that the unusual size of the toads there was simply due to the general

unusualness which characterized uncle Pullet's possessions as a

gentleman farmer. Toads who paid rent were naturally leaner. As for

the house, it was not less remarkable; it had a receding centre, and

two wings with battlemented turrets, and was covered with glittering

white stucco.

Uncle Pullet had seen the expected party approaching from the window,

and made haste to unbar and unchain the front door, kept always in

this fortified condition from fear of tramps, who might be supposed to

know of the glass case of stuffed birds in the hall, and to

contemplate rushing in and carrying it away on their heads. Aunt

Pullet, too, appeared at the doorway, and as soon as her sister was

within hearing said, "Stop the children, for God's sake! Bessy; don't

let 'em come up the door-steps; Sally's bringing the old mat and the

duster, to rub their shoes."

Mrs. Pullet's front-door mats were by no means intended to wipe shoes

on; the very scraper had a deputy to do its dirty work. Tom rebelled

particularly against this shoewiping, which he always considered in

the light of an indignity to his sex. He felt it as the beginning of

the disagreeables incident to a visit at aunt Pullet's, where he had

once been compelled to sit with towels wrapped round his boots; a fact

which may serve to correct the too-hasty conclusion that a visit to

Garum Firs must have been a great treat to a young gentleman fond of

animals,--fond, that is, of throwing stones at them.

The next disagreeable was confined to his feminine companions; it was

the mounting of the polished oak stairs, which had very handsome

carpets rolled up and laid by in a spare bedroom, so that the ascent

of these glossy steps might have served, in barbarous times, as a

trial by ordeal from which none but the most spotless virtue could

have come off with unbroken limbs. Sophy's weakness about these

polished stairs was always a subject of bitter remonstrance on Mrs.

Glegg's part; but Mrs. Tulliver ventured on no comment, only thinking

to herself it was a mercy when she and the children were safe on the

landing.

"Mrs. Gray has sent home my new bonnet, Bessy," said Mrs. Pullet, in a

pathetic tone, as Mrs. Tulliver adjusted her cap.

"Has she, sister?" said Mrs. Tulliver, with an air of much interest.

"And how do you like it?"

"It's apt to make a mess with clothes, taking 'em out and putting 'em

in again," said Mrs. Pullet, drawing a bunch of keys from her pocket

and looking at them earnestly, "but it 'ud be a pity for you to go

away without seeing it. There's no knowing what may happen."

Mrs. Pullet shook her head slowly at this last serious consideration,

which determined her to single out a particular key.

"I'm afraid it'll be troublesome to you getting it out, sister," said

Mrs. Tulliver; "but I \_should\_ like to see what sort of a crown she's

made you."

Mrs. Pullet rose with a melancholy air and unlocked one wing of a very

bright wardrobe, where you may have hastily supposed she would find a

new bonnet. Not at all. Such a supposition could only have arisen from

a too-superficial acquaintance with the habits of the Dodson family.

In this wardrobe Mrs. Pullet was seeking something small enough to be

hidden among layers of linen,--it was a door-key.

"You must come with me into the best room," said Mrs. Pullet.

"May the children come too, sister?" inquired Mrs. Tulliver, who saw

that Maggie and Lucy were looking rather eager.

"Well," said aunt Pullet, reflectively, "it'll perhaps be safer for

'em to come; they'll be touching something if we leave 'em behind."

So they went in procession along the bright and slippery corridor,

dimly lighted by the semi-lunar top of the window which rose above the

closed shutter; it was really quite solemn. Aunt Pullet paused and

unlocked a door which opened on something still more solemn than the

passage,--a darkened room, in which the outer light, entering feebly,

showed what looked like the corpses of furniture in white shrouds.

Everything that was not shrouded stood with its legs upward. Lucy laid

hold of Maggie's frock, and Maggie's heart beat rapidly.

Aunt Pullet half-opened the shutter and then unlocked the wardrobe,

with a melancholy deliberateness which was quite in keeping with the

funereal solemnity of the scene. The delicious scent of rose-leaves

that issued from the wardrobe made the process of taking out sheet

after sheet of silver paper quite pleasant to assist at, though the

sight of the bonnet at last was an anticlimax to Maggie, who would

have preferred something more strikingly preternatural. But few things

could have been more impressive to Mrs. Tulliver. She looked all round

it in silence for some moments, and then said emphatically, "Well,

sister, I'll never speak against the full crowns again!"

It was a great concession, and Mrs. Pullet felt it; she felt something

was due to it.

"You'd like to see it on, sister?" she said sadly. "I'll open the

shutter a bit further."

"Well, if you don't mind taking off your cap, sister," said Mrs.

Tulliver.

Mrs. Pullet took off her cap, displaying the brown silk scalp with a

jutting promontory of curls which was common to the more mature and

judicious women of those times, and placing the bonnet on her head,

turned slowly round, like a draper's lay-figure, that Mrs. Tulliver

might miss no point of view.

"I've sometimes thought there's a loop too much o' ribbon on this left

side, sister; what do you think?" said Mrs. Pullet.

Mrs. Tulliver looked earnestly at the point indicated, and turned her

head on one side. "Well, I think it's best as it is; if you meddled

with it, sister, you might repent."

"That's true," said aunt Pullet, taking off the bonnet and looking at

it contemplatively.

"How much might she charge you for that bonnet, sister?" said Mrs.

Tulliver, whose mind was actively engaged on the possibility of

getting a humble imitation of this \_chef-d'Åuvre\_ made from a piece

of silk she had at home.

Mrs. Pullet screwed up her mouth and shook her head, and then

whispered, "Pullet pays for it; he said I was to have the best bonnet

at Garum Church, let the next best be whose it would."

She began slowly to adjust the trimmings, in preparation for returning

it to its place in the wardrobe, and her thoughts seemed to have taken

a melancholy turn, for she shook her head.

"Ah," she said at last, "I may never wear it twice, sister; who

knows?"

"Don't talk o' that sister," answered Mrs. Tulliver. "I hope you'll

have your health this summer."

"Ah! but there may come a death in the family, as there did soon after

I had my green satin bonnet. Cousin Abbott may go, and we can't think

o' wearing crape less nor half a year for him."

"That \_would\_ be unlucky," said Mrs. Tulliver, entering thoroughly

into the possibility of an inopportune decease. "There's never so much

pleasure i' wearing a bonnet the second year, especially when the

crowns are so chancy,--never two summers alike."

"Ah, it's the way i' this world," said Mrs. Pullet, returning the

bonnet to the wardrobe and locking it up. She maintained a silence

characterized by head-shaking, until they had all issued from the

solemn chamber and were in her own room again. Then, beginning to cry,

she said, "Sister, if you should never see that bonnet again till I'm

dead and gone, you'll remember I showed it you this day."

Mrs. Tulliver felt that she ought to be affected, but she was a woman

of sparse tears, stout and healthy; she couldn't cry so much as her

sister Pullet did, and had often felt her deficiency at funerals. Her

effort to bring tears into her eyes issued in an odd contraction of

her face. Maggie, looking on attentively, felt that there was some

painful mystery about her aunt's bonnet which she was considered too

young to understand; indignantly conscious, all the while, that she

could have understood that, as well as everything else, if she had

been taken into confidence.

When they went down, uncle Pullet observed, with some acumen, that he

reckoned the missis had been showing her bonnet,--that was what had

made them so long upstairs. With Tom the interval had seemed still

longer, for he had been seated in irksome constraint on the edge of a

sofa directly opposite his uncle Pullet, who regarded him with

twinkling gray eyes, and occasionally addressed him as "Young sir."

"Well, young sir, what do you learn at school?" was a standing

question with uncle Pullet; whereupon Tom always looked sheepish,

rubbed his hands across his face, and answered, "I don't know." It was

altogether so embarrassing to be seated \_tÃªte-Ã -tÃªte\_ with uncle

Pullet, that Tom could not even look at the prints on the walls, or

the flycages, or the wonderful flower-pots; he saw nothing but his

uncle's gaiters. Not that Tom was in awe of his uncle's mental

superiority; indeed, he had made up his mind that he didn't want to be

a gentleman farmer, because he shouldn't like to be such a

thin-legged, silly fellow as his uncle Pullet,--a molly-coddle, in

fact. A boy's sheepishness is by no means a sign of overmastering

reverence; and while you are making encouraging advances to him under

the idea that he is overwhelmed by a sense of your age and wisdom, ten

to one he is thinking you extremely queer. The only consolation I can

suggest to you is, that the Greek boys probably thought the same of

Aristotle. It is only when you have mastered a restive horse, or

thrashed a drayman, or have got a gun in your hand, that these shy

juniors feel you to be a truly admirable and enviable character. At

least, I am quite sure of Tom Tulliver's sentiments on these points.

In very tender years, when he still wore a lace border under his

outdoor cap, he was often observed peeping through the bars of a gate

and making minatory gestures with his small forefinger while he

scolded the sheep with an inarticulate burr, intended to strike terror

into their astonished minds; indicating thus early that desire for

mastery over the inferior animals, wild and domestic, including

cockchafers, neighbors' dogs, and small sisters, which in all ages has

been an attribute of so much promise for the fortunes of our race.

Now, Mr. Pullet never rode anything taller than a low pony, and was

the least predatory of men, considering firearms dangerous, as apt to

go off of themselves by nobody's particular desire. So that Tom was

not without strong reasons when, in confidential talk with a chum, he

had described uncle Pullet as a nincompoop, taking care at the same

time to observe that he was a very "rich fellow."

The only alleviating circumstance in a \_tÃªte-Ã -tÃªte\_ with uncle Pullet

was that he kept a variety of lozenges and peppermint-drops about his

person, and when at a loss for conversation, he filled up the void by

proposing a mutual solace of this kind.

"Do you like peppermints, young sir?" required only a tacit answer

when it was accompanied by a presentation of the article in question.

The appearance of the little girls suggested to uncle Pullet the

further solace of small sweet-cakes, of which he also kept a stock

under lock and key for his own private eating on wet days; but the

three children had no sooner got the tempting delicacy between their

fingers, than aunt Pullet desired them to abstain from eating it till

the tray and the plates came, since with those crisp cakes they would

make the floor "all over" crumbs. Lucy didn't mind that much, for the

cake was so pretty, she thought it was rather a pity to eat it; but

Tom, watching his opportunity while the elders were talking, hastily

stowed it in his mouth at two bites, and chewed it furtively. As for

Maggie, becoming fascinated, as usual, by a print of Ulysses and

Nausicaa, which uncle Pullet had bought as a "pretty Scripture thing,"

she presently let fall her cake, and in an unlucky movement crushed it

beneath her foot,--a source of so much agitation to aunt Pullet and

conscious disgrace to Maggie, that she began to despair of hearing the

musical snuff-box to-day, till, after some reflection, it occurred to

her that Lucy was in high favor enough to venture on asking for a

tune. So she whispered to Lucy; and Lucy, who always did what she was

desired to do, went up quietly to her uncle's knee, and blush-all over

her neck while she fingered her necklace, said, "Will you please play

us a tune, uncle?"

Lucy thought it was by reason of some exceptional talent in uncle

Pullet that the snuff-box played such beautiful tunes, and indeed the

thing was viewed in that light by the majority of his neighbors in

Garum. Mr. Pullet had \_bought\_ the box, to begin with, and he

understood winding it up, and knew which tune it was going to play

beforehand; altogether the possession of this unique "piece of music"

was a proof that Mr. Pullet's character was not of that entire nullity

which might otherwise have been attributed to it. But uncle Pullet,

when entreated to exhibit his accomplishment, never depreciated it by

a too-ready consent. "We'll see about it," was the answer he always

gave, carefully abstaining from any sign of compliance till a suitable

number of minutes had passed. Uncle Pullet had a programme for all

great social occasions, and in this way fenced himself in from much

painful confusion and perplexing freedom of will.

Perhaps the suspense did heighten Maggie's enjoyment when the fairy

tune began; for the first time she quite forgot that she had a load on

her mind, that Tom was angry with her; and by the time "Hush, ye

pretty warbling choir," had been played, her face wore that bright

look of happiness, while she sat immovable with her hands clasped,

which sometimes comforted her mother with the sense that Maggie could

look pretty now and then, in spite of her brown skin. But when the

magic music ceased, she jumped up, and running toward Tom, put her arm

round his neck and said, "Oh, Tom, isn't it pretty?"

Lest you should think it showed a revolting insensibility in Tom that

he felt any new anger toward Maggie for this uncalled-for and, to him,

inexplicable caress, I must tell you that he had his glass of cowslip

wine in his hand, and that she jerked him so as to make him spill half

of it. He must have been an extreme milksop not to say angrily, "Look

there, now!" especially when his resentment was sanctioned, as it was,

by general disapprobation of Maggie's behavior.

"Why don't you sit still, Maggie?" her mother said peevishly.

"Little gells mustn't come to see me if they behave in that way," said

aunt Pullet.

"Why, you're too rough, little miss," said uncle Pullet.

Poor Maggie sat down again, with the music all chased out of her soul,

and the seven small demons all in again.

Mrs. Tulliver, foreseeing nothing but misbehavior while the children

remained indoors, took an early opportunity of suggesting that, now

they were rested after their walk, they might go and play out of

doors; and aunt Pullet gave permission, only enjoining them not to go

off the paved walks in the garden, and if they wanted to see the

poultry fed, to view them from a distance on the horse-block; a

restriction which had been imposed ever since Tom had been found

guilty of running after the peacock, with an illusory idea that fright

would make one of its feathers drop off.

Mrs. Tulliver's thoughts had been temporarily diverted from the

quarrel with Mrs. Glegg by millinery and maternal cares, but now the

great theme of the bonnet was thrown into perspective, and the

children were out of the way, yesterday's anxieties recurred.

"It weighs on my mind so as never was," she said, by way of opening

the subject, "sister Glegg's leaving the house in that way. I'm sure

I'd no wish t' offend a sister."

"Ah," said aunt Pullet, "there's no accounting for what Jane 'ull do.

I wouldn't speak of it out o' the family, if it wasn't to Dr.

Turnbull; but it's my belief Jane lives too low. I've said so to

Pullet often and often, and he knows it."

"Why, you said so last Monday was a week, when we came away from

drinking tea with 'em," said Mr. Pullet, beginning to nurse his knee

and shelter it with his pocket-hand-kerchief, as was his way when the

conversation took an interesting turn.

"Very like I did," said Mrs. Pullet, "for you remember when I said

things, better than I can remember myself. He's got a wonderful

memory, Pullet has," she continued, looking pathetically at her

sister. "I should be poorly off if he was to have a stroke, for he

always remembers when I've got to take my doctor's stuff; and I'm

taking three sorts now."

"There's the 'pills as before' every other night, and the new drops at

eleven and four, and the 'fervescing mixture 'when agreeable,'"

rehearsed Mr. Pullet, with a punctuation determined by a lozenge on

his tongue.

"Ah, perhaps it 'ud be better for sister Glegg if \_she'd\_ go to the

doctor sometimes, instead o' chewing Turkey rhubarb whenever there's

anything the matter with her," said Mrs. Tulliver, who naturally saw

the wide subject of medicine chiefly in relation to Mrs. Glegg.

"It's dreadful to think on," said aunt Pullet, raising her hands and

letting them fall again, "people playing with their own insides in

that way! And it's flying i' the face o' Providence; for what are the

doctors for, if we aren't to call 'em in? And when folks have got the

money to pay for a doctor, it isn't respectable, as I've told Jane

many a time. I'm ashamed of acquaintance knowing it."

"Well, \_we've\_ no call to be ashamed," said Mr. Pullet, "for Doctor

Turnbull hasn't got such another patient as you i' this parish, now

old Mrs. Sutton's gone."

"Pullet keeps all my physic-bottles, did you know, Bessy?" said Mrs.

Pullet. "He won't have one sold. He says it's nothing but right folks

should see 'em when I'm gone. They fill two o' the long store-room

shelves a'ready; but," she added, beginning to cry a little, "it's

well if they ever fill three. I may go before I've made up the dozen

o' these last sizes. The pill-boxes are in the closet in my

room,--you'll remember that, sister,--but there's nothing to show for

the boluses, if it isn't the bills."

"Don't talk o' your going, sister," said Mrs. Tulliver; "I should have

nobody to stand between me and sister Glegg if you was gone. And

there's nobody but you can get her to make it up with Mr. Tulliver,

for sister Deane's never o' my side, and if she was, it's not to be

looked for as she can speak like them as have got an independent

fortin."

"Well, your husband \_is\_ awk'ard, you know, Bessy," said Mrs. Pullet,

good-naturedly ready to use her deep depression on her sister's

account as well as her own. "He's never behaved quite so pretty to our

family as he should do, and the children take after him,--the boy's

very mischievous, and runs away from his aunts and uncles, and the

gell's rude and brown. It's your bad luck, and I'm sorry for you,

Bessy; for you was allays my favorite sister, and we allays liked the

same patterns."

"I know Tulliver's hasty, and says odd things," said Mrs. Tulliver,

wiping away one small tear from the corner of her eye; "but I'm sure

he's never been the man, since he married me, to object to my making

the friends o' my side o' the family welcome to the house."

"\_I\_ don't want to make the worst of you, Bessy," said Mrs. Pullet,

compassionately, "for I doubt you'll have trouble enough without that;

and your husband's got that poor sister and her children hanging on

him,--and so given to lawing, they say. I doubt he'll leave you poorly

off when he dies. Not as I'd have it said out o' the family."

This view of her position was naturally far from cheering to Mrs.

Tulliver. Her imagination was not easily acted on, but she could not

help thinking that her case was a hard one, since it appeared that

other people thought it hard.

"I'm sure, sister, I can't help myself," she said, urged by the fear

lest her anticipated misfortunes might be held retributive, to take

comprehensive review of her past conduct. "There's no woman strives

more for her children; and I'm sure at scouring-time this Lady-day as

I've had all the bedhangings taken down I did as much as the two gells

put together; and there's the last elder-flower wine I've

made--beautiful! I allays offer it along with the sherry, though

sister Glegg will have it I'm so extravagant; and as for liking to

have my clothes tidy, and not go a fright about the house, there's

nobody in the parish can say anything against me in respect o'

backbiting and making mischief, for I don't wish anybody any harm; and

nobody loses by sending me a porkpie, for my pies are fit to show with

the best o' my neighbors'; and the linen's so in order as if I was to

die to-morrow I shouldn't be ashamed. A woman can do no more nor she

can."

"But it's all o' no use, you know, Bessy," said Mrs. Pullet, holding

her head on one side, and fixing her eyes pathetically on her sister,

"if your husband makes away with his money. Not but what if you was

sold up, and other folks bought your furniture, it's a comfort to

think as you've kept it well rubbed. And there's the linen, with your

maiden mark on, might go all over the country. It 'ud be a sad pity

for our family." Mrs. Pullet shook her head slowly.

"But what can I do, sister?" said Mrs. Tulliver. "Mr. Tulliver's not a

man to be dictated to,--not if I was to go to the parson and get by

heart what I should tell my husband for the best. And I'm sure I don't

pretend to know anything about putting out money and all that. I could

never see into men's business as sister Glegg does."

"Well, you're like me in that, Bessy," said Mrs. Pullet; "and I think

it 'ud be a deal more becoming o' Jane if she'd have that pier-glass

rubbed oftener,--there was ever so many spots on it last

week,--instead o' dictating to folks as have more comings in than she

ever had, and telling 'em what they're to do with their money. But

Jane and me were allays contrairy; she \_would\_ have striped things,

and I like spots. You like a spot too, Bessy; we allays hung together

i' that."

"Yes, Sophy," said Mrs. Tulliver, "I remember our having a blue ground

with a white spot both alike,--I've got a bit in a bed-quilt now; and

if you would but go and see sister Glegg, and persuade her to make it

up with Tulliver, I should take it very kind of you. You was allays a

good sister to me."

"But the right thing 'ud be for Tulliver to go and make it up with her

himself, and say he was sorry for speaking so rash. If he's borrowed

money of her, he shouldn't be above that," said Mrs. Pullet, whose

partiality did not blind her to principles; she did not forget what

was due to people of independent fortune.

"It's no use talking o' that," said poor Mrs. Tulliver, almost

peevishly. "If I was to go down on my bare knees on the gravel to

Tulliver, he'd never humble himself."

"Well, you can't expect me to persuade \_Jane\_ to beg pardon," said

Mrs. Pullet. "Her temper's beyond everything; it's well if it doesn't

carry her off her mind, though there never \_was\_ any of our family

went to a madhouse."

"I'm not thinking of her begging pardon," said Mrs. Tulliver. "But if

she'd just take no notice, and not call her money in; as it's not so

much for one sister to ask of another; time 'ud mend things, and

Tulliver 'ud forget all about it, and they'd be friends again."

Mrs. Tulliver, you perceive, was not aware of her husband's

irrevocable determination to pay in the five hundred pounds; at least

such a determination exceeded her powers of belief.

"Well, Bessy," said Mrs. Pullet, mournfully, "\_I\_ don't want to help

you on to ruin. I won't be behindhand i' doing you a good turn, if it

is to be done. And I don't like it said among acquaintance as we've

got quarrels in the family. I shall tell Jane that; and I don't mind

driving to Jane's tomorrow, if Pullet doesn't mind. What do you say,

Mr. Pullet?"

"I've no objections," said Mr. Pullet, who was perfectly contented

with any course the quarrel might take, so that Mr. Tulliver did not

apply to \_him\_ for money. Mr. Pullet was nervous about his

investments, and did not see how a man could have any security for his

money unless he turned it into land.

After a little further discussion as to whether it would not be better

for Mrs. Tulliver to accompany them on a visit to sister Glegg, Mrs.

Pullet, observing that it was tea-time, turned to reach from a drawer

a delicate damask napkin, which she pinned before her in the fashion

of an apron. The door did, in fact, soon open, but instead of the

tea-tray, Sally introduced an object so startling that both Mrs.

Pullet and Mrs. Tulliver gave a scream, causing uncle Pullet to

swallow his lozenge--for the fifth time in his life, as he afterward

noted.

Chapter X

Maggie Behaves Worse Than She Expected

The startling object which thus made an epoch for uncle Pullet was no

other than little Lucy, with one side of her person, from her small

foot to her bonnet-crown, wet and discolored with mud, holding out two

tiny blackened hands, and making a very piteous face. To account for

this unprecedented apparition in aunt Pullet's parlor, we must return

to the moment when the three children went to play out of doors, and

the small demons who had taken possession of Maggie's soul at an early

period of the day had returned in all the greater force after a

temporary absence. All the disagreeable recollections of the morning

were thick upon her, when Tom, whose displeasure toward her had been

considerably refreshed by her foolish trick of causing him to upset

his cowslip wine, said, "Here, Lucy, you come along with me," and

walked off to the area where the toads were, as if there were no

Maggie in existence. Seeing this, Maggie lingered at a distance

looking like a small Medusa with her snakes cropped. Lucy was

naturally pleased that cousin Tom was so good to her, and it was very

amusing to see him tickling a fat toad with a piece of string when the

toad was safe down the area, with an iron grating over him. Still Lucy

wished Maggie to enjoy the spectacle also, especially as she would

doubtless find a name for the toad, and say what had been his past

history; for Lucy had a delighted semibelief in Maggie's stories about

the live things they came upon by accident,--how Mrs. Earwig had a

wash at home, and one of her children had fallen into the hot copper,

for which reason she was running so fast to fetch the doctor. Tom had

a profound contempt for this nonsense of Maggie's, smashing the earwig

at once as a superfluous yet easy means of proving the entire

unreality of such a story; but Lucy, for the life of her, could not

help fancying there was something in it, and at all events thought it

was very pretty make-believe. So now the desire to know the history of

a very portly toad, added to her habitual affectionateness, made her

run back to Maggie and say, "Oh, there is such a big, funny toad,

Maggie! Do come and see!"

Maggie said nothing, but turned away from her with a deeper frown. As

long as Tom seemed to prefer Lucy to her, Lucy made part of his

unkindness. Maggie would have thought a little while ago that she

could never be cross with pretty little Lucy, any more than she could

be cruel to a little white mouse; but then, Tom had always been quite

indifferent to Lucy before, and it had been left to Maggie to pet and

make much of her. As it was, she was actually beginning to think that

she should like to make Lucy cry by slapping or pinching her,

especially as it might vex Tom, whom it was of no use to slap, even if

she dared, because he didn't mind it. And if Lucy hadn't been there,

Maggie was sure he would have got friends with her sooner.

Tickling a fat toad who is not highly sensitive is an amusement that

it is possible to exhaust, and Tom by and by began to look round for

some other mode of passing the time. But in so prim a garden, where

they were not to go off the paved walks, there was not a great choice

of sport. The only great pleasure such a restriction suggested was the

pleasure of breaking it, and Tom began to meditate an insurrectionary

visit to the pond, about a field's length beyond the garden.

"I say, Lucy," he began, nodding his head up and down with great

significance, as he coiled up his string again, "what do you think I

mean to do?"

"What, Tom?" said Lucy, with curiosity.

"I mean to go to the pond and look at the pike. You may go with me if

you like," said the young sultan.

"Oh, Tom, \_dare\_ you?" said Lucy. "Aunt said we mustn't go out of the

garden."

"Oh, I shall go out at the other end of the garden," said Tom. "Nobody

'ull see us. Besides, I don't care if they do,--I'll run off home."

"But \_I\_ couldn't run," said Lucy, who had never before been exposed

to such severe temptation.

"Oh, never mind; they won't be cross with \_you\_," said Tom. "You say I

took you."

Tom walked along, and Lucy trotted by his side, timidly enjoying the

rare treat of doing something naughty,--excited also by the mention of

that celebrity, the pike, about which she was quite uncertain whether

it was a fish or a fowl.

Maggie saw them leaving the garden, and could not resist the impulse

to follow. Anger and jealousy can no more bear to lose sight of their

objects than love, and that Tom and Lucy should do or see anything of

which she was ignorant would have been an intolerable idea to Maggie.

So she kept a few yards behind them, unobserved by Tom, who was

presently absorbed in watching for the pike,--a highly interesting

monster; he was said to be so very old, so very large, and to have

such a remarkable appetite. The pike, like other celebrities, did not

show when he was watched for, but Tom caught sight of something in

rapid movement in the water, which attracted him to another spot on

the brink of the pond.

"Here, Lucy!" he said in a loud whisper, "come here! take care! keep

on the grass!--don't step where the cows have been!" he added,

pointing to a peninsula of dry grass, with trodden mud on each side of

it; for Tom's contemptuous conception of a girl included the attribute

of being unfit to walk in dirty places.

Lucy came carefully as she was bidden, and bent down to look at what

seemed a golden arrow-head darting through the water. It was a

water-snake, Tom told her; and Lucy at last could see the serpentine

wave of its body, very much wondering that a snake could swim. Maggie

had drawn nearer and nearer; she \_must\_ see it too, though it was

bitter to her, like everything else, since Tom did not care about her

seeing it. At last she was close by Lucy; and Tom, who had been aware

of her approach, but would not notice it till he was obliged, turned

round and said,--

"Now, get away, Maggie; there's no room for you on the grass here.

Nobody asked \_you\_ to come."

There were passions at war in Maggie at that moment to have made a

tragedy, if tragedies were made by passion only; but the essential

[Greek text] which was present in the passion was wanting to the action;

the utmost Maggie could do, with a fierce thrust of her small brown arm,

was to push poor little pink-and-white Lucy into the cow-trodden mud.

Then Tom could not restrain himself, and gave Maggie two smart slaps

on the arm as he ran to pick up Lucy, who lay crying helplessly.

Maggie retreated to the roots of a tree a few yards off, and looked on

impenitently. Usually her repentance came quickly after one rash deed,

but now Tom and Lucy had made her so miserable, she was glad to spoil

their happiness,--glad to make everybody uncomfortable. Why should she

be sorry? Tom was very slow to forgive \_her\_, however sorry she might

have been.

"I shall tell mother, you know, Miss Mag," said Tom, loudly and

emphatically, as soon as Lucy was up and ready to walk away. It was

not Tom's practice to "tell," but here justice clearly demanded that

Maggie should be visited with the utmost punishment; not that Tom had

learned to put his views in that abstract form; he never mentioned

"justice," and had no idea that his desire to punish might be called

by that fine name. Lucy was too entirely absorbed by the evil that had

befallen her,--the spoiling of her pretty best clothes, and the

discomfort of being wet and dirty,--to think much of the cause, which

was entirely mysterious to her. She could never have guessed what she

had done to make Maggie angry with her; but she felt that Maggie was

very unkind and disagreeable, and made no magnanimous entreaties to

Tom that he would not "tell," only running along by his side and

crying piteously, while Maggie sat on the roots of the tree and looked

after them with her small Medusa face.

"Sally," said Tom, when they reached the kitchen door, and Sally

looked at them in speechless amaze, with a piece of bread-and-butter

in her mouth and a toasting-fork in her hand,--"Sally, tell mother it

was Maggie pushed Lucy into the mud."

"But Lors ha' massy, how did you get near such mud as that?" said

Sally, making a wry face, as she stooped down and examined the \_corpus

delicti\_.

Tom's imagination had not been rapid and capacious enough to include

this question among the foreseen consequences, but it was no sooner

put than he foresaw whither it tended, and that Maggie would not be

considered the only culprit in the case. He walked quietly away from

the kitchen door, leaving Sally to that pleasure of guessing which

active minds notoriously prefer to ready-made knowledge.

Sally, as you are aware, lost no time in presenting Lucy at the parlor

door, for to have so dirty an object introduced into the house at

Garum Firs was too great a weight to be sustained by a single mind.

"Goodness gracious!" aunt Pullet exclaimed, after preluding by an

inarticulate scream; "keep her at the door, Sally! Don't bring her off

the oil-cloth, whatever you do."

"Why, she's tumbled into some nasty mud," said Mrs. Tulliver, going up

to Lucy to examine into the amount of damage to clothes for which she

felt herself responsible to her sister Deane.

"If you please, 'um, it was Miss Maggie as pushed her in," said Sally;

"Master Tom's been and said so, and they must ha' been to the pond,

for it's only there they could ha' got into such dirt."

"There it is, Bessy; it's what I've been telling you," said Mrs.

Pullet, in a tone of prophetic sadness; "it's your children,--there's

no knowing what they'll come to."

Mrs. Tulliver was mute, feeling herself a truly wretched mother. As

usual, the thought pressed upon her that people would think she had

done something wicked to deserve her maternal troubles, while Mrs.

Pullet began to give elaborate directions to Sally how to guard the

premises from serious injury in the course of removing the dirt.

Meantime tea was to be brought in by the cook, and the two naughty

children were to have theirs in an ignominious manner in the kitchen.

Mrs. Tulliver went out to speak to these naughty children, supposing

them to be close at hand; but it was not until after some search that

she found Tom leaning with rather a hardened, careless air against the

white paling of the poultry-yard, and lowering his piece of string on

the other side as a means of exasperating the turkey-cock.

"Tom, you naughty boy, where's your sister?" said Mrs. Tulliver, in a

distressed voice.

"I don't know," said Tom; his eagerness for justice on Maggie had

diminished since he had seen clearly that it could hardly be brought

about without the injustice of some blame on his own conduct.

"Why, where did you leave her?" said the mother, looking round.

"Sitting under the tree, against the pond," said Tom, apparently

indifferent to everything but the string and the turkey-cock.

"Then go and fetch her in this minute, you naughty boy. And how could

you think o' going to the pond, and taking your sister where there was

dirt? You know she'll do mischief if there's mischief to be done."

It was Mrs. Tulliver's way, if she blamed Tom, to refer his

misdemeanor, somehow or other, to Maggie.

The idea of Maggie sitting alone by the pond roused an habitual fear

in Mrs. Tulliver's mind, and she mounted the horse-block to satisfy

herself by a sight of that fatal child, while Tom walked--not very

quickly--on his way toward her.

"They're such children for the water, mine are," she said aloud,

without reflecting that there was no one to hear her; "they'll be

brought in dead and drownded some day. I wish that river was far

enough."

But when she not only failed to discern Maggie, but presently saw Tom

returning from the pool alone, this hovering fear entered and took

complete possession of her, and she hurried to meet him.

"Maggie's nowhere about the pond, mother," said Tom; "she's gone

away."

You may conceive the terrified search for Maggie, and the difficulty

of convincing her mother that she was not in the pond. Mrs. Pullet

observed that the child might come to a worse end if she lived, there

was no knowing; and Mr. Pullet, confused and overwhelmed by this

revolutionary aspect of things,--the tea deferred and the poultry

alarmed by the unusual running to and fro,--took up his spud as an

instrument of search, and reached down a key to unlock the goose-pen,

as a likely place for Maggie to lie concealed in.

Tom, after a while, started the idea that Maggie was gone home

(without thinking it necessary to state that it was what he should

have done himself under the circumstances), and the suggestion was

seized as a comfort by his mother.

"Sister, for goodness' sake let 'em put the horse in the carriage and

take me home; we shall perhaps find her on the road. Lucy can't walk

in her dirty clothes," she said, looking at that innocent victim, who

was wrapped up in a shawl, and sitting with naked feet on the sofa.

Aunt Pullet was quite willing to take the shortest means of restoring

her premises to order and quiet, and it was not long before Mrs.

Tulliver was in the chaise, looking anxiously at the most distant

point before her. What the father would say if Maggie was lost, was a

question that predominated over every other.

Chapter XI

Maggie Tries to Run away from Her Shadow

Maggie's intentions, as usual, were on a larger scale than Tom

imagined. The resolution that gathered in her mind, after Tom and Lucy

had walked away, was not so simple as that of going home. No! she

would run away and go to the gypsies, and Tom should never see her any

more. That was by no means a new idea to Maggie; she had been so often

told she was like a gypsy, and "half wild," that when she was

miserable it seemed to her the only way of escaping opprobrium, and

being entirely in harmony with circumstances, would be to live in a

little brown tent on the commons; the gypsies, she considered, would

gladly receive her and pay her much respect on account of her superior

knowledge. She had once mentioned her views on this point to Tom and

suggested that he should stain his face brown, and they should run

away together; but Tom rejected the scheme with contempt, observing

that gypsies were thieves, and hardly got anything to eat and had

nothing to drive but a donkey. To-day however, Maggie thought her

misery had reached a pitch at which gypsydom was her refuge, and she

rose from her seat on the roots of the tree with the sense that this

was a great crisis in her life; she would run straight away till she

came to Dunlow Common, where there would certainly be gypsies; and

cruel Tom, and the rest of her relations who found fault with her,

should never see her any more. She thought of her father as she ran

along, but she reconciled herself to the idea of parting with him, by

determining that she would secretly send him a letter by a small

gypsy, who would run away without telling where she was, and just let

him know that she was well and happy, and always loved him very much.

Maggie soon got out of breath with running, but by the time Tom got to

the pond again she was at the distance of three long fields, and was

on the edge of the lane leading to the highroad. She stopped to pant a

little, reflecting that running away was not a pleasant thing until

one had got quite to the common where the gypsies were, but her

resolution had not abated; she presently passed through the gate into

the lane, not knowing where it would lead her, for it was not this way

that they came from Dorlcote Mill to Garum Firs, and she felt all the

safer for that, because there was no chance of her being overtaken.

But she was soon aware, not without trembling, that there were two men

coming along the lane in front of her; she had not thought of meeting

strangers, she had been too much occupied with the idea of her friends

coming after her. The formidable strangers were two shabby-looking men

with flushed faces, one of them carrying a bundle on a stick over his

shoulder; but to her surprise, while she was dreading their

disapprobation as a runaway, the man with the bundle stopped, and in a

half-whining, half-coaxing tone asked her if she had a copper to give

a poor man. Maggie had a sixpence in her pocket,--her uncle Glegg's

present,--which she immediately drew out and gave this poor man with a

polite smile, hoping he would feel very kindly toward her as a

generous person. "That's the only money I've got," she said

apologetically. "Thank you, little miss," said the man, in a less

respectful and grateful tone than Maggie anticipated, and she even

observed that he smiled and winked at his companion. She walked on

hurriedly, but was aware that the two men were standing still,

probably to look after her, and she presently heard them laughing

loudly. Suddenly it occurred to her that they might think she was an

idiot; Tom had said that her cropped hair made her look like an idiot,

and it was too painful an idea to be readily forgotten. Besides, she

had no sleeves on,--only a cape and bonnet. It was clear that she was

not likely to make a favorable impression on passengers, and she

thought she would turn into the fields again, but not on the same side

of the lane as before, lest they should still be uncle Pullet's

fields. She turned through the first gate that was not locked, and

felt a delightful sense of privacy in creeping along by the hedgerows,

after her recent humiliating encounter. She was used to wandering

about the fields by herself, and was less timid there than on the

highroad. Sometimes she had to climb over high gates, but that was a

small evil; she was getting out of reach very fast, and she should

probably soon come within sight of Dunlow Common, or at least of some

other common, for she had heard her father say that you couldn't go

very far without coming to a common. She hoped so, for she was getting

rather tired and hungry, and until she reached the gypsies there was

no definite prospect of bread and butter. It was still broad daylight,

for aunt Pullet, retaining the early habits of the Dodson family, took

tea at half-past four by the sun, and at five by the kitchen clock;

so, though it was nearly an hour since Maggie started, there was no

gathering gloom on the fields to remind her that the night would come.

Still, it seemed to her that she had been walking a very great

distance indeed, and it was really surprising that the common did not

come within sight. Hitherto she had been in the rich parish of Garum,

where was a great deal of pasture-land, and she had only seen one

laborer at a distance. That was fortunate in some respects, as

laborers might be too ignorant to understand the propriety of her

wanting to go to Dunlow Common; yet it would have been better if she

could have met some one who would tell her the way without wanting to

know anything about her private business. At last, however, the green

fields came to an end, and Maggie found herself looking through the

bars of a gate into a lane with a wide margin of grass on each side of

it. She had never seen such a wide lane before, and, without her

knowing why, it gave her the impression that the common could not be

far off; perhaps it was because she saw a donkey with a log to his

foot feeding on the grassy margin, for she had seen a donkey with that

pitiable encumbrance on Dunlow Common when she had been across it in

her father's gig. She crept through the bars of the gate and walked on

with new spirit, though not without haunting images of Apollyon, and a

highwayman with a pistol, and a blinking dwarf in yellow with a mouth

from ear to ear, and other miscellaneous dangers. For poor little

Maggie had at once the timidity of an active imagination and the

daring that comes from overmastering impulse. She had rushed into the

adventure of seeking her unknown kindred, the gypsies; and now she was

in this strange lane, she hardly dared look on one side of her, lest

she should see the diabolical blacksmith in his leathern apron

grinning at her with arms akimbo. It was not without a leaping of the

heart that she caught sight of a small pair of bare legs sticking up,

feet uppermost, by the side of a hillock; they seemed something

hideously preternatural,--a diabolical kind of fungus; for she was too

much agitated at the first glance to see the ragged clothes and the

dark shaggy head attached to them. It was a boy asleep, and Maggie

trotted along faster and more lightly, lest she should wake him; it

did not occur to her that he was one of her friends the gypsies, who

in all probability would have very genial manners. But the fact was

so, for at the next bend in the lane Maggie actually saw the little

semicircular black tent with the blue smoke rising before it, which

was to be her refuge from all the blighting obloquy that had pursued

her in civilized life. She even saw a tall female figure by the column

of smoke, doubtless the gypsy-mother, who provided the tea and other

groceries; it was astonishing to herself that she did not feel more

delighted. But it was startling to find the gypsies in a lane, after

all, and not on a common; indeed, it was rather disappointing; for a

mysterious illimitable common, where there were sand-pits to hide in,

and one was out of everybody's reach, had always made part of Maggie's

picture of gypsy life. She went on, however, and thought with some

comfort that gypsies most likely knew nothing about idiots, so there

was no danger of their falling into the mistake of setting her down at

the first glance as an idiot. It was plain she had attracted

attention; for the tall figure, who proved to be a young woman with a

baby on her arm, walked slowly to meet her. Maggie looked up in the

new face rather tremblingly as it approached, and was reassured by the

thought that her aunt Pullet and the rest were right when they called

her a gypsy; for this face, with the bright dark eyes and the long

hair, was really something like what she used to see in the glass

before she cut her hair off.

"My little lady, where are you going to?" the gypsy said, in a tone of

coaxing deference.

It was delightful, and just what Maggie expected; the gypsies saw at

once that she was a little lady, and were prepared to treat her

accordingly.

"Not any farther," said Maggie, feeling as if she were saying what she

had rehearsed in a dream. "I'm come to stay with \_you\_, please."

"That's pretty; come, then. Why, what a nice little lady you are, to

be sure!" said the gypsy, taking her by the hand. Maggie thought her

very agreeable, but wished she had not been so dirty.

There was quite a group round the fire when she reached it. An old

gypsy woman was seated on the ground nursing her knees, and

occasionally poking a skewer into the round kettle that sent forth an

odorous steam; two small shock-headed children were lying prone and

resting on their elbows something like small sphinxes; and a placid

donkey was bending his head over a tall girl, who, lying on her back,

was scratching his nose and indulging him with a bite of excellent

stolen hay. The slanting sunlight fell kindly upon them, and the scene

was really very pretty and comfortable, Maggie thought, only she hoped

they would soon set out the tea-cups. Everything would be quite

charming when she had taught the gypsies to use a washing-basin, and

to feel an interest in books. It was a little confusing, though, that

the young woman began to speak to the old one in a language which

Maggie did not understand, while the tall girl, who was feeding the

donkey, sat up and stared at her without offering any salutation. At

last the old woman said,--

"What! my pretty lady, are you come to stay with us? Sit ye down and

tell us where you come from."

It was just like a story; Maggie liked to be called pretty lady and

treated in this way. She sat down and said,--

"I'm come from home because I'm unhappy, and I mean to be a gypsy.

I'll live with you if you like, and I can teach you a great many

things."

"Such a clever little lady," said the woman with the baby sitting down

by Maggie, and allowing baby to crawl; "and such a pretty bonnet and

frock," she added, taking off Maggie's bonnet and looking at it while

she made an observation to the old woman, in the unknown language. The

tall girl snatched the bonnet and put it on her own head hind-foremost

with a grin; but Maggie was determined not to show any weakness on

this subject, as if she were susceptible about her bonnet.

"I don't want to wear a bonnet," she said; "I'd rather wear a red

handkerchief, like yours" (looking at her friend by her side). "My

hair was quite long till yesterday, when I cut it off; but I dare say

it will grow again very soon," she added apologetically, thinking it

probable the gypsies had a strong prejudice in favor of long hair. And

Maggie had forgotten even her hunger at that moment in the desire to

conciliate gypsy opinion.

"Oh, what a nice little lady!--and rich, I'm sure," said the old

woman. "Didn't you live in a beautiful house at home?"

"Yes, my home is pretty, and I'm very fond of the river, where we go

fishing, but I'm often very unhappy. I should have liked to bring my

books with me, but I came away in a hurry, you know. But I can tell

you almost everything there is in my books, I've read them so many

times, and that will amuse you. And I can tell you something about

Geography too,--that's about the world we live in,--very useful and

interesting. Did you ever hear about Columbus?"

Maggie's eyes had begun to sparkle and her cheeks to flush,--she was

really beginning to instruct the gypsies, and gaining great influence

over them. The gypsies themselves were not without amazement at this

talk, though their attention was divided by the contents of Maggie's

pocket, which the friend at her right hand had by this time emptied

without attracting her notice.

"Is that where you live, my little lady?" said the old woman, at the

mention of Columbus.

"Oh, no!" said Maggie, with some pity; "Columbus was a very wonderful

man, who found out half the world, and they put chains on him and

treated him very badly, you know; it's in my Catechism of Geography,

but perhaps it's rather too long to tell before tea--\_I want my tea

so\_."

The last words burst from Maggie, in spite of herself, with a sudden

drop from patronizing instruction to simple peevishness.

"Why, she's hungry, poor little lady," said the younger woman. "Give

her some o' the cold victual. You've been walking a good way, I'll be

bound, my dear. Where's your home?"

"It's Dorlcote Mill, a good way off," said Maggie. "My father is Mr.

Tulliver, but we mustn't let him know where I am, else he'll fetch me

home again. Where does the queen of the gypsies live?"

"What! do you want to go to her, my little lady?" said the younger

woman. The tall girl meanwhile was constantly staring at Maggie and

grinning. Her manners were certainly not agreeable.

"No," said Maggie, "I'm only thinking that if she isn't a very good

queen you might be glad when she died, and you could choose another.

If I was a queen, I'd be a very good queen, and kind to everybody."

"Here's a bit o' nice victual, then," said the old woman, handing to

Maggie a lump of dry bread, which she had taken from a bag of scraps,

and a piece of cold bacon.

"Thank you,' said Maggie, looking at the food without taking it; "but

will you give me some bread-and-butter and tea instead? I don't like

bacon."

"We've got no tea nor butter," said the old woman, with something like

a scowl, as if she were getting tired of coaxing.

"Oh, a little bread and treacle would do," said Maggie.

"We han't got no treacle," said the old woman, crossly, whereupon

there followed a sharp dialogue between the two women in their unknown

tongue, and one of the small sphinxes snatched at the bread-and-bacon,

and began to eat it. At this moment the tall girl, who had gone a few

yards off, came back, and said something which produced a strong

effect. The old woman, seeming to forget Maggie's hunger, poked the

skewer into the pot with new vigor, and the younger crept under the

tent and reached out some platters and spoons. Maggie trembled a

little, and was afraid the tears would come into her eyes. Meanwhile

the tall girl gave a shrill cry, and presently came running up the boy

whom Maggie had passed as he was sleeping,--a rough urchin about the

age of Tom. He stared at Maggie, and there ensued much incomprehensible

chattering. She felt very lonely, and was quite sure she should begin to

cry before long; the gypsies didn't seem to mind her at all, and she felt

quite weak among them. But the springing tears were checked by new

terror, when two men came up, whose approach had been the cause

of the sudden excitement. The elder of the two carried a bag, which

he flung down, addressing the women in a loud and scolding tone,

which they answered by a shower of treble sauciness; while a black

cur ran barking up to Maggie, and threw her into a tremor that only

found a new cause in the curses with which the younger man called

the dog off, and gave him a rap with a great stick he held in his hand.

Maggie felt that it was impossible she should ever be queen of these

people, or ever communicate to them amusing and useful knowledge.

Both the men now seemed to be inquiring about Maggie, for they looked

at her, and the tone of the conversation became of that pacific kind

which implies curiosity on one side and the power of satisfying it on

the other. At last the younger woman said in her previous deferential,

coaxing tone,--

"This nice little lady's come to live with us; aren't you glad?"

"Ay, very glad," said the younger man, who was looking at Maggie's

silver thimble and other small matters that had been taken from her

pocket. He returned them all except the thimble to the younger woman,

with some observation, and she immediately restored them to Maggie's

pocket, while the men seated themselves, and began to attack the

contents of the kettle,--a stew of meat and potatoes,--which had been

taken off the fire and turned out into a yellow platter.

Maggie began to think that Tom must be right about the gypsies; they

must certainly be thieves, unless the man meant to return her thimble

by and by. She would willingly have given it to him, for she was not

at all attached to her thimble; but the idea that she was among

thieves prevented her from feeling any comfort in the revival of

deference and attention toward her; all thieves, except Robin Hood,

were wicked people. The women saw she was frightened.

"We've got nothing nice for a lady to eat," said the old woman, in her

coaxing tone. "And she's so hungry, sweet little lady."

"Here, my dear, try if you can eat a bit o' this," said the younger

woman, handing some of the stew on a brown dish with an iron spoon to

Maggie, who, remembering that the old woman had seemed angry with her

for not liking the bread-and-bacon, dared not refuse the stew, though

fear had chased away her appetite. If her father would but come by in

the gig and take her up! Or even if Jack the Giantkiller, or Mr.

Greatheart, or St. George who slew the dragon on the half-pennies,

would happen to pass that way! But Maggie thought with a sinking heart

that these heroes were never seen in the neighborhood of St. Ogg's;

nothing very wonderful ever came there.

Maggie Tulliver, you perceive, was by no means that well trained,

well-informed young person that a small female of eight or nine

necessarily is in these days; she had only been to school a year at

St. Ogg's, and had so few books that she sometimes read the

dictionary; so that in travelling over her small mind you would have

found the most unexpected ignorance as well as unexpected knowledge.

She could have informed you that there was such a word as "polygamy,"

and being also acquainted with "polysyllable," she had deduced the

conclusion that "poly" mean "many"; but she had had no idea that

gypsies were not well supplied with groceries, and her thoughts

generally were the oddest mixture of clear-eyed acumen and blind

dreams.

Her ideas about the gypsies had undergone a rapid modification in the

last five minutes. From having considered them very respectful

companions, amenable to instruction, she had begun to think that they

meant perhaps to kill her as soon as it was dark, and cut up her body

for gradual cooking; the suspicion crossed her that the fierce-eyed

old man was in fact the Devil, who might drop that transparent

disguise at any moment, and turn either into the grinning blacksmith,

or else a fiery-eyed monster with dragon's wings. It was no use trying

to eat the stew, and yet the thing she most dreaded was to offend the

gypsies, by betraying her extremely unfavorable opinion of them; and

she wondered, with a keenness of interest that no theologian could

have exceeded, whether, if the Devil were really present, he would

know her thoughts.

"What! you don't like the smell of it, my dear," said the young woman,

observing that Maggie did not even take a spoonful of the stew. "Try a

bit, come."

"No, thank you," said Maggie, summoning all her force for a desperate

effort, and trying to smile in a friendly way. "I haven't time, I

think; it seems getting darker. I think I must go home now, and come

again another day, and then I can bring you a basket with some

jam-tarts and things."

Maggie rose from her seat as she threw out this illusory prospect,

devoutly hoping that Apollyon was gullible; but her hope sank when the

old gypsy-woman said, "Stop a bit, stop a bit, little lady; we'll take

you home, all safe, when we've done supper; you shall ride home, like

a lady."

Maggie sat down again, with little faith in this promise, though she

presently saw the tall girl putting a bridle on the donkey, and

throwing a couple of bags on his back.

"Now, then, little missis," said the younger man, rising, and leading

the donkey forward, "tell us where you live; what's the name o' the

place?"

"Dorlcote Mill is my home," said Maggie, eagerly. "My father is Mr.

Tulliver; he lives there."

"What! a big mill a little way this side o' St. Ogg's?"

"Yes," said Maggie. "Is it far off? I think I should like to walk

there, if you please."

"No, no, it'll be getting dark, we must make haste. And the donkey'll

carry you as nice as can be; you'll see."

He lifted Maggie as he spoke, and set her on the donkey. She felt

relieved that it was not the old man who seemed to be going with her,

but she had only a trembling hope that she was really going home.

"Here's your pretty bonnet," said the younger woman, putting that

recently despised but now welcome article of costume on Maggie's head;

"and you'll say we've been very good to you, won't you? and what a

nice little lady we said you was."

"Oh yes, thank you," said Maggie, "I'm very much obliged to you. But I

wish you'd go with me too." She thought anything was better than going

with one of the dreadful men alone; it would be more cheerful to be

murdered by a larger party.

"Ah, you're fondest o' \_me\_, aren't you?" said the woman. "But I can't

go; you'll go too fast for me."

It now appeared that the man also was to be seated on the donkey,

holding Maggie before him, and she was as incapable of remonstrating

against this arrangement as the donkey himself, though no nightmare

had ever seemed to her more horrible. When the woman had patted her on

the back, and said "Good-by," the donkey, at a strong hint from the

man's stick, set off at a rapid walk along the lane toward the point

Maggie had come from an hour ago, while the tall girl and the rough

urchin, also furnished with sticks, obligingly escorted them for the

first hundred yards, with much screaming and thwacking.

Not Leonore, in that preternatural midnight excursion with her phantom

lover, was more terrified than poor Maggie in this entirely natural

ride on a short-paced donkey, with a gypsy behind her, who considered

that he was earning half a crown. The red light of the setting sun

seemed to have a portentous meaning, with which the alarming bray of

the second donkey with the log on its foot must surely have some

connection. Two low thatched cottages--the only houses they passed in

this lane--seemed to add to its dreariness; they had no windows to

speak of, and the doors were closed; it was probable that they were

inhabitated by witches, and it was a relief to find that the donkey

did not stop there.

At last--oh, sight of joy!--this lane, the longest in the world, was

coming to an end, was opening on a broad highroad, where there was

actually a coach passing! And there was a finger-post at the

corner,--she had surely seen that finger-post before,--"To St. Ogg's,

2 miles." The gypsy really meant to take her home, then; he was

probably a good man, after all, and might have been rather hurt at the

thought that she didn't like coming with him alone. This idea became

stronger as she felt more and more certain that she knew the road

quite well, and she was considering how she might open a conversation

with the injured gypsy, and not only gratify his feelings but efface

the impression of her cowardice, when, as they reached a cross-road.

Maggie caught sight of some one coming on a white-faced horse.

"Oh, stop, stop!" she cried out. "There's my father! Oh, father,

father!"

The sudden joy was almost painful, and before her father reached her,

she was sobbing. Great was Mr. Tulliver's wonder, for he had made a

round from Basset, and had not yet been home.

"Why, what's the meaning o' this?" he said, checking his horse, while

Maggie slipped from the donkey and ran to her father's stirrup.

"The little miss lost herself, I reckon," said the gypsy. "She'd come

to our tent at the far end o' Dunlow Lane, and I was bringing her

where she said her home was. It's a good way to come after being on

the tramp all day."

"Oh yes, father, he's been very good to bring me home," said

Maggie,--"a very kind, good man!"

"Here, then, my man," said Mr. Tulliver, taking out five shillings.

"It's the best day's work \_you\_ ever did. I couldn't afford to lose

the little wench; here, lift her up before me."

"Why, Maggie, how's this, how's this?" he said, as they rode along,

while she laid her head against her father and sobbed. "How came you

to be rambling about and lose yourself?"

"Oh, father," sobbed Maggie, "I ran away because I was so unhappy; Tom

was so angry with me. I couldn't bear it."

"Pooh, pooh," said Mr. Tulliver, soothingly, "you mustn't think o'

running away from father. What 'ud father do without his little

wench?"

"Oh no, I never will again, father--never."

Mr. Tulliver spoke his mind very strongly when he reached home that

evening; and the effect was seen in the remarkable fact that Maggie

never heard one reproach from her mother, or one taunt from Tom, about

this foolish business of her running away to the gypsies. Maggie was

rather awe-stricken by this unusual treatment, and sometimes thought

that her conduct had been too wicked to be alluded to.

Chapter XII

Mr. and Mrs. Glegg at Home

In order to see Mr. and Mrs. Glegg at home, we must enter the town of

St. Ogg's,--that venerable town with the red fluted roofs and the

broad warehouse gables, where the black ships unlade themselves of

their burthens from the far north, and carry away, in exchange, the

precious inland products, the well-crushed cheese and the soft fleeces

which my refined readers have doubtless become acquainted with through

the medium of the best classic pastorals.

It is one of those old, old towns which impress one as a continuation

and outgrowth of nature, as much as the nests of the bower-birds or

the winding galleries of the white ants; a town which carries the

traces of its long growth and history like a millennial tree, and has

sprung up and developed in the same spot between the river and the low

hill from the time when the Roman legions turned their backs on it

from the camp on the hillside, and the long-haired sea-kings came up

the river and looked with fierce, eager eyes at the fatness of the

land. It is a town "familiar with forgotten years." The shadow of the

Saxon hero-king still walks there fitfully, reviewing the scenes of

his youth and love-time, and is met by the gloomier shadow of the

dreadful heathen Dane, who was stabbed in the midst of his warriors by

the sword of an invisible avenger, and who rises on autumn evenings

like a white mist from his tumulus on the hill, and hovers in the

court of the old hall by the river-side, the spot where he was thus

miraculously slain in the days before the old hall was built. It was

the Normans who began to build that fine old hall, which is, like the

town, telling of the thoughts and hands of widely sundered

generations; but it is all so old that we look with loving pardon at

its inconsistencies, and are well content that they who built the

stone oriel, and they who built the Gothic faÃ§ade and towers of finest

small brickwork with the trefoil ornament, and the windows and

battlements defined with stone, did not sacreligiously pull down the

ancient half-timbered body with its oak-roofed banqueting-hall.

But older even than this old hall is perhaps the bit of wall now built

into the belfry of the parish church, and said to be a remnant of the

original chapel dedicated to St. Ogg, the patron saint of this ancient

town, of whose history I possess several manuscript versions. I

incline to the briefest, since, if it should not be wholly true, it is

at least likely to contain the least falsehood. "Ogg the son of

Beorl," says my private hagiographer, "was a boatman who gained a

scanty living by ferrying passengers across the river Floss. And it

came to pass, one evening when the winds were high, that there sat

moaning by the brink of the river a woman with a child in her arms;

and she was clad in rags, and had a worn and withered look, and she

craved to be rowed across the river. And the men thereabout questioned

her, and said, 'Wherefore dost thou desire to cross the river? Tarry

till the morning, and take shelter here for the night; so shalt thou

be wise and not foolish.' Still she went on to mourn and crave. But

Ogg the son of Beorl came up and said, 'I will ferry thee across; it

is enough that thy heart needs it.' And he ferried her across. And it

came to pass, when she stepped ashore, that her rags were turned into

robes of flowing white, and her face became bright with exceeding

beauty, and there was a glory around it, so that she shed a light on

the water like the moon in its brightness. And she said, 'Ogg, the son

of Beorl, thou art blessed in that thou didst not question and wrangle

with the heart's need, but wast smitten with pity, and didst

straightway relieve the same. And from henceforth whoso steps into thy

boat shall be in no peril from the storm; and whenever it puts forth

to the rescue, it shall save the lives both of men and beasts.' And

when the floods came, many were saved by reason of that blessing on

the boat. But when Ogg the son of Beorl died, behold, in the parting

of his soul, the boat loosed itself from its moorings, and was floated

with the ebbing tide in great swiftness to the ocean, and was seen no

more. Yet it was witnessed in the floods of aftertime, that at the

coming on of eventide, Ogg the son of Beorl was always seen with his

boat upon the wide-spreading waters, and the Blessed Virgin sat in the

prow, shedding a light around as of the moon in its brightness, so

that the rowers in the gathering darkness took heart and pulled anew."

This legend, one sees, reflects from a far-off time the visitation of

the floods, which, even when they left human life untouched, were

widely fatal to the helpless cattle, and swept as sudden death over

all smaller living things. But the town knew worse troubles even than

the floods,--troubles of the civil wars, when it was a continual

fighting-place, where first Puritans thanked God for the blood of the

Loyalists, and then Loyalists thanked God for the blood of the

Puritans. Many honest citizens lost all their possessions for

conscience' sake in those times, and went forth beggared from their

native town. Doubtless there are many houses standing now on which

those honest citizens turned their backs in sorrow,--quaint-gabled

houses looking on the river, jammed between newer warehouses, and

penetrated by surprising passages, which turn and turn at sharp angles

till they lead you out on a muddy strand overflowed continually by the

rushing tide. Everywhere the brick houses have a mellow look, and in

Mrs. Glegg's day there was no incongruous new-fashioned smartness, no

plate-glass in shop-windows, no fresh stucco-facing or other

fallacious attempt to make fine old red St. Ogg's wear the air of a

town that sprang up yesterday. The shop-windows were small and

unpretending; for the farmers' wives and daughters who came to do

their shopping on market-days were not to be withdrawn from their

regular well-known shops; and the tradesmen had no wares intended for

customers who would go on their way and be seen no more. Ah! even Mrs.

Glegg's day seems far back in the past now, separated from us by

changes that widen the years. War and the rumor of war had then died

out from the minds of men, and if they were ever thought of by the

farmers in drab greatcoats, who shook the grain out of their

sample-bags and buzzed over it in the full market-place, it was as a

state of things that belonged to a past golden age when prices were

high. Surely the time was gone forever when the broad river could

bring up unwelcome ships; Russia was only the place where the linseed

came from,--the more the better,--making grist for the great vertical

millstones with their scythe-like arms, roaring and grinding and

carefully sweeping as if an informing soul were in them. The

Catholics, bad harvests, and the mysterious fluctuations of trade were

the three evils mankind had to fear; even the floods had not been

great of late years. The mind of St. Ogg's did not look extensively

before or after. It inherited a long past without thinking of it, and

had no eyes for the spirits that walk the streets. Since the centuries

when St. Ogg with his boat and the Virgin Mother at the prow had been

seen on the wide water, so many memories had been left behind, and had

gradually vanished like the receding hilltops! And the present time

was like the level plain where men lose their belief in volcanoes and

earthquakes, thinking to-morrow will be as yesterday, and the giant

forces that used to shake the earth are forever laid to sleep. The

days were gone when people could be greatly wrought upon by their

faith, still less change it; the Catholics were formidable because

they would lay hold of government and property, and burn men alive;

not because any sane and honest parishioner of St. Ogg's could be

brought to believe in the Pope. One aged person remembered how a rude

multitude had been swayed when John Wesley preached in the

cattle-market; but for a long while it had not been expected of

preachers that they should shake the souls of men. An occasional burst

of fervor in Dissenting pulpits on the subject of infant baptism was

the only symptom of a zeal unsuited to sober times when men had done

with change. Protestantism sat at ease, unmindful of schisms, careless

of proselytism: Dissent was an inheritance along with a superior pew

and a business connection; and Churchmanship only wondered

contemptuously at Dissent as a foolish habit that clung greatly to

families in the grocery and chandlering lines, though not incompatible

with prosperous wholesale dealing. But with the Catholic Question had

come a slight wind of controversy to break the calm: the elderly

rector had become occasionally historical and argumentative; and Mr.

Spray, the Independent minister, had begun to preach political

sermons, in which he distinguished with much subtlety between his

fervent belief in the right of the Catholics to the franchise and his

fervent belief in their eternal perdition. Most of Mr. Spray's

hearers, however, were incapable of following his subtleties, and many

old-fashioned Dissenters were much pained by his "siding with the

Catholics"; while others thought he had better let politics alone.

Public spirit was not held in high esteem at St. Ogg's, and men who

busied themselves with political questions were regarded with some

suspicion, as dangerous characters; they were usually persons who had

little or no business of their own to manage, or, if they had, were

likely enough to become insolvent.

This was the general aspect of things at St. Ogg's in Mrs. Glegg's

day, and at that particular period in her family history when she had

had her quarrel with Mr. Tulliver. It was a time when ignorance was

much more comfortable than at present, and was received with all the

honors in very good society, without being obliged to dress itself in

an elaborate costume of knowledge; a time when cheap periodicals were

not, and when country surgeons never thought of asking their female

patients if they were fond of reading, but simply took it for granted

that they preferred gossip; a time when ladies in rich silk gowns wore

large pockets, in which they carried a mutton-bone to secure them

against cramp. Mrs. Glegg carried such a bone, which she had inherited

from her grandmother with a brocaded gown that would stand up empty,

like a suit of armor, and a silver-headed walking-stick; for the

Dodson family had been respectable for many generations.

Mrs. Glegg had both a front and a back parlor in her excellent house

at St. Ogg's, so that she had two points of view from which she could

observe the weakness of her fellow-beings, and reinforce her

thankfulness for her own exceptional strength of mind. From her front

window she could look down the Tofton Road, leading out of St. Ogg's,

and note the growing tendency to "gadding about" in the wives of men

not retired from business, together with a practice of wearing woven

cotton stockings, which opened a dreary prospect for the coming

generation; and from her back windows she could look down the pleasant

garden and orchard which stretched to the river, and observe the folly

of Mr. Glegg in spending his time among "them flowers and vegetables."

For Mr. Glegg, having retired from active business as a wool-stapler

for the purpose of enjoying himself through the rest of his life, had

found this last occupation so much more severe than his business, that

he had been driven into amateur hard labor as a dissipation, and

habitually relaxed by doing the work of two ordinary gardeners. The

economizing of a gardener's wages might perhaps have induced Mrs.

Glegg to wink at this folly, if it were possible for a healthy female

mind even to simulate respect for a husband's hobby. But it is well

known that this conjugal complacency belongs only to the weaker

portion of the sex, who are scarcely alive to the responsibilities of

a wife as a constituted check on her husband's pleasures, which are

hardly ever of a rational or commendable kind.

Mr. Glegg on his side, too, had a double source of mental occupation,

which gave every promise of being inexhaustible. On the one hand, he

surprised himself by his discoveries in natural history, finding that

his piece of garden-ground contained wonderful caterpillars, slugs,

and insects, which, so far as he had heard, had never before attracted

human observation; and he noticed remarkable coincidences between

these zoological phenomena and the great events of that time,--as, for

example, that before the burning of York Minster there had been

mysterious serpentine marks on the leaves of the rose-trees, together

with an unusual prevalence of slugs, which he had been puzzled to know

the meaning of, until it flashed upon him with this melancholy

conflagration. (Mr. Glegg had an unusual amount of mental activity,

which, when disengaged from the wool business, naturally made itself a

pathway in other directions.) And his second subject of meditation was

the "contrairiness" of the female mind, as typically exhibited in Mrs.

Glegg. That a creature made--in a genealogical sense--out of a man's

rib, and in this particular case maintained in the highest

respectability without any trouble of her own, should be normally in a

state of contradiction to the blandest propositions and even to the

most accommodating concessions, was a mystery in the scheme of things

to which he had often in vain sought a clew in the early chapters of

Genesis. Mr. Glegg had chosen the eldest Miss Dodson as a handsome

embodiment of female prudence and thrift, and being himself of a

money-getting, money-keeping turn, had calculated on much conjugal

harmony. But in that curious compound, the feminine character, it may

easily happen that the flavor is unpleasant in spite of excellent

ingredients; and a fine systematic stinginess may be accompanied with

a seasoning that quite spoils its relish. Now, good Mr. Glegg himself

was stingy in the most amiable manner; his neighbors called him

"near," which always means that the person in question is a lovable

skinflint. If you expressed a preference for cheese-parings, Mr. Glegg

would remember to save them for you, with a good-natured delight in

gratifying your palate, and he was given to pet all animals which

required no appreciable keep. There was no humbug or hypocrisy about

Mr. Glegg; his eyes would have watered with true feeling over the sale

of a widow's furniture, which a five-pound note from his side pocket

would have prevented; but a donation of five pounds to a person "in a

small way of life" would have seemed to him a mad kind of lavishness

rather than "charity," which had always presented itself to him as a

contribution of small aids, not a neutralizing of misfortune. And Mr.

Glegg was just as fond of saving other people's money as his own; he

would have ridden as far round to avoid a turnpike when his expenses

were to be paid for him, as when they were to come out of his own

pocket, and was quite zealous in trying to induce indifferent

acquaintances to adopt a cheap substitute for blacking. This

inalienable habit of saving, as an end in itself, belonged to the

industrious men of business of a former generation, who made their

fortunes slowly, almost as the tracking of the fox belongs to the

harrier,--it constituted them a "race," which is nearly lost in these

days of rapid money-getting, when lavishness comes close on the back

of want. In old-fashioned times an "independence" was hardly ever made

without a little miserliness as a condition, and you would have found

that quality in every provincial district, combined with characters as

various as the fruits from which we can extract acid. The true

Harpagons were always marked and exceptional characters; not so the

worthy tax-payers, who, having once pinched from real necessity,

retained even in the midst of their comfortable retirement, with their

wallfruit and wine-bins, the habit of regarding life as an ingenious

process of nibbling out one's livelihood without leaving any

perceptible deficit, and who would have been as immediately prompted

to give up a newly taxed luxury when they had had their clear five

hundred a year, as when they had only five hundred pounds of capital.

Mr. Glegg was one of these men, found so impracticable by chancellors

of the exchequer; and knowing this, you will be the better able to

understand why he had not swerved from the conviction that he had made

an eligible marriage, in spite of the too-pungent seasoning that

nature had given to the eldest Miss Dodson's virtues. A man with an

affectionate disposition, who finds a wife to concur with his

fundamental idea of life, easily comes to persuade himself that no

other woman would have suited him so well, and does a little daily

snapping and quarrelling without any sense of alienation. Mr. Glegg,

being of a reflective turn, and no longer occupied with wool, had much

wondering meditation on the peculiar constitution of the female mind

as unfolded to him in his domestic life; and yet he thought Mrs.

Glegg's household ways a model for her sex. It struck him as a

pitiable irregularity in other women if they did not roll up their

table-napkins with the same tightness and emphasis as Mrs. Glegg did,

if their pastry had a less leathery consistence, and their damson

cheese a less venerable hardness than hers; nay, even the peculiar

combination of grocery and druglike odors in Mrs. Glegg's private

cupboard impressed him as the only right thing in the way of cupboard

smells. I am not sure that he would not have longed for the

quarrelling again, if it had ceased for an entire week; and it is

certain that an acquiescent, mild wife would have left his meditations

comparatively jejune and barren of mystery.

Mr. Glegg's unmistakable kind-heartedness was shown in this, that it

pained him more to see his wife at variance with others,--even with

Dolly, the servant,--than to be in a state of cavil with her himself;

and the quarrel between her and Mr. Tulliver vexed him so much that it

quite nullified the pleasure he would otherwise have had in the state

of his early cabbages, as he walked in his garden before breakfast the

next morning. Still, he went in to breakfast with some slight hope

that, now Mrs. Glegg had "slept upon it," her anger might be subdued

enough to give way to her usually strong sense of family decorum. She

had been used to boast that there had never been any of those deadly

quarrels among the Dodsons which had disgraced other families; that no

Dodson had ever been "cut off with a shilling," and no cousin of the

Dodsons disowned; as, indeed, why should they be? For they had no

cousins who had not money out at use, or some houses of their own, at

the very least.

There was one evening-cloud which had always disappeared from Mrs.

Glegg's brow when she sat at the breakfast-table. It was her fuzzy

front of curls; for as she occupied herself in household matters in

the morning it would have been a mere extravagance to put on anything

so superfluous to the making of leathery pastry as a fuzzy curled

front. By half-past ten decorum demanded the front; until then Mrs.

Glegg could economize it, and society would never be any the wiser.

But the absence of that cloud only left it more apparent that the

cloud of severity remained; and Mr. Glegg, perceiving this, as he sat

down to his milkporridge, which it was his old frugal habit to stem

his morning hunger with, prudently resolved to leave the first remark

to Mrs. Glegg, lest, to so delicate an article as a lady's temper, the

slightest touch should do mischief. People who seem to enjoy their ill

temper have a way of keeping it in fine condition by inflicting

privations on themselves. That was Mrs. Glegg's way. She made her tea

weaker than usual this morning, and declined butter. It was a hard

case that a vigorous mood for quarrelling, so highly capable of using

an opportunity, should not meet with a single remark from Mr. Glegg on

which to exercise itself. But by and by it appeared that his silence

would answer the purpose, for he heard himself apostrophized at last

in that tone peculiar to the wife of one's bosom.

"Well, Mr. Glegg! it's a poor return I get for making you the wife

I've made you all these years. If this is the way I'm to be treated,

I'd better ha' known it before my poor father died, and then, when I'd

wanted a home, I should ha' gone elsewhere, as the choice was offered

me."

Mr. Glegg paused from his porridge and looked up, not with any new

amazement, but simply with that quiet, habitual wonder with which we

regard constant mysteries.

"Why, Mrs. G., what have I done now?"

"Done now, Mr. Glegg? \_done now?\_--I'm sorry for you."

Not seeing his way to any pertinent answer, Mr. Glegg reverted to his

porridge.

"There's husbands in the world," continued Mrs. Glegg, after a pause,

"as 'ud have known how to do something different to siding with

everybody else against their own wives. Perhaps I'm wrong and you can

teach me better. But I've allays heard as it's the husband's place to

stand by the wife, instead o' rejoicing and triumphing when folks

insult her."

"Now, what call have you to say that?" said Mr. Glegg, rather warmly,

for though a kind man, he was not as meek as Moses. "When did I

rejoice or triumph over you?"

"There's ways o' doing things worse than speaking out plain, Mr.

Glegg. I'd sooner you'd tell me to my face as you make light of me,

than try to make out as everybody's in the right but me, and come to

your breakfast in the morning, as I've hardly slept an hour this

night, and sulk at me as if I was the dirt under your feet."

"Sulk at you?" said Mr. Glegg, in a tone of angry facetiousness.

"You're like a tipsy man as thinks everybody's had too much but

himself."

"Don't lower yourself with using coarse language to \_me\_, Mr. Glegg!

It makes you look very small, though you can't see yourself," said

Mrs. Glegg, in a tone of energetic compassion. "A man in your place

should set an example, and talk more sensible."

"Yes; but will you listen to sense?" retorted Mr. Glegg, sharply. "The

best sense I can talk to you is what I said last night,--as you're i'

the wrong to think o' calling in your money, when it's safe enough if

you'd let it alone, all because of a bit of a tiff, and I was in hopes

you'd ha' altered your mind this morning. But if you'd like to call it

in, don't do it in a hurry now, and breed more enmity in the family,

but wait till there's a pretty mortgage to be had without any trouble.

You'd have to set the lawyer to work now to find an investment, and

make no end o' expense."

Mrs. Glegg felt there was really something in this, but she tossed her

head and emitted a guttural interjection to indicate that her silence

was only an armistice, not a peace. And, in fact hostilities soon

broke out again.

"I'll thank you for my cup o' tea, now, Mrs. G.," said Mr. Glegg,

seeing that she did not proceed to give it him as usual, when he had

finished his porridge. She lifted the teapot with a slight toss of the

head, and said,--

"I'm glad to hear you'll \_thank\_ me, Mr. Glegg. It's little thanks \_I\_

get for what I do for folks i' this world. Though there's never a

woman o' \_your\_ side o' the family, Mr. Glegg, as is fit to stand up

with me, and I'd say it if I was on my dying bed. Not but what I've

allays conducted myself civil to your kin, and there isn't one of 'em

can say the contrary, though my equils they aren't, and nobody shall

make me say it."

"You'd better leave finding fault wi' my kin till you've left off

quarrelling with you own, Mrs. G.," said Mr. Glegg, with angry

sarcasm. "I'll trouble you for the milk-jug."

"That's as false a word as ever you spoke, Mr. Glegg," said the lady,

pouring out the milk with unusual profuseness, as much as to say, if

he wanted milk he should have it with a vengeance. "And you know it's

false. I'm not the woman to quarrel with my own kin; \_you\_ may, for

I've known you to do it."

"Why, what did you call it yesterday, then, leaving your sister's

house in a tantrum?"

"I'd no quarrel wi' my sister, Mr. Glegg, and it's false to say it.

Mr. Tulliver's none o' my blood, and it was him quarrelled with me,

and drove me out o' the house. But perhaps you'd have had me stay and

be swore at, Mr. Glegg; perhaps you was vexed not to hear more abuse

and foul language poured out upo' your own wife. But, let me tell you,

it's \_your\_ disgrace."

"Did ever anybody hear the like i' this parish?" said Mr. Glegg,

getting hot. "A woman, with everything provided for her, and allowed

to keep her own money the same as if it was settled on her, and with a

gig new stuffed and lined at no end o' expense, and provided for when

I die beyond anything she could expect--to go on i' this way, biting

and snapping like a mad dog! It's beyond everything, as God A 'mighty

should ha' made women \_so\_." (These last words were uttered in a tone

of sorrowful agitation. Mr. Glegg pushed his tea from him, and tapped

the table with both his hands.)

"Well, Mr. Glegg, if those are your feelings, it's best they should be

known," said Mrs. Glegg, taking off her napkin, and folding it in an

excited manner. "But if you talk o' my being provided for beyond what

I could expect, I beg leave to tell you as I'd a right to expect a

many things as I don't find. And as to my being like a mad dog, it's

well if you're not cried shame on by the county for your treatment of

me, for it's what I can't bear, and I won't bear----"

Here Mrs. Glegg's voice intimated that she was going to cry, and

breaking off from speech, she rang the bell violently.

"Sally," she said, rising from her chair, and speaking in rather a

choked voice, "light a fire up-stairs, and put the blinds down. Mr.

Glegg, you'll please to order what you'd like for dinner. I shall have

gruel."

Mrs. Glegg walked across the room to the small book-case, and took

down Baxter's "Saints' Everlasting Rest," which she carried with her

up-stairs. It was the book she was accustomed to lay open before her

on special occasions,--on wet Sunday mornings, or when she heard of a

death in the family, or when, as in this case, her quarrel with Mr.

Glegg had been set an octave higher than usual.

But Mrs. Glegg carried something else up-stairs with her, which,

together with the "Saints' Rest" and the gruel, may have had some

influence in gradually calming her feelings, and making it possible

for her to endure existence on the ground-floor, shortly before

tea-time. This was, partly, Mr. Glegg's suggestion that she would do

well to let her five hundred lie still until a good investment turned

up; and, further, his parenthetic hint at his handsome provision for

her in case of his death. Mr. Glegg, like all men of his stamp, was

extremely reticent about his will; and Mrs. Glegg, in her gloomier

moments, had forebodings that, like other husbands of whom she had

heard, he might cherish the mean project of heightening her grief at

his death by leaving her poorly off, in which case she was firmly

resolved that she would have scarcely any weeper on her bonnet, and

would cry no more than if he had been a second husband. But if he had

really shown her any testamentary tenderness, it would be affecting to

think of him, poor man, when he was gone; and even his foolish fuss

about the flowers and garden-stuff, and his insistence on the subject

of snails, would be touching when it was once fairly at an end. To

survive Mr. Glegg, and talk eulogistically of him as a man who might

have his weaknesses, but who had done the right thing by her,

not-withstanding his numerous poor relations; to have sums of interest

coming in more frequently, and secrete it in various corners, baffling

to the most ingenious of thieves (for, to Mrs. Glegg's mind, banks and

strong-boxes would have nullified the pleasure of property; she might

as well have taken her food in capsules); finally, to be looked up to

by her own family and the neighborhood, so as no woman can ever hope

to be who has not the prÃ¦terite and present dignity comprised in being

a "widow well left,"--all this made a flattering and conciliatory view

of the future. So that when good Mr. Glegg, restored to good humor by

much hoeing, and moved by the sight of his wife's empty chair, with

her knitting rolled up in the corner, went up-stairs to her, and

observed that the bell had been tolling for poor Mr. Morton, Mrs.

Glegg answered magnanimously, quite as if she had been an uninjured

woman: "Ah! then, there'll be a good business for somebody to take

to."

Baxter had been open at least eight hours by this time, for it was

nearly five o'clock; and if people are to quarrel often, it follows as

a corollary that their quarrels cannot be protracted beyond certain

limits.

Mr. and Mrs. Glegg talked quite amicably about the Tullivers that

evening. Mr. Glegg went the length of admitting that Tulliver was a

sad man for getting into hot water, and was like enough to run through

his property; and Mrs. Glegg, meeting this acknowledgment half-way,

declared that it was beneath her to take notice of such a man's

conduct, and that, for her sister's sake, she would let him keep the

five hundred a while longer, for when she put it out on a mortgage she

should only get four per cent.

Chapter XIII

Mr. Tulliver Further Entangles the Skein of Life

Owing to this new adjustment of Mrs. Glegg's thoughts, Mrs. Pullet

found her task of mediation the next day surprisingly easy. Mrs.

Glegg, indeed checked her rather sharply for thinking it would be

necessary to tell her elder sister what was the right mode of behavior

in family matters. Mrs. Pullet's argument, that it would look ill in

the neighborhood if people should have it in their power to say that

there was a quarrel in the family, was particularly offensive. If the

family name never suffered except through Mrs. Glegg, Mrs. Pullet

might lay her head on her pillow in perfect confidence.

"It's not to be expected, I suppose," observed Mrs. Glegg, by way of

winding up the subject, "as I shall go to the mill again before Bessy

comes to see me, or as I shall go and fall down o' my knees to Mr.

Tulliver, and ask his pardon for showing him favors; but I shall bear

no malice, and when Mr. Tulliver speaks civil to me, I'll speak civil

to him. Nobody has any call to tell me what's becoming."

Finding it unnecessary to plead for the Tullivers, it was natural that

aunt Pullet should relax a little in her anxiety for them, and recur

to the annoyance she had suffered yesterday from the offspring of that

apparently ill-fated house. Mrs. Glegg heard a circumstantial

narrative, to which Mr. Pullet's remarkable memory furnished some

items; and while aunt Pullet pitied poor Bessy's bad luck with her

children, and expressed a half-formed project of paying for Maggie's

being sent to a distant boarding-school, which would not prevent her

being so brown, but might tend to subdue some other vices in her, aunt

Glegg blamed Bessy for her weakness, and appealed to all witnesses who

should be living when the Tulliver children had turned out ill, that

she, Mrs. Glegg, had always said how it would be from the very first,

observing that it was wonderful to herself how all her words came

true.

"Then I may call and tell Bessy you'll bear no malice, and everything

be as it was before?" Mrs. Pullet said, just before parting.

"Yes, you may, Sophy," said Mrs. Glegg; "you may tell Mr. Tulliver,

and Bessy too, as I'm not going to behave ill because folks behave ill

to me; I know it's my place, as the eldest, to set an example in every

respect, and I do it. Nobody can say different of me, if they'll keep

to the truth."

Mrs. Glegg being in this state of satisfaction in her own lofty

magnanimity, I leave you to judge what effect was produced on her by

the reception of a short letter from Mr. Tulliver that very evening,

after Mrs. Pullet's departure, informing her that she needn't trouble

her mind about her five hundred pounds, for it should be paid back to

her in the course of the next month at farthest, together with the

interest due thereon until the time of payment. And furthermore, that

Mr. Tulliver had no wish to behave uncivilly to Mrs. Glegg, and she

was welcome to his house whenever she liked to come, but he desired no

favors from her, either for himself or his children.

It was poor Mrs. Tulliver who had hastened this catastrophe, entirely

through that irrepressible hopefulness of hers which led her to expect

that similar causes may at any time produce different results. It had

very often occurred in her experience that Mr. Tulliver had done

something because other people had said he was not able to do it, or

had pitied him for his supposed inability, or in any other way piqued

his pride; still, she thought to-day, if she told him when he came in

to tea that sister Pullet was gone to try and make everything up with

sister Glegg, so that he needn't think about paying in the money, it

would give a cheerful effect to the meal. Mr. Tulliver had never

slackened in his resolve to raise the money, but now he at once

determined to write a letter to Mrs. Glegg, which should cut off all

possibility of mistake. Mrs. Pullet gone to beg and pray for \_him\_

indeed! Mr. Tulliver did not willingly write a letter, and found the

relation between spoken and written language, briefly known as

spelling, one of the most puzzling things in this puzzling world.

Nevertheless, like all fervid writing, the task was done in less time

than usual, and if the spelling differed from Mrs. Glegg's,--why, she

belonged, like himself, to a generation with whom spelling was a

matter of private judgment.

Mrs. Glegg did not alter her will in consequence of this letter, and

cut off the Tulliver children from their sixth and seventh share in

her thousand pounds; for she had her principles. No one must be able

to say of her when she was dead that she had not divided her money

with perfect fairness among her own kin. In the matter of wills,

personal qualities were subordinate to the great fundamental fact of

blood; and to be determined in the distribution of your property by

caprice, and not make your legacies bear a direct ratio to degrees of

kinship, was a prospective disgrace that would have embittered her

life. This had always been a principle in the Dodson family; it was

one form if that sense of honor and rectitude which was a proud

tradition in such families,--a tradition which has been the salt of

our provincial society.

But though the letter could not shake Mrs. Glegg's principles, it made

the family breach much more difficult to mend; and as to the effect it

produced on Mrs. Glegg's opinion of Mr. Tulliver, she begged to be

understood from that time forth that she had nothing whatever to say

about him; his state of mind, apparently, was too corrupt for her to

contemplate it for a moment. It was not until the evening before Tom

went to school, at the beginning of August, that Mrs. Glegg paid a

visit to her sister Tulliver, sitting in her gig all the while, and

showing her displeasure by markedly abstaining from all advice and

criticism; for, as she observed to her sister Deane, "Bessy must bear

the consequence o' having such a husband, though I'm sorry for her,"

and Mrs. Deane agreed that Bessy was pitiable.

That evening Tom observed to Maggie: "Oh my! Maggie, aunt Glegg's

beginning to come again; I'm glad I'm going to school. \_You'll\_ catch

it all now!"

Maggie was already so full of sorrow at the thought of Tom's going

away from her, that this playful exultation of his seemed very unkind,

and she cried herself to sleep that night.

Mr. Tulliver's prompt procedure entailed on him further promptitude in

finding the convenient person who was desirous of lending five hundred

pounds on bond. "It must be no client of Wakem's," he said to himself;

and yet at the end of a fortnight it turned out to the contrary; not

because Mr. Tulliver's will was feeble, but because external fact was

stronger. Wakem's client was the only convenient person to be found.

Mr. Tulliver had a destiny as well as Ådipus, and in this case

he might plead, like Ådipus, that his deed was inflicted on him

rather than committed by him.

Book II

\_School-Time\_

Chapter I

Tom's "First Half"

Tom Tulliver's sufferings during the first quarter he was at King's

Lorton, under the distinguished care of the Rev. Walter Stelling, were

rather severe. At Mr. Jacob's academy life had not presented itself to

him as a difficult problem; there were plenty of fellows to play with,

and Tom being good at all active games,--fighting especially,--had

that precedence among them which appeared to him inseparable from the

personality of Tom Tulliver. Mr. Jacobs himself, familiarly known as

Old Goggles, from his habit of wearing spectacles, imposed no painful

awe; and if it was the property of snuffy old hypocrites like him to

write like copperplate and surround their signatures with arabesques,

to spell without forethought, and to spout "my name is Norval" without

bungling, Tom, for his part, was glad he was not in danger of those

mean accomplishments. He was not going to be a snuffy schoolmaster,

he, but a substantial man, like his father, who used to go hunting

when he was younger, and rode a capital black mare,--as pretty a bit

of horse-flesh as ever you saw; Tom had heard what her points were a

hundred times. \_He\_ meant to go hunting too, and to be generally

respected. When people were grown up, he considered, nobody inquired

about their writing and spelling; when he was a man, he should be

master of everything, and do just as he liked. It had been very

difficult for him to reconcile himself to the idea that his

school-time was to be prolonged and that he was not to be brought up

to his father's business, which he had always thought extremely

pleasant; for it was nothing but riding about, giving orders, and

going to market; and he thought that a clergyman would give him a

great many Scripture lessons, and probably make him learn the Gospel

and Epistle on a Sunday, as well as the Collect. But in the absence of

specific information, it was impossible for him to imagine that school

and a schoolmaster would be something entirely different from the

academy of Mr. Jacobs. So, not to be at a deficiency, in case of his

finding genial companions, he had taken care to carry with him a small

box of percussion-caps; not that there was anything particular to be

done with them, but they would serve to impress strange boys with a

sense of his familiarity with guns. Thus poor Tom, though he saw very

clearly through Maggie's illusions, was not without illusions of his

own, which were to be cruelly dissipated by his enlarged experience at

King's Lorton.

He had not been there a fortnight before it was evident to him that

life, complicated not only with the Latin grammar but with a new

standard of English pronunciation, was a very difficult business, made

all the more obscure by a thick mist of bashfulness. Tom, as you have

observed, was never an exception among boys for ease of address; but

the difficulty of enunciating a monosyllable in reply to Mr. or Mrs.

Stelling was so great, that he even dreaded to be asked at table

whether he would have more pudding. As to the percussion-caps, he had

almost resolved, in the bitterness of his heart, that he would throw

them into a neighboring pond; for not only was he the solitary pupil,

but he began even to have a certain scepticism about guns, and a

general sense that his theory of life was undermined. For Mr. Stelling

thought nothing of guns, or horses either, apparently; and yet it was

impossible for Tom to despise Mr. Stelling as he had despised Old

Goggles. If there were anything that was not thoroughly genuine about

Mr. Stelling, it lay quite beyond Tom's power to detect it; it is only

by a wide comparison of facts that the wisest full-grown man can

distinguish well-rolled barrels from mere supernal thunder.

Mr. Stelling was a well-sized, broad-chested man, not yet thirty, with

flaxen hair standing erect, and large lightish-gray eyes, which were

always very wide open; he had a sonorous bass voice, and an air of

defiant self-confidence inclining to brazenness. He had entered on his

career with great vigor, and intended to make a considerable

impression on his fellowmen. The Rev. Walter Stelling was not a man

who would remain among the "inferior clergy" all his life. He had a

true British determination to push his way in the world,--as a

schoolmaster, in the first place, for there were capital masterships

of grammar-schools to be had, and Mr. Stelling meant to have one of

them; but as a preacher also, for he meant always to preach in a

striking manner, so as to have his congregation swelled by admirers

from neighboring parishes, and to produce a great sensation whenever

he took occasional duty for a brother clergyman of minor gifts. The

style of preaching he had chosen was the extemporaneous, which was

held little short of the miraculous in rural parishes like King's

Lorton. Some passages of Massillon and Bourdaloue, which he knew by

heart, were really very effective when rolled out in Mr. Stelling's

deepest tones; but as comparatively feeble appeals of his own were

delivered in the same loud and impressive manner, they were often

thought quite as striking by his hearers. Mr. Stelling's doctrine was

of no particular school; if anything, it had a tinge of

evangelicalism, for that was "the telling thing" just then in the

diocese to which King's Lorton belonged. In short, Mr. Stelling was a

man who meant to rise in his profession, and to rise by merit,

clearly, since he had no interest beyond what might be promised by a

problematic relationship to a great lawyer who had not yet become Lord

Chancellor. A clergyman who has such vigorous intentions naturally

gets a little into debt at starting; it is not to be expected that he

will live in the meagre style of a man who means to be a poor curate

all his life; and if the few hundreds Mr. Timpson advanced toward his

daughter's fortune did not suffice for the purchase of handsome

furniture, together with a stock of wine, a grand piano, and the

laying out of a superior flower-garden, it followed in the most

rigorous manner, either that these things must be procured by some

other means, or else that the Rev. Mr. Stelling must go without them,

which last alternative would be an absurd procrastination of the

fruits of success, where success was certain. Mr. Stelling was so

broad-chested and resolute that he felt equal to anything; he would

become celebrated by shaking the consciences of his hearers, and he

would by and by edit a Greek play, and invent several new readings. He

had not yet selected the play, for having been married little more

than two years, his leisure time had been much occupied with

attentions to Mrs. Stelling; but he had told that fine woman what he

meant to do some day, and she felt great confidence in her husband, as

a man who understood everything of that sort.

But the immediate step to future success was to bring on Tom Tulliver

during this first half-year; for, by a singular coincidence, there had

been some negotiation concerning another pupil from the same

neighborhood and it might further a decision in Mr. Stelling's favor,

if it were understood that young Tulliver, who, Mr. Stelling observed

in conjugal privacy, was rather a rough cub, had made prodigious

progress in a short time. It was on this ground that he was severe

with Tom about his lessons; he was clearly a boy whose powers would

never be developed through the medium of the Latin grammar, without

the application of some sternness. Not that Mr. Stelling was a

harsh-tempered or unkind man; quite the contrary. He was jocose with

Tom at table, and corrected his provincialisms and his deportment in

the most playful manner; but poor Tom was only the more cowed and

confused by this double novelty, for he had never been used to jokes

at all like Mr. Stelling's; and for the first time in his life he had

a painful sense that he was all wrong somehow. When Mr. Stelling said,

as the roast-beef was being uncovered, "Now, Tulliver! which would you

rather decline, roast-beef or the Latin for it?" Tom, to whom in his

coolest moments a pun would have been a hard nut, was thrown into a

state of embarrassed alarm that made everything dim to him except the

feeling that he would rather not have anything to do with Latin; of

course he answered, "Roast-beef," whereupon there followed much

laughter and some practical joking with the plates, from which Tom

gathered that he had in some mysterious way refused beef, and, in

fact, made himself appear "a silly." If he could have seen a

fellow-pupil undergo these painful operations and survive them in good

spirits, he might sooner have taken them as a matter of course. But

there are two expensive forms of education, either of which a parent

may procure for his son by sending him as solitary pupil to a

clergyman: one is the enjoyment of the reverend gentleman's undivided

neglect; the other is the endurance of the reverend gentleman's

undivided attention. It was the latter privilege for which Mr.

Tulliver paid a high price in Tom's initiatory months at King's

Lorton.

That respectable miller and maltster had left Tom behind, and driven

homeward in a state of great mental satisfaction. He considered that

it was a happy moment for him when he had thought of asking Riley's

advice about a tutor for Tom. Mr. Stelling's eyes were so wide open,

and he talked in such an off-hand, matter-of-fact way, answering every

difficult, slow remark of Mr. Tulliver's with, "I see, my good sir, I

see"; "To be sure, to be sure"; "You want your son to be a man who

will make his way in the world,"--that Mr. Tulliver was delighted to

find in him a clergyman whose knowledge was so applicable to the

every-day affairs of this life. Except Counsellor Wylde, whom he had

heard at the last sessions, Mr. Tulliver thought the Rev. Mr Stelling

was the shrewdest fellow he had ever met with,--not unlike Wylde, in

fact; he had the same way of sticking his thumbs in the armholes of

his waistcoat. Mr. Tulliver was not by any means an exception in

mistaking brazenness for shrewdness; most laymen thought Stelling

shrewd, and a man of remarkable powers generally; it was chiefly by

his clerical brethren that he was considered rather a full fellow. But

he told Mr. Tulliver several stories about "Swing" and incendiarism,

and asked his advice about feeding pigs in so thoroughly secular and

judicious a manner, with so much polished glibness of tongue, that the

miller thought, here was the very thing he wanted for Tom. He had no

doubt this first-rate man was acquainted with every branch of

information, and knew exactly what Tom must learn in order to become a

match for the lawyers, which poor Mr. Tulliver himself did \_not\_ know,

and so was necessarily thrown for self-direction on this wide kind of

inference. It is hardly fair to laugh at him, for I have known much

more highly instructed persons than he make inferences quite as wide,

and not at all wiser.

As for Mrs. Tulliver, finding that Mrs. Stelling's views as to the

airing of linen and the frequent recurrence of hunger in a growing boy

entirely coincided with her own; moreover, that Mrs. Stelling, though

so young a woman, and only anticipating her second confinement, had

gone through very nearly the same experience as herself with regard to

the behavior and fundamental character of the monthly nurse,--she

expressed great contentment to her husband, when they drove away, at

leaving Tom with a woman who, in spite of her youth, seemed quite

sensible and motherly, and asked advice as prettily as could be.

"They must be very well off, though," said Mrs. Tulliver, "for

everything's as nice as can be all over the house, and that watered

silk she had on cost a pretty penny. Sister Pullet has got one like

it."

"Ah," said Mr. Tulliver, "he's got some income besides the curacy, I

reckon. Perhaps her father allows 'em something. There's Tom 'ull be

another hundred to him, and not much trouble either, by his own

account; he says teaching comes natural to him. That's wonderful,

now," added Mr. Tulliver, turning his head on one side, and giving his

horse a meditative tickling on the flank.

Perhaps it was because teaching came naturally to Mr. Stelling, that

he set about it with that uniformity of method and independence of

circumstances which distinguish the actions of animals understood to

be under the immediate teaching of nature. Mr. Broderip's amiable

beaver, as that charming naturalist tells us, busied himself as

earnestly in constructing a dam, in a room up three pair of stairs in

London, as if he had been laying his foundation in a stream or lake in

Upper Canada. It was "Binny's" function to build; the absence of water

or of possible progeny was an accident for which he was not

accountable. With the same unerring instinct Mr. Stelling set to work

at his natural method of instilling the Eton Grammar and Euclid into

the mind of Tom Tulliver. This, he considered, was the only basis of

solid instruction; all other means of education were mere

charlatanism, and could produce nothing better than smatterers. Fixed

on this firm basis, a man might observe the display of various or

special knowledge made by irregularly educated people with a pitying

smile; all that sort of thing was very well, but it was impossible

these people could form sound opinions. In holding this conviction Mr.

Stelling was not biassed, as some tutors have been, by the excessive

accuracy or extent of his own scholarship; and as to his views about

Euclid, no opinion could have been freer from personal partiality. Mr.

Stelling was very far from being led astray by enthusiasm, either

religious or intellectual; on the other hand, he had no secret belief

that everything was humbug. He thought religion was a very excellent

thing, and Aristotle a great authority, and deaneries and prebends

useful institutions, and Great Britain the providential bulwark of

Protestantism, and faith in the unseen a great support to afflicted

minds; he believed in all these things, as a Swiss hotel-keeper

believes in the beauty of the scenery around him, and in the pleasure

it gives to artistic visitors. And in the same way Mr. Stelling

believed in his method of education; he had no doubt that he was doing

the very best thing for Mr. Tulliver's boy. Of course, when the miller

talked of "mapping" and "summing" in a vague and diffident manner, Mr

Stelling had set his mind at rest by an assurance that he understood

what was wanted; for how was it possible the good man could form any

reasonable judgment about the matter? Mr Stelling's duty was to teach

the lad in the only right way,--indeed he knew no other; he had not

wasted his time in the acquirement of anything abnormal.

He very soon set down poor Tom as a thoroughly stupid lad; for though

by hard labor he could get particular declensions into his brain,

anything so abstract as the relation between cases and terminations

could by no means get such a lodgment there as to enable him to

recognize a chance genitive or dative. This struck Mr. Stelling as

something more than natural stupidity; he suspected obstinacy, or at

any rate indifference, and lectured Tom severely on his want of

thorough application. "You feel no interest in what you're doing,

sir," Mr. Stelling would say, and the reproach was painfully true. Tom

had never found any difficulty in discerning a pointer from a setter,

when once he had been told the distinction, and his perceptive powers

were not at all deficient. I fancy they were quite as strong as those

of the Rev. Mr. Stelling; for Tom could predict with accuracy what

number of horses were cantering behind him, he could throw a stone

right into the centre of a given ripple, he could guess to a fraction

how many lengths of his stick it would take to reach across the

playground, and could draw almost perfect squares on his slate without

any measurement. But Mr. Stelling took no note of these things; he

only observed that Tom's faculties failed him before the abstractions

hideously symbolized to him in the pages of the Eton Grammar, and that

he was in a state bordering on idiocy with regard to the demonstration

that two given triangles must be equal, though he could discern with

great promptitude and certainty the fact that they \_were\_ equal.

Whence Mr. Stelling concluded that Tom's brain, being peculiarly

impervious to etymology and demonstrations, was peculiarly in need of

being ploughed and harrowed by these patent implements; it was his

favorite metaphor, that the classics and geometry constituted that

culture of the mind which prepared it for the reception of any

subsequent crop. I say nothing against Mr. Stelling's theory; if we

are to have one regimen for all minds, his seems to me as good as any

other. I only know it turned out as uncomfortably for Tom Tulliver as

if he had been plied with cheese in order to remedy a gastric weakness

which prevented him from digesting it. It is astonishing what a

different result one gets by changing the metaphor! Once call the

brain an intellectual stomach, and one's ingenious conception of the

classics and geometry as ploughs and harrows seems to settle nothing.

But then it is open to some one else to follow great authorities, and

call the mind a sheet of white paper or a mirror, in which case one's

knowledge of the digestive process becomes quite irrelevant. It was

doubtless an ingenious idea to call the camel the ship of the desert,

but it would hardly lead one far in training that useful beast. O

Aristotle! if you had had the advantage of being "the freshest modern"

instead of the greatest ancient, would you not have mingled your

praise of metaphorical speech, as a sign of high intelligence, with a

lamentation that intelligence so rarely shows itself in speech without

metaphor,--that we can so seldom declare what a thing is, except by

saying it is something else?

Tom Tulliver, being abundant in no form of speech, did not use any

metaphor to declare his views as to the nature of Latin; he never

called it an instrument of torture; and it was not until he had got on

some way in the next half-year, and in the Delectus, that he was

advanced enough to call it a "bore" and "beastly stuff." At present,

in relation to this demand that he should learn Latin declensions and

conjugations, Tom was in a state of as blank unimaginativeness

concerning the cause and tendency of his sufferings, as if he had been

an innocent shrewmouse imprisoned in the split trunk of an ash-tree in

order to cure lameness in cattle. It is doubtless almost incredible to

instructed minds of the present day that a boy of twelve, not

belonging strictly to "the masses," who are now understood to have the

monopoly of mental darkness, should have had no distinct idea how

there came to be such a thing as Latin on this earth; yet so it was

with Tom. It would have taken a long while to make conceivable to him

that there ever existed a people who bought and sold sheep and oxen,

and transacted the every-day affairs of life, through the medium of

this language; and still longer to make him understand why he should

be called upon to learn it, when its connection with those affairs had

become entirely latent. So far as Tom had gained any acquaintance with

the Romans at Mr. Jacob's academy, his knowledge was strictly correct,

but it went no farther than the fact that they were "in the New

Testament"; and Mr. Stelling was not the man to enfeeble and

emasculate his pupil's mind by simplifying and explaining, or to

reduce the tonic effect of etymology by mixing it with smattering,

extraneous information, such as is given to girls.

Yet, strange to say, under this vigorous treatment Tom became more

like a girl than he had ever been in his life before. He had a large

share of pride, which had hitherto found itself very comfortable in

the world, despising Old Goggles, and reposing in the sense of

unquestioned rights; but now this same pride met with nothing but

bruises and crushings. Tom was too clear-sighted not to be aware that

Mr. Stelling's standard of things was quite different, was certainly

something higher in the eyes of the world than that of the people he

had been living amongst, and that, brought in contact with it, he, Tom

Tulliver, appeared uncouth and stupid; he was by no means indifferent

to this, and his pride got into an uneasy condition which quite

nullified his boyish self-satisfaction, and gave him something of the

girl's susceptibility. He was a very firm, not to say obstinate,

disposition, but there was no brute-like rebellion and recklessness in

his nature; the human sensibilities predominated, and if it had

occurred to him that he could enable himself to show some quickness at

his lessons, and so acquire Mr. Stelling's approbation, by standing on

one leg for an inconvenient length of time, or rapping his head

moderately against the wall, or any voluntary action of that sort, he

would certainly have tried it. But no; Tom had never heard that these

measures would brighten the understanding, or strengthen the verbal

memory; and he was not given to hypothesis and experiment. It did

occur to him that he could perhaps get some help by praying for it;

but as the prayers he said every evening were forms learned by heart,

he rather shrank from the novelty and irregularity of introducing an

extempore passage on a topic of petition for which he was not aware of

any precedent. But one day, when he had broken down, for the fifth

time, in the supines of the third conjugation, and Mr. Stelling,

convinced that this must be carelessness, since it transcended the

bounds of possible stupidity, had lectured him very seriously,

pointing out that if he failed to seize the present golden opportunity

of learning supines, he would have to regret it when he became a

man,--Tom, more miserable than usual, determined to try his sole

resource; and that evening, after his usual form of prayer for his

parents and "little sister" (he had begun to pray for Maggie when she

was a baby), and that he might be able always to keep God's

commandments, he added, in the same low whisper, "and please to make

me always remember my Latin." He paused a little to consider how he

should pray about Euclid--whether he should ask to see what it meant,

or whether there was any other mental state which would be more

applicable to the case. But at last he added: "And make Mr. Stelling

say I sha'n't do Euclid any more. Amen."

The fact that he got through his supines without mistake the next day,

encouraged him to persevere in this appendix to his prayers, and

neutralized any scepticism that might have arisen from Mr. Stelling's

continued demand for Euclid. But his faith broke down under the

apparent absence of all help when he got into the irregular verbs. It

seemed clear that Tom's despair under the caprices of the present

tense did not constitute a \_nodus\_ worthy of interference, and since

this was the climax of his difficulties, where was the use of praying

for help any longer? He made up his mind to this conclusion in one of

his dull, lonely evenings, which he spent in the study, preparing his

lessons for the morrow. His eyes were apt to get dim over the page,

though he hated crying, and was ashamed of it; he couldn't help

thinking with some affection even of Spouncer, whom he used to fight

and quarrel with; he would have felt at home with Spouncer, and in a

condition of superiority. And then the mill, and the river, and Yap

pricking up his ears, ready to obey the least sign when Tom said,

"Hoigh!" would all come before him in a sort of calenture, when his

fingers played absently in his pocket with his great knife and his

coil of whipcord, and other relics of the past.

Tom, as I said, had never been so much like a girl in his life before,

and at that epoch of irregular verbs his spirit was further depressed

by a new means of mental development which had been thought of for him

out of school hours. Mrs. Stelling had lately had her second baby, and

as nothing could be more salutary for a boy than to feel himself

useful, Mrs. Stelling considered she was doing Tom a service by

setting him to watch the little cherub Laura while the nurse was

occupied with the sickly baby. It was quite a pretty employment for

Tom to take little Laura out in the sunniest hour of the autumn day;

it would help to make him feel that Lorton Parsonage was a home for

him, and that he was one of the family. The little cherub Laura, not

being an accomplished walker at present, had a ribbon fastened round

her waist, by which Tom held her as if she had been a little dog

during the minutes in which she chose to walk; but as these were rare,

he was for the most part carrying this fine child round and round the

garden, within sight of Mrs. Stelling's window, according to orders.

If any one considers this unfair and even oppressive toward Tom, I beg

him to consider that there are feminine virtues which are with

difficulty combined, even if they are not incompatible. When the wife

of a poor curate contrives, under all her disadvantages, to dress

extremely well, and to have a style of coiffure which requires that

her nurse shall occasionally officiate as lady's-maid; when, moreover,

her dinner-parties and her drawing-room show that effort at elegance

and completeness of appointment to which ordinary women might imagine

a large income necessary, it would be unreasonable to expect of her

that she should employ a second nurse, or even act as a nurse herself.

Mr. Stelling knew better; he saw that his wife did wonders already,

and was proud of her. It was certainly not the best thing in the world

for young Tulliver's gait to carry a heavy child, but he had plenty of

exercise in long walks with himself, and next half-year Mr. Stelling

would see about having a drilling-master. Among the many means whereby

Mr. Stelling intended to be more fortunate than the bulk of his

fellow-men, he had entirely given up that of having his own way in his

own house. What then? He had married "as kind a little soul as ever

breathed," according to Mr. Riley, who had been acquainted with Mrs.

Stelling's blond ringlets and smiling demeanor throughout her maiden

life, and on the strength of that knowledge would have been ready any

day to pronounce that whatever domestic differences might arise in her

married life must be entirely Mr. Stelling's fault.

If Tom had had a worse disposition, he would certainly have hated the

little cherub Laura, but he was too kind-hearted a lad for that; there

was too much in him of the fibre that turns to true manliness, and to

protecting pity for the weak. I am afraid he hated Mrs. Stelling, and

contracted a lasting dislike to pale blond ringlets and broad plaits,

as directly associated with haughtiness of manner, and a frequent

reference to other people's "duty." But he couldn't help playing with

little Laura, and liking to amuse her; he even sacrificed his

percussion-caps for her sake, in despair of their ever serving a

greater purpose,--thinking the small flash and bang would delight her,

and thereby drawing down on himself a rebuke from Mrs. Stelling for

teaching her child to play with fire. Laura was a sort of

playfellow--and oh, how Tom longed for playfellows! In his secret

heart he yearned to have Maggie with him, and was almost ready to dote

on her exasperating acts of forgetfulness; though, when he was at

home, he always represented it as a great favor on his part to let

Maggie trot by his side on his pleasure excursions.

And before this dreary half-year was ended, Maggie actually came. Mrs.

Stelling had given a general invitation for the little girl to come

and stay with her brother; so when Mr. Tulliver drove over to King's

Lorton late in October, Maggie came too, with the sense that she was

taking a great journey, and beginning to see the world. It was Mr.

Tulliver's first visit to see Tom, for the lad must learn not to think

too much about home.

"Well, my lad," he said to Tom, when Mr. Stelling had left the room to

announce the arrival to his wife, and Maggie had begun to kiss Tom

freely, "you look rarely! School agrees with you."

Tom wished he had looked rather ill.

"I don't think I \_am\_ well, father," said Tom; "I wish you'd ask Mr.

Stelling not to let me do Euclid; it brings on the toothache, I

think."

(The toothache was the only malady to which Tom had ever been

subject.)

"Euclid, my lad,--why, what's that?" said Mr. Tulliver.

"Oh, I don't know; it's definitions, and axioms, and triangles, and

things. It's a book I've got to learn in--there's no sense in it."

"Go, go!" said Mr. Tulliver, reprovingly; "you mustn't say so. You

must learn what your master tells you. He knows what it's right for

you to learn."

"\_I'll\_ help you now, Tom," said Maggie, with a little air of

patronizing consolation. "I'm come to stay ever so long, if Mrs.

Stelling asks me. I've brought my box and my pinafores, haven't I,

father?"

"\_You\_ help me, you silly little thing!" said Tom, in such high

spirits at this announcement that he quite enjoyed the idea of

confounding Maggie by showing her a page of Euclid. "I should like to

see you doing one of \_my\_ lessons! Why, I learn Latin too! Girls never

learn such things. They're too silly."

"I know what Latin is very well," said Maggie, confidently, "Latin's a

language. There are Latin words in the Dictionary. There's bonus, a

gift."

"Now, you're just wrong there, Miss Maggie!" said Tom, secretly

astonished. "You think you're very wise! But 'bonus' means 'good,' as

it happens,--bonus, bona, bonum."

"Well, that's no reason why it shouldn't mean 'gift,'" said Maggie,

stoutly. "It may mean several things; almost every word does. There's

'lawn,'--it means the grass-plot, as well as the stuff

pocket-handkerchiefs are made of."

"Well done, little 'un," said Mr. Tulliver, laughing, while Tom felt

rather disgusted with Maggie's knowingness, though beyond measure

cheerful at the thought that she was going to stay with him. Her

conceit would soon be overawed by the actual inspection of his books.

Mrs. Stelling, in her pressing invitation, did not mention a longer

time than a week for Maggie's stay; but Mr. Stelling, who took her

between his knees, and asked her where she stole her dark eyes from,

insisted that she must stay a fortnight. Maggie thought Mr. Stelling

was a charming man, and Mr. Tulliver was quite proud to leave his

little wench where she would have an opportunity of showing her

cleverness to appreciating strangers. So it was agreed that she should

not be fetched home till the end of the fortnight.

"Now, then, come with me into the study, Maggie," said Tom, as their

father drove away. "What do you shake and toss your head now for, you

silly?" he continued; for though her hair was now under a new

dispensation, and was brushed smoothly behind her ears, she seemed

still in imagination to be tossing it out of her eyes. "It makes you

look as if you were crazy."

"Oh, I can't help it," said Maggie, impatiently. "Don't tease me, Tom.

Oh, what books!" she exclaimed, as she saw the bookcases in the study.

"How I should like to have as many books as that!"

"Why, you couldn't read one of 'em," said Tom, triumphantly. "They're

all Latin."

"No, they aren't," said Maggie. "I can read the back of

this,--'History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.'"

"Well, what does that mean? \_You\_ don't know," said Tom, wagging his

head.

"But I could soon find out," said Maggie, scornfully.

"Why, how?"

"I should look inside, and see what it was about."

"You'd better not, Miss Maggie," said Tom, seeing her hand on the

volume. "Mr. Stelling lets nobody touch his books without leave, and

\_I\_ shall catch it, if you take it out."

"Oh, very well. Let me see all \_your\_ books, then," said Maggie,

turning to throw her arms round Tom's neck, and rub his cheek with her

small round nose.

Tom, in the gladness of his heart at having dear old Maggie to dispute

with and crow over again, seized her round the waist, and began to

jump with her round the large library table. Away they jumped with

more and more vigor, till Maggie's hair flew from behind her ears, and

twirled about like an animated mop. But the revolutions round the

table became more and more irregular in their sweep, till at last

reaching Mr. Stelling's reading stand, they sent it thundering down

with its heavy lexicons to the floor. Happily it was the ground-floor,

and the study was a one-storied wing to the house, so that the

downfall made no alarming resonance, though Tom stood dizzy and aghast

for a few minutes, dreading the appearance of Mr. or Mrs. Stelling.

"Oh, I say, Maggie," said Tom at last, lifting up the stand, "we must

keep quiet here, you know. If we break anything Mrs. Stelling'll make

us cry peccavi."

"What's that?" said Maggie.

"Oh, it's the Latin for a good scolding," said Tom, not without some

pride in his knowledge.

"Is she a cross woman?" said Maggie.

"I believe you!" said Tom, with an emphatic nod.

"I think all women are crosser than men," said Maggie. "Aunt Glegg's a

great deal crosser than uncle Glegg, and mother scolds me more than

father does."

"Well, \_you'll\_ be a woman some day," said Tom, "so \_you\_ needn't

talk."

"But I shall be a \_clever\_ woman," said Maggie, with a toss.

"Oh, I dare say, and a nasty conceited thing. Everybody'll hate you."

"But you oughtn't to hate me, Tom; it'll be very wicked of you, for I

shall be your sister."

"Yes, but if you're a nasty disagreeable thing I \_shall\_ hate you."

"Oh, but, Tom, you won't! I sha'n't be disagreeable. I shall be very

good to you, and I shall be good to everybody. You won't hate me

really, will you, Tom?"

"Oh, bother! never mind! Come, it's time for me to learn my lessons.

See here! what I've got to do," said Tom, drawing Maggie toward him

and showing her his theorem, while she pushed her hair behind her

ears, and prepared herself to prove her capability of helping him in

Euclid. She began to read with full confidence in her own powers, but

presently, becoming quite bewildered, her face flushed with

irritation. It was unavoidable; she must confess her incompetency, and

she was not fond of humiliation.

"It's nonsense!" she said, "and very ugly stuff; nobody need want to

make it out."

"Ah, there, now, Miss Maggie!" said Tom, drawing the book away, and

wagging his head at her, "You see you're not so clever as you thought

you were."

"Oh," said Maggie, pouting, "I dare say I could make it out, if I'd

learned what goes before, as you have."

"But that's what you just couldn't, Miss Wisdom," said Tom. "For it's

all the harder when you know what goes before; for then you've got to

say what definition 3 is, and what axiom V. is. But get along with you

now; I must go on with this. Here's the Latin Grammar. See what you

can make of that."

Maggie found the Latin Grammar quite soothing after her mathematical

mortification; for she delighted in new words, and quickly found that

there was an English Key at the end, which would make her very wise

about Latin, at slight expense. She presently made up her mind to skip

the rules in the Syntax, the examples became so absorbing. These

mysterious sentences, snatched from an unknown context,--like strange

horns of beasts, and leaves of unknown plants, brought from some

far-off region,--gave boundless scope to her imagination, and were all

the more fascinating because they were in a peculiar tongue of their

own, which she could learn to interpret. It was really very

interesting, the Latin Grammar that Tom had said no girls could learn;

and she was proud because she found it interesting. The most

fragmentary examples were her favourites. \_Mors omnibus est communis\_

would have been jejune, only she liked to know the Latin; but the

fortunate gentleman whom every one congratulated because he had a son

"endowed with \_such\_ a disposition" afforded her a great deal of

pleasant conjecture, and she was quite lost in the "thick grove

penetrable by no star," when Tom called out,--

"Now, then, Magsie, give us the Grammar!"

"Oh, Tom, it's such a pretty book!" she said, as she jumped out of the

large arm-chair to give it him; "it's much prettier than the

Dictionary. I could learn Latin very soon. I don't think it's at all

hard."

"Oh, I know what you've been doing," said Tom; "you've been reading

the English at the end. Any donkey can do that."

Tom seized the book and opened it with a determined and business-like

air, as much as to say that he had a lesson to learn which no donkeys

would find themselves equal to. Maggie, rather piqued, turned to the

bookcases to amuse herself with puzzling out the titles.

Presently Tom called to her: "Here, Magsie, come and hear if I can say

this. Stand at that end of the table, where Mr. Stelling sits when he

hears me."

Maggie obeyed, and took the open book.

"Where do you begin, Tom?"

"Oh, I begin at \_'Appellativa arborum,'\_ because I say all over again

what I've been learning this week."

Tom sailed along pretty well for three lines; and Maggie was beginning

to forget her office of prompter in speculating as to what \_mas\_ could

mean, which came twice over, when he stuck fast at \_Sunt etiam

volucrum\_.

"Don't tell me, Maggie; \_Sunt etiam volucrum\_--\_Sunt etiam

volucrum\_--\_ut ostrea, cetus\_----"

"No," said Maggie, opening her mouth and shaking her head.

"\_Sunt etiam volucrum\_," said Tom, very slowly, as if the next words

might be expected to come sooner when he gave them this strong hint

that they were waited for.

"C, e, u," said Maggie, getting impatient.

"Oh, I know--hold your tongue," said Tom. "\_Ceu passer, hirundo;

Ferarum\_--\_ferarum\_----" Tom took his pencil and made several hard

dots with it on his book-cover--"\_ferarum\_----"

"Oh dear, oh dear, Tom," said Maggie, "what a time you are! \_Ut\_----"

"\_Ut ostrea\_----"

"No, no," said Maggie, "\_ut tigris\_----"

"Oh yes, now I can do," said Tom; "it was \_tigris, vulpes\_, I'd

forgotten: \_ut tigris, volupes; et Piscium\_."

With some further stammering and repetition, Tom got through the next

few lines.

"Now, then," he said, "the next is what I've just learned for

to-morrow. Give me hold of the book a minute."

After some whispered gabbling, assisted by the beating of his fist on

the table, Tom returned the book.

"\_Mascula nomina in a\_," he began.

"No, Tom," said Maggie, "that doesn't come next. It's \_Nomen non

creskens genittivo\_----"

"\_Creskens genittivo!\_" exclaimed Tom, with a derisive laugh, for Tom

had learned this omitted passage for his yesterday's lesson, and a

young gentleman does not require an intimate or extensive acquaintance

with Latin before he can feel the pitiable absurdity of a false

quantity. "\_Creskens genittivo!\_ What a little silly you are, Maggie!"

"Well, you needn't laugh, Tom, for you didn't remember it at all. I'm

sure it's spelt so; how was I to know?"

"Phee-e-e-h! I told you girls couldn't learn Latin. It's \_Nomen non

crescens genitivo\_."

"Very well, then," said Maggie, pouting. "I can say that as well as you

can. And you don't mind your stops. For you ought to stop twice as

long at a semicolon as you do at a comma, and you make the longest

stops where there ought to be no stop at all."

"Oh, well, don't chatter. Let me go on."

They were presently fetched to spend the rest of the evening in the

drawing-room, and Maggie became so animated with Mr. Stelling, who,

she felt sure, admired her cleverness, that Tom was rather amazed and

alarmed at her audacity. But she was suddenly subdued by Mr.

Stelling's alluding to a little girl of whom he had heard that she

once ran away to the gypsies.

"What a very odd little girl that must be!" said Mrs. Stelling,

meaning to be playful; but a playfulness that turned on her supposed

oddity was not at all to Maggie's taste. She feared that Mr. Stelling,

after all, did not think much of her, and went to bed in rather low

spirits. Mrs. Stelling, she felt, looked at her as if she thought her

hair was very ugly because it hung down straight behind.

Nevertheless it was a very happy fortnight to Maggie, this visit to

Tom. She was allowed to be in the study while he had his lessons, and

in her various readings got very deep into the examples in the Latin

Grammar. The astronomer who hated women generally caused her so much

puzzling speculation that she one day asked Mr. Stelling if all

astronomers hated women, or whether it was only this particular

astronomer. But forestalling his answer, she said,--

"I suppose it's all astronomers; because, you know, they live up in

high towers, and if the women came there they might talk and hinder

them from looking at the stars."

Mr. Stelling liked her prattle immensely, and they were on the best

terms. She told Tom she should like to go to school to Mr. Stelling,

as he did, and learn just the same things. She knew she could do

Euclid, for she had looked into it again, and she saw what A B C

meant; they were the names of the lines.

"I'm sure you couldn't do it, now," said Tom; "and I'll just ask Mr.

Stelling if you could."

"I don't mind," said the little conceited minx, "I'll ask him myself."

"Mr. Stelling," she said, that same evening when they were in the

drawing-room, "couldn't I do Euclid, and all Tom's lessons, if you

were to teach me instead of him?"

"No, you couldn't," said Tom, indignantly. "Girls can't do Euclid; can

they, sir?"

"They can pick up a little of everything, I dare say," said Mr.

Stelling. "They've a great deal of superficial cleverness; but they

couldn't go far into anything. They're quick and shallow."

Tom, delighted with this verdict, telegraphed his triumph by wagging

his head at Maggie, behind Mr. Stelling's chair. As for Maggie, she

had hardly ever been so mortified. She had been so proud to be called

"quick" all her little life, and now it appeared that this quickness

was the brand of inferiority. It would have been better to be slow,

like Tom.

"Ha, ha! Miss Maggie!" said Tom, when they were alone; "you see it's

not such a fine thing to be quick. You'll never go far into anything,

you know."

And Maggie was so oppressed by this dreadful destiny that she had no

spirit for a retort.

But when this small apparatus of shallow quickness was fetched away in

the gig by Luke, and the study was once more quite lonely for Tom, he

missed her grievously. He had really been brighter, and had got

through his lessons better, since she had been there; and she had

asked Mr. Stelling so many questions about the Roman Empire, and

whether there really ever was a man who said, in Latin, "I would not

buy it for a farthing or a rotten nut," or whether that had only been

turned into Latin, that Tom had actually come to a dim understanding

of the fact that there had once been people upon the earth who were so

fortunate as to know Latin without learning it through the medium of

the Eton Grammar. This luminous idea was a great addition to his

historical acquirements during this half-year, which were otherwise

confined to an epitomized history of the Jews.

But the dreary half-year \_did\_ come to an end. How glad Tom was to see

the last yellow leaves fluttering before the cold wind! The dark

afternoons and the first December snow seemed to him far livelier than

the August sunshine; and that he might make himself the surer about

the flight of the days that were carrying him homeward, he stuck

twenty-one sticks deep in a corner of the garden, when he was three

weeks from the holidays, and pulled one up every day with a great

wrench, throwing it to a distance with a vigor of will which would

have carried it to limbo, if it had been in the nature of sticks to

travel so far.

But it was worth purchasing, even at the heavy price of the Latin

Grammar, the happiness of seeing the bright light in the parlor at

home, as the gig passed noiselessly over the snow-covered bridge; the

happiness of passing from the cold air to the warmth and the kisses

and the smiles of that familiar hearth, where the pattern of the rug

and the grate and the fire-irons were "first ideas" that it was no

more possible to criticise than the solidity and extension of matter.

There is no sense of ease like the ease we felt in those scenes where

we were born, where objects became dear to us before we had known the

labor of choice, and where the outer world seemed only an extension of

our own personality; we accepted and loved it as we accepted our own

sense of existence and our own limbs. Very commonplace, even ugly,

that furniture of our early home might look if it were put up to

auction; an improved taste in upholstery scorns it; and is not the

striving after something better and better in our surroundings the

grand characteristic that distinguishes man from the brute, or, to

satisfy a scrupulous accuracy of definition, that distinguishes the

British man from the foreign brute? But heaven knows where that

striving might lead us, if our affections had not a trick of twining

round those old inferior things; if the loves and sanctities of our

life had no deep immovable roots in memory. One's delight in an

elderberry bush overhanging the confused leafage of a hedgerow bank,

as a more gladdening sight than the finest cistus or fuchsia spreading

itself on the softest undulating turf, is an entirely unjustifiable

preference to a nursery-gardener, or to any of those regulated minds

who are free from the weakness of any attachment that does not rest on

a demonstrable superiority of qualities. And there is no better reason

for preferring this elderberry bush than that it stirs an early

memory; that it is no novelty in my life, speaking to me merely

through my present sensibilities to form and color, but the long

companion of my existence, that wove itself into my joys when joys

were vivid.

Chapter II

The Christmas Holidays

Fine old Christmas, with the snowy hair and ruddy face, had done his

duty that year in the noblest fashion, and had set off his rich gifts

of warmth and color with all the heightening contrast of frost and

snow.

Snow lay on the croft and river-bank in undulations softer than the

limbs of infancy; it lay with the neatliest finished border on every

sloping roof, making the dark-red gables stand out with a new depth of

color; it weighed heavily on the laurels and fir-trees, till it fell

from them with a shuddering sound; it clothed the rough turnip-field

with whiteness, and made the sheep look like dark blotches; the gates

were all blocked up with the sloping drifts, and here and there a

disregarded four-footed beast stood as if petrified "in unrecumbent

sadness"; there was no gleam, no shadow, for the heavens, too, were

one still, pale cloud; no sound or motion in anything but the dark

river that flowed and moaned like an unresting sorrow. But old

Christmas smiled as he laid this cruel-seeming spell on the outdoor

world, for he meant to light up home with new brightness, to deepen

all the richness of indoor color, and give a keener edge of delight to

the warm fragrance of food; he meant to prepare a sweet imprisonment

that would strengthen the primitive fellowship of kindred, and make

the sunshine of familiar human faces as welcome as the hidden

day-star. His kindness fell but hardly on the homeless,--fell but

hardly on the homes where the hearth was not very warm, and where the

food had little fragrance; where the human faces had had no sunshine

in them, but rather the leaden, blank-eyed gaze of unexpectant want.

But the fine old season meant well; and if he has not learned the

secret how to bless men impartially, it is because his father Time,

with ever-unrelenting unrelenting purpose, still hides that secret in

his own mighty, slow-beating heart.

And yet this Christmas day, in spite of Tom's fresh delight in home,

was not, he thought, somehow or other, quite so happy as it had always

been before. The red berries were just as abundant on the holly, and

he and Maggie had dressed all the windows and mantlepieces and

picture-frames on Christmas eve with as much taste as ever, wedding

the thick-set scarlet clusters with branches of the black-berried ivy.

There had been singing under the windows after midnight,--supernatural

singing, Maggie always felt, in spite of Tom's contemptuous insistence

that the singers were old Patch, the parish clerk, and the rest of the

church choir; she trembled with awe when their carolling broke in upon

her dreams, and the image of men in fustian clothes was always thrust

away by the vision of angels resting on the parted cloud. The midnight

chant had helped as usual to lift the morning above the level of

common days; and then there were the smell of hot toast and ale from

the kitchen, at the breakfast hour; the favorite anthem, the green

boughs, and the short sermon gave the appropriate festal character to

the church-going; and aunt and uncle Moss, with all their seven

children, were looking like so many reflectors of the bright

parlor-fire, when the church-goers came back, stamping the snow from

their feet. The plum-pudding was of the same handsome roundness as

ever, and came in with the symbolic blue flames around it, as if it

had been heroically snatched from the nether fires, into which it had

been thrown by dyspeptic Puritans; the dessert was as splendid as

ever, with its golden oranges, brown nuts, and the crystalline light

and dark of apple-jelly and damson cheese; in all these things

Christmas was as it had always been since Tom could remember; it was

only distinguished, it by anything, by superior sliding and snowballs.

Christmas was cheery, but not so Mr. Tulliver. He was irate and

defiant; and Tom, though he espoused his father's quarrels and shared

his father's sense of injury, was not without some of the feeling that

oppressed Maggie when Mr. Tulliver got louder and more angry in

narration and assertion with the increased leisure of dessert. The

attention that Tom might have concentrated on his nuts and wine was

distracted by a sense that there were rascally enemies in the world,

and that the business of grown-up life could hardly be conducted

without a good deal of quarrelling. Now, Tom was not fond of

quarrelling, unless it could soon be put an end to by a fair stand-up

fight with an adversary whom he had every chance of thrashing; and his

father's irritable talk made him uncomfortable, though he never

accounted to himself for the feeling, or conceived the notion that his

father was faulty in this respect.

The particular embodiment of the evil principle now exciting Mr.

Tulliver's determined resistance was Mr. Pivart, who, having lands

higher up the Ripple, was taking measures for their irrigation, which

either were, or would be, or were bound to be (on the principle that

water was water), an infringement on Mr. Tulliver's legitimate share

of water-power. Dix, who had a mill on the stream, was a feeble

auxiliary of Old Harry compared with Pivart. Dix had been brought to

his senses by arbitration, and Wakem's advice had not carried \_him\_

far. No; Dix, Mr. Tulliver considered, had been as good as nowhere in

point of law; and in the intensity of his indignation against Pivart,

his contempt for a baffled adversary like Dix began to wear the air of

a friendly attachment. He had no male audience to-day except Mr. Moss,

who knew nothing, as he said, of the "natur' o' mills," and could only

assent to Mr. Tulliver's arguments on the \_a priori\_ ground of family

relationship and monetary obligation; but Mr. Tulliver did not talk

with the futile intention of convincing his audience, he talked to

relieve himself; while good Mr. Moss made strong efforts to keep his

eyes wide open, in spite of the sleepiness which an unusually good

dinner produced in his hard-worked frame. Mrs. Moss, more alive to the

subject, and interested in everything that affected her brother,

listened and put in a word as often as maternal preoccupations

allowed.

"Why, Pivart's a new name hereabout, brother, isn't it?" she said; "he

didn't own the land in father's time, nor yours either, before I was

married."

"New name? Yes, I should think it \_is\_ a new name," said Mr. Tulliver,

with angry emphasis. "Dorlcote Mill's been in our family a hundred

year and better, and nobody ever heard of a Pivart meddling with the

river, till this fellow came and bought Bincome's farm out of hand,

before anybody else could so much as say 'snap.' But I'll \_Pivart\_

him!" added Mr. Tulliver, lifting his glass with a sense that he had

defined his resolution in an unmistakable manner.

"You won't be forced to go to law with him, I hope, brother?" said

Mrs. Moss, with some anxiety.

"I don't know what I shall be forced to; but I know what I shall force

\_him\_ to, with his dikes and erigations, if there's any law to be

brought to bear o' the right side. I know well enough who's at the

bottom of it; he's got Wakem to back him and egg him on. I know Wakem

tells him the law can't touch him for it, but there's folks can handle

the law besides Wakem. It takes a big raskil to beat him; but there's

bigger to be found, as know more o' th' ins and outs o' the law, else

how came Wakem to lose Brumley's suit for him?"

Mr. Tulliver was a strictly honest man, and proud of being honest, but

he considered that in law the ends of justice could only be achieved

by employing a stronger knave to frustrate a weaker. Law was a sort of

cock-fight, in which it was the business of injured honesty to get a

game bird with the best pluck and the strongest spurs.

"Gore's no fool; you needn't tell me that," he observed presently, in

a pugnacious tone, as if poor Gritty had been urging that lawyer's

capabilities; "but, you see, he isn't up to the law as Wakem is. And

water's a very particular thing; you can't pick it up with a

pitchfork. That's why it's been nuts to Old Harry and the lawyers.

It's plain enough what's the rights and the wrongs of water, if you

look at it straight-forrard; for a river's a river, and if you've got

a mill, you must have water to turn it; and it's no use telling me

Pivart's erigation and nonsense won't stop my wheel; I know what

belongs to water better than that. Talk to me o' what th' engineers

say! I say it's common sense, as Pivart's dikes must do me an injury.

But if that's their engineering, I'll put Tom to it by-and-by, and he

shall see if he can't find a bit more sense in th' engineering

business than what \_that\_ comes to."

Tom, looking round with some anxiety at this announcement of his

prospects, unthinkingly withdrew a small rattle he was amusing baby

Moss with, whereupon she, being a baby that knew her own mind with

remarkable clearness, instantaneously expressed her sentiments in a

piercing yell, and was not to be appeased even by the restoration of

the rattle, feeling apparently that the original wrong of having it

taken from her remained in all its force. Mrs. Moss hurried away with

her into another room, and expressed to Mrs. Tulliver, who accompanied

her, the conviction that the dear child had good reasons for crying;

implying that if it was supposed to be the rattle that baby clamored

for, she was a misunderstood baby. The thoroughly justifiable yell

being quieted, Mrs. Moss looked at her sister-in-law and said,--

"I'm sorry to see brother so put out about this water work."

"It's your brother's way, Mrs. Moss; I'd never anything o' that sort

before I was married," said Mrs. Tulliver, with a half-implied

reproach. She always spoke of her husband as "your brother" to Mrs.

Moss in any case when his line of conduct was not matter of pure

admiration. Amiable Mrs. Tulliver, who was never angry in her life,

had yet her mild share of that spirit without which she could hardly

have been at once a Dodson and a woman. Being always on the defensive

toward her own sisters, it was natural that she should be keenly

conscious of her superiority, even as the weakest Dodson, over a

husband's sister, who, besides being poorly off, and inclined to "hang

on" her brother, had the good-natured submissiveness of a large,

easy-tempered, untidy, prolific woman, with affection enough in her

not only for her own husband and abundant children, but for any number

of collateral relations.

"I hope and pray he won't go to law," said Mrs. Moss, "for there's

never any knowing where that'll end. And the right doesn't allays win.

This Mr. Pivart's a rich man, by what I can make out, and the rich

mostly get things their own way."

"As to that," said Mrs. Tulliver, stroking her dress down, "I've seen

what riches are in my own family; for my sisters have got husbands as

can afford to do pretty much what they like. But I think sometimes I

shall be drove off my head with the talk about this law and erigation;

and my sisters lay all the fault to me, for they don't know what it is

to marry a man like your brother; how should they? Sister Pullet has

her own way from morning till night."

"Well," said Mrs. Moss, "I don't think I should like my husband if he

hadn't got any wits of his own, and I had to find head-piece for him.

It's a deal easier to do what pleases one's husband, than to be

puzzling what else one should do."

"If people come to talk o' doing what pleases their husbands," said

Mrs. Tulliver, with a faint imitation of her sister Glegg, "I'm sure

your brother might have waited a long while before he'd have found a

wife that 'ud have let him have his say in everything, as I do. It's

nothing but law and erigation now, from when we first get up in the

morning till we go to bed at night; and I never contradict him; I only

say, 'Well, Mr. Tulliver, do as you like; but whativer you do, don't

go to law."

Mrs. Tulliver, as we have seen, was not without influence over her

husband. No woman is; she can always incline him to do either what she

wishes, or the reverse; and on the composite impulses that were

threatening to hurry Mr. Tulliver into "law," Mrs. Tulliver's

monotonous pleading had doubtless its share of force; it might even be

comparable to that proverbial feather which has the credit or

discredit of breaking the camel's back; though, on a strictly

impartial view, the blame ought rather to lie with the previous weight

of feathers which had already placed the back in such imminent peril

that an otherwise innocent feather could not settle on it without

mischief. Not that Mrs. Tulliver's feeble beseeching could have had

this feather's weight in virtue of her single personality; but

whenever she departed from entire assent to her husband, he saw in her

the representative of the Dodson family; and it was a guiding

principle with Mr. Tulliver to let the Dodsons know that they were not

to domineer over \_him\_, or--more specifically--that a male Tulliver

was far more than equal to four female Dodsons, even though one of

them was Mrs. Glegg.

But not even a direct argument from that typical Dodson female herself

against his going to law could have heightened his disposition toward

it so much as the mere thought of Wakem, continually freshened by the

sight of the too able attorney on market-days. Wakem, to his certain

knowledge, was (metaphorically speaking) at the bottom of Pivart's

irrigation; Wakem had tried to make Dix stand out, and go to law about

the dam; it was unquestionably Wakem who had caused Mr. Tulliver to

lose the suit about the right of road and the bridge that made a

thoroughfare of his land for every vagabond who preferred an

opportunity of damaging private property to walking like an honest man

along the highroad; all lawyers were more or less rascals, but Wakem's

rascality was of that peculiarly aggravated kind which placed itself

in opposition to that form of right embodied in Mr. Tulliver's

interests and opinions. And as an extra touch of bitterness, the

injured miller had recently, in borrowing the five hundred pounds,

been obliged to carry a little business to Wakem's office on his own

account. A hook-nosed glib fellow! as cool as a cucumber,--always

looking so sure of his game! And it was vexatious that Lawyer Gore was

not more like him, but was a bald, round-featured man, with bland

manners and fat hands; a game-cock that you would be rash to bet upon

against Wakem. Gore was a sly fellow. His weakness did not lie on the

side of scrupulosity; but the largest amount of winking, however

significant, is not equivalent to seeing through a stone wall; and

confident as Mr. Tulliver was in his principle that water was water,

and in the direct inference that Pivart had not a leg to stand on in

this affair of irrigation, he had an uncomfortable suspicion that

Wakem had more law to show against this (rationally) irrefragable

inference than Gore could show for it. But then, if they went to law,

there was a chance for Mr. Tulliver to employ Counsellor Wylde on his

side, instead of having that admirable bully against him; and the

prospect of seeing a witness of Wakem's made to perspire and become

confounded, as Mr. Tulliver's witness had once been, was alluring to

the love of retributive justice.

Much rumination had Mr. Tulliver on these puzzling subjects during his

rides on the gray horse; much turning of the head from side to side,

as the scales dipped alternately; but the probable result was still

out of sight, only to be reached through much hot argument and

iteration in domestic and social life. That initial stage of the

dispute which consisted in the narration of the case and the

enforcement of Mr. Tulliver's views concerning it throughout the

entire circle of his connections would necessarily take time; and at

the beginning of February, when Tom was going to school again, there

were scarcely any new items to be detected in his father's statement

of the case against Pivart, or any more specific indication of the

measures he was bent on taking against that rash contravener of the

principle that water was water. Iteration, like friction, is likely to

generate heat instead of progress, and Mr. Tulliver's heat was

certainly more and more palpable. If there had been no new evidence on

any other point, there had been new evidence that Pivart was as "thick

as mud" with Wakem.

"Father," said Tom, one evening near the end of the holidays, "uncle

Glegg says Lawyer Wakem \_is\_ going to send his son to Mr. Stelling. It

isn't true, what they said about his going to be sent to France. You

won't like me to go to school with Wakem's son, shall you?"

"It's no matter for that, my boy," said Mr. Tulliver; "don't you learn

anything bad of him, that's all. The lad's a poor deformed creatur,

and takes after his mother in the face; I think there isn't much of

his father in him. It's a sign Wakem thinks high o' Mr. Sterling, as

he sends his son to him, and Wakem knows meal from bran."

Mr. Tulliver in his heart was rather proud of the fact that his son

was to have the same advantages as Wakem's; but Tom was not at all

easy on the point. It would have been much clearer if the lawyer's son

had not been deformed, for then Tom would have had the prospect of

pitching into him with all that freedom which is derived from a high

moral sanction.

Chapter III

The New Schoolfellow

It was a cold, wet January day on which Tom went back to school; a day

quite in keeping with this severe phase of his destiny. If he had not

carried in his pocket a parcel of sugar-candy and a small Dutch doll

for little Laura, there would have been no ray of expected pleasure to

enliven the general gloom. But he liked to think how Laura would put

out her lips and her tiny hands for the bits of sugarcandy; and to

give the greater keenness to these pleasures of imagination, he took

out the parcel, made a small hole in the paper, and bit off a crystal

or two, which had so solacing an effect under the confined prospect

and damp odors of the gig-umbrella, that he repeated the process more

than once on his way.

"Well, Tulliver, we're glad to see you again," said Mr. Stelling,

heartily. "Take off your wrappings and come into the study till

dinner. You'll find a bright fire there, and a new companion."

Tom felt in an uncomfortable flutter as he took off his woollen

comforter and other wrappings. He had seen Philip Wakem at St. Ogg's,

but had always turned his eyes away from him as quickly as possible.

He would have disliked having a deformed boy for his companion, even

if Philip had not been the son of a bad man. And Tom did not see how a

bad man's son could be very good. His own father was a good man, and

he would readily have fought any one who said the contrary. He was in

a state of mingled embarrassment and defiance as he followed Mr.

Stelling to the study.

"Here is a new companion for you to shake hands with, Tulliver," said

that gentleman on entering the study,--"Master Philip Wakem. I shall

leave you to make acquaintance by yourselves. You already know

something of each other, I imagine; for you are neighbors at home."

Tom looked confused and awkward, while Philip rose and glanced at him

timidly. Tom did not like to go up and put out his hand, and he was

not prepared to say, "How do you do?" on so short a notice.

Mr. Stelling wisely turned away, and closed the door behind him; boys'

shyness only wears off in the absence of their elders.

Philip was at once too proud and too timid to walk toward Tom. He

thought, or rather felt, that Tom had an aversion to looking at him;

every one, almost, disliked looking at him; and his deformity was more

conspicuous when he walked. So they remained without shaking hands or

even speaking, while Tom went to the fire and warmed himself, every

now and then casting furtive glances at Philip, who seemed to be

drawing absently first one object and then another on a piece of paper

he had before him. He had seated himself again, and as he drew, was

thinking what he could say to Tom, and trying to overcome his own

repugnance to making the first advances.

Tom began to look oftener and longer at Philip's face, for he could

see it without noticing the hump, and it was really not a disagreeable

face,--very old-looking, Tom thought. He wondered how much older

Philip was than himself. An anatomist--even a mere physiognomist--

would have seen that the deformity of Philip's spine was not a

congenital hump, but the result of an accident in infancy; but you

do not expect from Tom any acquaintance with such distinctions;

to him, Philip was simply a humpback. He had a vague notion

that the deformity of Wakem's son had some relation to the lawyer's

rascality, of which he had so often heard his father talk with hot

emphasis; and he felt, too, a half-admitted fear of him as probably

a spiteful fellow, who, not being able to fight you, had cunning

ways of doing you a mischief by the sly. There was a humpbacked

tailor in the neighborhood of Mr. Jacobs's academy, who was considered

a very unamiable character, and was much hooted after by public-spirited

boys solely on the ground of his unsatisfactory moral qualities; so

that Tom was not without a basis of fact to go upon. Still, no face

could be more unlike that ugly tailor's than this melancholy boy's

face,--the brown hair round it waved and curled at the ends like a

girl's; Tom thought that truly pitiable. This Wakem was a pale,

puny fellow, and it was quite clear he would not be able to play at

anything worth speaking of; but he handled his pencil in an enviable

manner, and was apparently making one thing after another without

any trouble. What was he drawing? Tom was quite warm now, and wanted

something new to be going forward. It was certainly more agreeable

to have an ill-natured humpback as a companion than to stand looking

out of the study window at the rain, and kicking his foot against

the washboard in solitude; something would happen every day,--

"a quarrel or something"; and Tom thought he should rather like to

show Philip that he had better not try his spiteful tricks on \_him\_.

He suddenly walked across the hearth and looked over Philip's paper.

"Why, that's a donkey with panniers, and a spaniel, and partridges in

the corn!" he exclaimed, his tongue being completely loosed by

surprise and admiration. "Oh my buttons! I wish I could draw like

that. I'm to learn drawing this half; I wonder if I shall learn to

make dogs and donkeys!"

"Oh, you can do them without learning," said Philip; "I never learned

drawing."

"Never learned?" said Tom, in amazement. "Why, when I make dogs and

horses, and those things, the heads and the legs won't come right;

though I can see how they ought to be very well. I can make houses,

and all sorts of chimneys,--chimneys going all down the wall,--and

windows in the roof, and all that. But I dare say I could do dogs and

horses if I was to try more," he added, reflecting that Philip might

falsely suppose that he was going to "knock under," if he were too

frank about the imperfection of his accomplishments.

"Oh, yes," said Philip, "it's very easy. You've only to look well at

things, and draw them over and over again. What you do wrong once, you

can alter the next time."

"But haven't you been taught \_any\_thing?" said Tom, beginning to have

a puzzled suspicion that Philip's crooked back might be the source of

remarkable faculties. "I thought you'd been to school a long while."

"Yes," said Philip, smiling; "I've been taught Latin and Greek and

mathematics, and writing and such things."

"Oh, but I say, you don't like Latin, though, do you?" said Tom,

lowering his voice confidentially.

"Pretty well; I don't care much about it," said Philip.

"Ah, but perhaps you haven't got into the \_Propria quÃ¦ maribus\_," said

Tom, nodding his head sideways, as much as to say, "that was the test;

it was easy talking till you came to \_that\_."

Philip felt some bitter complacency in the promising stupidity of this

well-made, active-looking boy; but made polite by his own extreme

sensitiveness, as well as by his desire to conciliate, he checked his

inclination to laugh, and said quietly,--

"I've done with the grammar; I don't learn that any more."

"Then you won't have the same lessons as I shall?" said Tom, with a

sense of disappointment.

"No; but I dare say I can help you. I shall be very glad to help you

if I can."

Tom did not say "Thank you," for he was quite absorbed in the thought

that Wakem's son did not seem so spiteful a fellow as might have been

expected.

"I say," he said presently, "do you love your father?"

"Yes," said Philip, coloring deeply; "don't you love yours?"

"Oh yes--I only wanted to know," said Tom, rather ashamed of himself,

now he saw Philip coloring and looking uncomfortable. He found much

difficulty in adjusting his attitude of mind toward the son of Lawyer

Wakem, and it had occurred to him that if Philip disliked his father,

that fact might go some way toward clearing up his perplexity.

"Shall you learn drawing now?" he said, by way of changing the

subject.

"No," said Philip. "My father wishes me to give all my time to other

things now."

"What! Latin and Euclid, and those things?" said Tom.

"Yes," said Philip, who had left off using his pencil, and was resting

his head on one hand, while Tom was learning forward on both elbows,

and looking with increasing admiration at the dog and the donkey.

"And you don't mind that?" said Tom, with strong curiosity.

"No; I like to know what everybody else knows. I can study what I like

by-and-by."

"I can't think why anybody should learn Latin," said Tom. "It's no

good."

"It's part of the education of a gentleman," said Philip. "All

gentlemen learn the same things."

"What! do you think Sir John Crake, the master of the harriers, knows

Latin?" said Tom, who had often thought he should like to resemble Sir

John Crake.

"He learned it when he was a boy, of course," said Philip. "But I dare

say he's forgotten it."

"Oh, well, I can do that, then," said Tom, not with any epigrammatic

intention, but with serious satisfaction at the idea that, as far as

Latin was concerned, there was no hindrance to his resembling Sir John

Crake. "Only you're obliged to remember it while you're at school,

else you've got to learn ever so many lines of 'Speaker.' Mr.

Stelling's very particular--did you know? He'll have you up ten times

if you say 'nam' for 'jam,'--he won't let you go a letter wrong, \_I\_

can tell you."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Philip, unable to choke a laugh; "I can

remember things easily. And there are some lessons I'm very fond of.

I'm very fond of Greek history, and everything about the Greeks. I

should like to have been a Greek and fought the Persians, and then

have come home and have written tragedies, or else have been listened

to by everybody for my wisdom, like Socrates, and have died a grand

death." (Philip, you perceive, was not without a wish to impress the

well-made barbarian with a sense of his mental superiority.)

"Why, were the Greeks great fighters?" said Tom, who saw a vista in

this direction. "Is there anything like David and Goliath and Samson

in the Greek history? Those are the only bits I like in the history of

the Jews."

"Oh, there are very fine stories of that sort about the Greeks,--about

the heroes of early times who killed the wild beasts, as Samson did.

And in the Odyssey--that's a beautiful poem--there's a more wonderful

giant than Goliath,--Polypheme, who had only one eye in the middle of

his forehead; and Ulysses, a little fellow, but very wise and cunning,

got a red-hot pine-tree and stuck it into this one eye, and made him

roar like a thousand bulls."

"Oh, what fun!" said Tom, jumping away from the table, and stamping

first with one leg and then the other. "I say, can you tell me all

about those stories? Because I sha'n't learn Greek, you know. Shall

I?" he added, pausing in his stamping with a sudden alarm, lest the

contrary might be possible. "Does every gentleman learn Greek? Will

Mr. Stelling make me begin with it, do you think?"

"No, I should think not, very likely not," said Philip. "But you may

read those stories without knowing Greek. I've got them in English."

"Oh, but I don't like reading; I'd sooner have you tell them me. But

only the fighting ones, you know. My sister Maggie is always wanting

to tell me stories, but they're stupid things. Girls' stories always

are. Can you tell a good many fighting stories?"

"Oh yes," said Philip; "lots of them, besides the Greek stories. I can

tell you about Richard CÅur-de-Lion and Saladin, and about William

Wallace and Robert Bruce and James Douglas,--I know no end."

"You're older than I am, aren't you?" said Tom.

"Why, how old are \_you?\_ I'm fifteen."

"I'm only going in fourteen," said Tom. "But I thrashed all the

fellows at Jacob's--that's where I was before I came here. And I beat

'em all at bandy and climbing. And I wish Mr. Stelling would let us go

fishing. \_I\_ could show you how to fish. You \_could\_ fish, couldn't

you? It's only standing, and sitting still, you know."

Tom, in his turn, wished to make the balance dip in his favor. This

hunchback must not suppose that his acquaintance with fighting stories

put him on a par with an actual fighting hero, like Tom Tulliver.

Philip winced under this allusion to his unfitness for active sports,

and he answered almost peevishly,--

"I can't bear fishing. I think people look like fools sitting watching

a line hour after hour, or else throwing and throwing, and catching

nothing."

"Ah, but you wouldn't say they looked like fools when they landed a

big pike, I can tell you," said Tom, who had never caught anything

that was "big" in his life, but whose imagination was on the stretch

with indignant zeal for the honor of sport. Wakem's son, it was plain,

had his disagreeable points, and must be kept in due check. Happily

for the harmony of this first interview, they were now called to

dinner, and Philip was not allowed to develop farther his unsound

views on the subject of fishing. But Tom said to himself, that was

just what he should have expected from a hunchback.

Chapter IV

"The Young Idea"

The alterations of feeling in that first dialogue between Tom and

Philip continued to make their intercourse even after many weeks of

schoolboy intimacy. Tom never quite lost the feeling that Philip,

being the son of a "rascal," was his natural enemy; never thoroughly

overcame his repulsion to Philip's deformity. He was a boy who adhered

tenaciously to impressions once received; as with all minds in which

mere perception predominates over thought and emotion, the external

remained to him rigidly what it was in the first instance. But then it

was impossible not to like Philip's company when he was in a good

humor; he could help one so well in one's Latin exercises, which Tom

regarded as a kind of puzzle that could only be found out by a lucky

chance; and he could tell such wonderful fighting stories about Hal of

the Wynd, for example, and other heroes who were especial favorites

with Tom, because they laid about them with heavy strokes. He had

small opinion of Saladin, whose cimeter could cut a cushion in two in

an instant; who wanted to cut cushions? That was a stupid story, and

he didn't care to hear it again. But when Robert Bruce, on the black

pony, rose in his stirrups, and lifting his good battle-axe, cracked

at once the helmet and the skull of the too hasty knight at

Bannockburn, then Tom felt all the exaltation of sympathy, and if he

had had a cocoanut at hand, he would have cracked it at once with the

poker. Philip in his happier moods indulged Tom to the top of his

bent, heightening the crash and bang and fury of every fight with all

the artillery of epithets and similes at his command. But he was not

always in a good humor or happy mood. The slight spurt of peevish

susceptibility which had escaped him in their first interview was a

symptom of a perpetually recurring mental ailment, half of it nervous

irritability, half of it the heart-bitterness produced by the sense of

his deformity. In these fits of susceptibility every glance seemed to

him to be charged either with offensive pity or with ill-repressed

disgust; at the very least it was an indifferent glance, and Philip

felt indifference as a child of the south feels the chill air of a

northern spring. Poor Tom's blundering patronage when they were out of

doors together would sometimes make him turn upon the well-meaning lad

quite savagely; and his eyes, usually sad and quiet, would flash with

anything but playful lightning. No wonder Tom retained his suspicions

of the humpback.

But Philip's self-taught skill in drawing was another link between

them; for Tom found, to his disgust, that his new drawing-master gave

him no dogs and donkeys to draw, but brooks and rustic bridges and

ruins, all with a general softness of black-lead surface, indicating

that nature, if anything, was rather satiny; and as Tom's feeling for

the picturesque in landscape was at present quite latent, it is not

surprising that Mr. Goodrich's productions seemed to him an

uninteresting form of art. Mr. Tulliver, having a vague intention that

Tom should be put to some business which included the drawing out of

plans and maps, had complained to Mr. Riley, when he saw him at

Mudport, that Tom seemed to be learning nothing of that sort;

whereupon that obliging adviser had suggested that Tom should have

drawing-lessons. Mr. Tulliver must not mind paying extra for drawing;

let Tom be made a good draughtsman, and he would be able to turn his

pencil to any purpose. So it was ordered that Tom should have

drawing-lessons; and whom should Mr. Stelling have selected as a

master if not Mr. Goodrich, who was considered quite at the head of

his profession within a circuit of twelve miles round King's Lorton?

By which means Tom learned to make an extremely fine point to his

pencil, and to represent landscape with a "broad generality," which,

doubtless from a narrow tendency in his mind to details, he thought

extremely dull.

All this, you remember, happened in those dark ages when there were no

schools of design; before schoolmasters were invariably men of

scrupulous integrity, and before the clergy were all men of enlarged

minds and varied culture. In those less favored days, it is no fable

that there were other clergymen besides Mr. Stelling who had narrow

intellects and large wants, and whose income, by a logical confusion

to which Fortune, being a female as well as blindfold, is peculiarly

liable, was proportioned not to their wants but to their intellect,

with which income has clearly no inherent relation. The problem these

gentlemen had to solve was to readjust the proportion between their

wants and their income; and since wants are not easily starved to

death, the simpler method appeared to be to raise their income. There

was but one way of doing this; any of those low callings in which men

are obliged to do good work at a low price were forbidden to

clergymen; was it their fault if their only resource was to turn out

very poor work at a high price? Besides, how should Mr. Stelling be

expected to know that education was a delicate and difficult business,

any more than an animal endowed with a power of boring a hole through

a rock should be expected to have wide views of excavation? Mr.

Stelling's faculties had been early trained to boring in a straight

line, and he had no faculty to spare. But among Tom's contemporaries,

whose fathers cast their sons on clerical instruction to find them

ignorant after many days, there were many far less lucky than Tom

Tulliver. Education was almost entirely a matter of luck--usually of

ill-luck--in those distant days. The state of mind in which you take a

billiard-cue or a dice-box in your hand is one of sober certainty

compared with that of old-fashioned fathers, like Mr. Tulliver, when

they selected a school or a tutor for their sons. Excellent men, who

had been forced all their lives to spell on an impromptu-phonetic

system, and having carried on a successful business in spite of this

disadvantage, had acquired money enough to give their sons a better

start in life than they had had themselves, must necessarily take

their chance as to the conscience and the competence of the

schoolmaster whose circular fell in their way, and appeared to promise

so much more than they would ever have thought of asking for,

including the return of linen, fork, and spoon. It was happy for them

if some ambitious draper of their acquaintance had not brought up his

son to the Church, and if that young gentleman, at the age of

four-and-twenty, had not closed his college dissipations by an

imprudent marriage; otherwise, these innocent fathers, desirous of

doing the best for their offspring, could only escape the draper's son

by happening to be on the foundation of a grammar-school as yet

unvisited by commissioners, where two or three boys could have, all to

themselves, the advantages of a large and lofty building, together

with a head-master, toothless, dim-eyed and deaf, whose erudite

indistinctness and inattention were engrossed by them at the rate of

three hundred pounds a-head,--a ripe scholar, doubtless, when first

appointed; but all ripeness beneath the sun has a further stage less

esteemed in the market.

Tom Tulliver, then, compared with many other British youths of his

time who have since had to scramble through life with some fragments

of more or less relevant knowledge, and a great deal of strictly

relevant ignorance, was not so very unlucky. Mr. Stelling was a

broad-chested, healthy man, with the bearing of a gentleman, a

conviction that a growing boy required a sufficiency of beef, and a

certain hearty kindness in him that made him like to see Tom looking

well and enjoying his dinner; not a man of refined conscience, or with

any deep sense of the infinite issues belonging to every-day duties,

not quite competent to his high offices; but incompetent gentlemen

must live, and without private fortune it is difficult to see how they

could all live genteelly if they had nothing to do with education or

government. Besides, it was the fault of Tom's mental constitution

that his faculties could not be nourished on the sort of knowledge Mr.

Stelling had to communicate. A boy born with a deficient power of

apprehending signs and abstractions must suffer the penalty of his

congenital deficiency, just as if he had been born with one leg

shorter than the other. A method of education sanctioned by the long

practice of our venerable ancestors was not to give way before the

exceptional dulness of a boy who was merely living at the time then

present. And Mr. Stelling was convinced that a boy so stupid at signs

and abstractions must be stupid at everything else, even if that

reverend gentleman could have taught him everything else. It was the

practice of our venerable ancestors to apply that ingenious instrument

the thumb-screw, and to tighten and tighten it in order to elicit

non-existent facts; they had a fixed opinion to begin with, that the

facts were existent, and what had they to do but to tighten the

thumb-screw? In like manner, Mr. Stelling had a fixed opinion that all

boys with any capacity could learn what it was the only regular thing

to teach; if they were slow, the thumb-screw must be tightened,--the

exercises must be insisted on with increased severity, and a page of

Virgil be awarded as a penalty, to encourage and stimulate a too

languid inclination to Latin verse.

The thumb-screw was a little relaxed, however, during this second

half-year. Philip was so advanced in his studies, and so apt, that Mr.

Stelling could obtain credit by his facility, which required little

help, much more easily than by the troublesome process of overcoming

Tom's dulness. Gentlemen with broad chests and ambitious intentions do

sometimes disappoint their friends by failing to carry the world

before them. Perhaps it is that high achievements demand some other

unusual qualification besides an unusual desire for high prizes;

perhaps it is that these stalwart gentlemen are rather indolent, their

\_divinÃ¦ particulum aurÃ¦\_ being obstructed from soaring by a too hearty

appetite. Some reason or other there was why Mr. Stelling deferred the

execution of many spirited projects,--why he did not begin the editing

of his Greek play, or any other work of scholarship, in his leisure

hours, but, after turning the key of his private study with much

resolution, sat down to one of Theodore Hook's novels. Tom was

gradually allowed to shuffle through his lessons with less rigor, and

having Philip to help him, he was able to make some show of having

applied his mind in a confused and blundering way, without being

cross-examined into a betrayal that his mind had been entirely neutral

in the matter. He thought school much more bearable under this

modification of circumstances; and he went on contentedly enough,

picking up a promiscuous education chiefly from things that were not

intended as education at all. What was understood to be his education

was simply the practice of reading, writing, and spelling, carried on

by an elaborate appliance of unintelligible ideas, and by much failure

in the effort to learn by rote.

Nevertheless, there was a visible improvement in Tom under this

training; perhaps because he was not a boy in the abstract, existing

solely to illustrate the evils of a mistaken education, but a boy made

of flesh and blood, with dispositions not entirely at the mercy of

circumstances.

There was a great improvement in his bearing, for example; and some

credit on this score was due to Mr. Poulter, the village schoolmaster,

who, being an old Peninsular soldier, was employed to drill Tom,--a

source of high mutual pleasure. Mr. Poulter, who was understood by the

company at the Black Swan to have once struck terror into the hearts

of the French, was no longer personally formidable. He had rather a

shrunken appearance, and was tremulous in the mornings, not from age,

but from the extreme perversity of the King's Lorton boys, which

nothing but gin could enable him to sustain with any firmness. Still,

he carried himself with martial erectness, had his clothes

scrupulously brushed, and his trousers tightly strapped; and on the

Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, when he came to Tom, he was always

inspired with gin and old memories, which gave him an exceptionally

spirited air, as of a superannuated charger who hears the drum. The

drilling-lessons were always protracted by episodes of warlike

narrative, much more interesting to Tom than Philip's stories out of

the Iliad; for there were no cannon in the Iliad, and besides, Tom had

felt some disgust on learning that Hector and Achilles might possibly

never have existed. But the Duke of Wellington was really alive, and

Bony had not been long dead; therefore Mr. Poulter's reminiscences of

the Peninsular War were removed from all suspicion of being mythical.

Mr. Poulter, it appeared, had been a conspicuous figure at Talavera,

and had contributed not a little to the peculiar terror with which his

regiment of infantry was regarded by the enemy. On afternoons when his

memory was more stimulated than usual, he remembered that the Duke of

Wellington had (in strict privacy, lest jealousies should be awakened)

expressed his esteem for that fine fellow Poulter. The very surgeon

who attended him in the hospital after he had received his

gunshot-wound had been profoundly impressed with the superiority of

Mr. Poulter's flesh,--no other flesh would have healed in anything

like the same time. On less personal matters connected with the

important warfare in which he had been engaged, Mr. Poulter was more

reticent, only taking care not to give the weight of his authority to

any loose notions concerning military history. Any one who pretended

to a knowledge of what occurred at the siege of Badajos was especially

an object of silent pity to Mr. Poulter; he wished that prating person

had been run down, and had the breath trampled out of him at the first

go-off, as he himself had,--he might talk about the siege of Badajos

then! Tom did not escape irritating his drilling-master occasionally,

by his curiosity concerning other military matters than Mr. Poulter's

personal experience.

"And General Wolfe, Mr. Poulter,--wasn't he a wonderful fighter?" said

Tom, who held the notion that all the martial heroes commemorated on

the public-house signs were engaged in the war with Bony.

"Not at all!" said Mr. Poulter, contemptuously. "Nothing o' the sort!

Heads up!" he added, in a tone of stern command, which delighted Tom,

and made him feel as if he were a regiment in his own person.

"No, no!" Mr. Poulter would continue, on coming to a pause in his

discipline; "they'd better not talk to me about General Wolfe. He did

nothing but die of his wound; that's a poor haction, I consider. Any

other man 'ud have died o' the wounds I've had. One of my sword-cuts

'ud ha' killed a fellow like General Wolfe."

"Mr. Poulter," Tom would say, at any allusion to the sword, "I wish

you'd bring your sword and do the sword-exercise!"

For a long while Mr. Poulter only shook his head in a significant

manner at this request, and smiled patronizingly, as Jupiter may have

done when Semele urged her too ambitious request. But one afternoon,

when a sudden shower of heavy rain had detained Mr. Poulter twenty

minutes longer than usual at the Black Swan, the sword was

brought,--just for Tom to look at.

"And this is the real sword you fought with in all the battles, Mr.

Poulter?" said Tom, handling the hilt. "Has it ever cut a Frenchman's

head off?"

"Head off? Ah! and would, if he'd had three heads."

"But you had a gun and bayonet besides?" said Tom. "\_I\_ should like

the gun and bayonet best, because you could shoot 'em first and spear

'em after. Bang! Ps-s-s-s!" Tom gave the requisite pantomime to

indicate the double enjoyment of pulling the trigger and thrusting the

spear.

"Ah, but the sword's the thing when you come to close fighting," said

Mr. Poulter, involuntarily falling in with Tom's enthusiasm, and

drawing the sword so suddenly that Tom leaped back with much agility.

"Oh, but, Mr. Poulter, if you're going to do the exercise," said Tom,

a little conscious that he had not stood his ground as became an

Englishman, "let me go and call Philip. He'll like to see you, you

know."

"What! the humpbacked lad?" said Mr. Poulter, contemptuously; "what's

the use of \_his\_ looking on?"

"Oh, but he knows a great deal about fighting," said Tom, "and how

they used to fight with bows and arrows, and battle-axes."

"Let him come, then. I'll show him something different from his bows

and arrows," said Mr. Poulter, coughing and drawing himself up, while

he gave a little preliminary play to his wrist.

Tom ran in to Philip, who was enjoying his afternoon's holiday at the

piano, in the drawing-room, picking out tunes for himself and singing

them. He was supremely happy, perched like an amorphous bundle on the

high stool, with his head thrown back, his eyes fixed on the opposite

cornice, and his lips wide open, sending forth, with all his might,

impromptu syllables to a tune of Arne's which had hit his fancy.

"Come, Philip," said Tom, bursting in; "don't stay roaring 'la la'

there; come and see old Poulter do his sword-exercise in the

carriage-house!"

The jar of this interruption, the discord of Tom's tones coming across

the notes to which Philip was vibrating in soul and body, would have

been enough to unhinge his temper, even if there had been no question

of Poulter the drilling-master; and Tom, in the hurry of seizing

something to say to prevent Mr. Poulter from thinking he was afraid of

the sword when he sprang away from it, had alighted on this

proposition to fetch Philip, though he knew well enough that Philip

hated to hear him mention his drilling-lessons. Tom would never have

done so inconsiderate a thing except under the severe stress of his

personal pride.

Philip shuddered visibly as he paused from his music. Then turning

red, he said, with violent passion,--

"Get away, you lumbering idiot! Don't come bellowing at me; you're not

fit to speak to anything but a cart-horse!"

It was not the first time Philip had been made angry by him, but Tom

had never before been assailed with verbal missiles that he understood

so well.

"I'm fit to speak to something better than you, you poor-spirited

imp!" said Tom, lighting up immediately at Philip's fire. "You know I

won't hit you, because you're no better than a girl. But I'm an honest

man's son, and \_your\_ father's a rogue; everybody says so!"

Tom flung out of the room, and slammed the door after him, made

strangely heedless by his anger; for to slam doors within the hearing

of Mrs. Stelling, who was probably not far off, was an offence only to

be wiped out by twenty lines of Virgil. In fact, that lady did

presently descend from her room, in double wonder at the noise and the

subsequent cessation of Philip's music. She found him sitting in a

heap on the hassock, and crying bitterly.

"What's the matter, Wakem? what was that noise about? Who slammed the

door?"

Philip looked up, and hastily dried his eyes. "It was Tulliver who

came in--to ask me to go out with him."

"And what are you in trouble about?" said Mrs. Stelling.

Philip was not her favorite of the two pupils; he was less obliging

than Tom, who was made useful in many ways. Still, his father paid

more than Mr. Tulliver did, and she meant him to feel that she behaved

exceedingly well to him. Philip, however, met her advances toward a

good understanding very much as a caressed mollusk meets an invitation

to show himself out of his shell. Mrs. Stelling was not a loving,

tender-hearted woman; she was a woman whose skirt sat well, who

adjusted her waist and patted her curls with a preoccupied air when

she inquired after your welfare. These things, doubtless, represent a

great social power, but it is not the power of love; and no other

power could win Philip from his personal reserve.

He said, in answer to her question, "My toothache came on, and made me

hysterical again."

This had been the fact once, and Philip was glad of the recollection;

it was like an inspiration to enable him to excuse his crying. He had

to accept eau-de-Cologne and to refuse creosote in consequence; but

that was easy.

Meanwhile Tom, who had for the first time sent a poisoned arrow into

Philip's heart, had returned to the carriage-house, where he found Mr.

Poulter, with a fixed and earnest eye, wasting the perfections of his

sword-exercise on probably observant but inappreciative rats. But Mr.

Poulter was a host in himself; that is to say, he admired himself more

than a whole army of spectators could have admired him. He took no

notice of Tom's return, being too entirely absorbed in the cut and

thrust,--the solemn one, two, three, four; and Tom, not without a

slight feeling of alarm at Mr. Poulter's fixed eye and hungry-looking

sword, which seemed impatient for something else to cut besides the

air, admired the performance from as great a distance as possible. It

was not until Mr. Poulter paused and wiped the perspiration from his

forehead, that Tom felt the full charm of the sword-exercise, and

wished it to be repeated.

"Mr. Poulter," said Tom, when the sword was being finally sheathed, "I

wish you'd lend me your sword a little while to keep."

"No no, young gentleman," said Mr. Poulter, shaking his head

decidedly; "you might do yourself some mischief with it."

"No, I'm sure I wouldn't; I'm sure I'd take care and not hurt myself.

I shouldn't take it out of the sheath much, but I could ground arms

with it, and all that."

"No, no, it won't do, I tell you; it won't do," said Mr. Poulter,

preparing to depart. "What 'ud Mr. Stelling say to me?"

"Oh, I say, do, Mr. Poulter! I'd give you my five-shilling piece if

you'd let me keep the sword a week. Look here!" said Tom, reaching out

the attractively large round of silver. The young dog calculated the

effect as well as if he had been a philosopher.

"Well," said Mr. Poulter, with still deeper gravity, "you must keep it

out of sight, you know."

"Oh yes, I'll keep it under the bed," said Tom, eagerly, "or else at

the bottom of my large box."

"And let me see, now, whether you can draw it out of the sheath

without hurting yourself." That process having been gone through more

than once, Mr. Poulter felt that he had acted with scrupulous

conscientiousness, and said, "Well, now, Master Tulliver, if I take

the crown-piece, it is to make sure as you'll do no mischief with the

sword."

"Oh no, indeed, Mr. Poulter," said Tom, delightedly handing him the

crown-piece, and grasping the sword, which, he thought, might have

been lighter with advantage.

"But if Mr. Stelling catches you carrying it in?" said Mr. Poulter,

pocketing the crown-piece provisionally while he raised this new

doubt.

"Oh, he always keeps in his upstairs study on Saturday afternoon,"

said Tom, who disliked anything sneaking, but was not disinclined to a

little stratagem in a worthy cause. So he carried off the sword in

triumph mixed with dread--dread that he might encounter Mr. or Mrs.

Stelling--to his bedroom, where, after some consideration, he hid it

in the closet behind some hanging clothes. That night he fell asleep

in the thought that he would astonish Maggie with it when she

came,--tie it round his waist with his red comforter, and make her

believe that the sword was his own, and that he was going to be a

soldier. There was nobody but Maggie who would be silly enough to

believe him, or whom he dared allow to know he had a sword; and Maggie

was really coming next week to see Tom, before she went to a

boarding-school with Lucy.

If you think a lad of thirteen would have been so childish, you must

be an exceptionally wise man, who, although you are devoted to a civil

calling, requiring you to look bland rather than formidable, yet

never, since you had a beard, threw yourself into a martial attitude,

and frowned before the looking-glass. It is doubtful whether our

soldiers would be maintained if there were not pacific people at home

who like to fancy themselves soldiers. War, like other dramatic

spectacles, might possibly cease for want of a "public."

Chapter V

Maggie's Second Visit

This last breach between the two lads was not readily mended, and for

some time they spoke to each other no more than was necessary. Their

natural antipathy of temperament made resentment an easy passage to

hatred, and in Philip the transition seemed to have begun; there was

no malignity in his disposition, but there was a susceptibility that

made him peculiarly liable to a strong sense of repulsion. The ox--we

may venture to assert it on the authority of a great classic--is not

given to use his teeth as an instrument of attack, and Tom was an

excellent bovine lad, who ran at questionable objects in a truly

ingenious bovine manner; but he had blundered on Philip's tenderest

point, and had caused him as much acute pain as if he had studied the

means with the nicest precision and the most envenomed spite. Tom saw

no reason why they should not make up this quarrel as they had done

many others, by behaving as if nothing had happened; for though he had

never before said to Philip that his father was a rogue, this idea had

so habitually made part of his feeling as to the relation between

himself and his dubious schoolfellow, who he could neither like nor

dislike, that the mere utterance did not make such an epoch to him as

it did to Philip. And he had a right to say so when Philip hectored

over \_him\_, and called him names. But perceiving that his first

advances toward amity were not met, he relapsed into his least

favorable disposition toward Philip, and resolved never to appeal to

him either about drawing or exercise again. They were only so far

civil to each other as was necessary to prevent their state of feud

from being observed by Mr. Stelling, who would have "put down" such

nonsense with great vigor.

When Maggie came, however, she could not help looking with growing

interest at the new schoolfellow, although he was the son of that

wicked Lawyer Wakem, who made her father so angry. She had arrived in

the middle of school-hours, and had sat by while Philip went through

his lessons with Mr. Stelling. Tom, some weeks ago, had sent her word

that Philip knew no end of stories,--not stupid stories like hers; and

she was convinced now from her own observation that he must be very

clever; she hoped he would think \_her\_ rather clever too, when she

came to talk to him. Maggie, moreover, had rather a tenderness for

deformed things; she preferred the wry-necked lambs, because it seemed

to her that the lambs which were quite strong and well made wouldn't

mind so much about being petted; and she was especially fond of

petting objects that would think it very delightful to be petted by

her. She loved Tom very dearly, but she often wished that he \_cared\_

more about her loving him.

"I think Philip Wakem seems a nice boy, Tom," she said, when they went

out of the study together into the garden, to pass the interval before

dinner. "He couldn't choose his father, you know; and I've read of

very bad men who had good sons, as well as good parents who had bad

children. And if Philip is good, I think we ought to be the more sorry

for him because his father is not a good man. \_You\_ like him, don't

you?"

"Oh, he's a queer fellow," said Tom, curtly, "and he's as sulky as can

be with me, because I told him his father was a rogue. And I'd a right

to tell him so, for it was true; and \_he\_ began it, with calling me

names. But you stop here by yourself a bit, Maggie, will you? I've got

something I want to do upstairs."

"Can't I go too?" said Maggie, who in this first day of meeting again

loved Tom's shadow.

"No, it's something I'll tell you about by-and-by, not yet," said Tom,

skipping away.

In the afternoon the boys were at their books in the study, preparing

the morrow's lesson's that they might have a holiday in the evening in

honor of Maggie's arrival. Tom was hanging over his Latin grammar,

moving his lips inaudibly like a strict but impatient Catholic

repeating his tale of paternosters; and Philip, at the other end of

the room, was busy with two volumes, with a look of contented

diligence that excited Maggie's curiosity; he did not look at all as

if he were learning a lesson. She sat on a low stool at nearly a right

angle with the two boys, watching first one and then the other; and

Philip, looking off his book once toward the fire-place, caught the

pair of questioning dark eyes fixed upon him. He thought this sister

of Tulliver's seemed a nice little thing, quite unlike her brother; he

wished \_he\_ had a little sister. What was it, he wondered, that made

Maggie's dark eyes remind him of the stories about princesses being

turned into animals? I think it was that her eyes were full of

unsatisfied intelligence, and unsatisfied beseeching affection.

"I say, Magsie," said Tom at last, shutting his books and putting them

away with the energy and decision of a perfect master in the art of

leaving off, "I've done my lessons now. Come upstairs with me."

"What is it?" said Maggie, when they were outside the door, a slight

suspicion crossing her mind as she remembered Tom's preliminary visit

upstairs. "It isn't a trick you're going to play me, now?"

"No, no, Maggie," said Tom, in his most coaxing tone; "It's something

you'll like \_ever so\_."

He put his arm round her neck, and she put hers round his waist, and

twined together in this way, they went upstairs.

"I say, Magsie, you must not tell anybody, you know," said Tom, "else

I shall get fifty lines."

"Is it alive?" said Maggie, whose imagination had settled for the

moment on the idea that Tom kept a ferret clandestinely.

"Oh, I sha'n't tell you," said he. "Now you go into that corner and

hide your face, while I reach it out," he added, as he locked the

bedroom door behind them. "I'll tell you when to turn round. You

mustn't squeal out, you know."

"Oh, but if you frighten me, I shall," said Maggie, beginning to look

rather serious.

"You won't be frightened, you silly thing," said Tom. "Go and hide

your face, and mind you don't peep."

"Of course I sha'n't peep," said Maggie, disdainfully; and she buried

her face in the pillow like a person of strict honor.

But Tom looked round warily as he walked to the closet; then he

stepped into the narrow space, and almost closed the door. Maggie kept

her face buried without the aid of principle, for in that

dream-suggestive attitude she had soon forgotten where she was, and

her thoughts were busy with the poor deformed boy, who was so clever,

when Tom called out, "Now then, Magsie!"

Nothing but long meditation and preconcerted arrangement of effects

would have enabled Tom to present so striking a figure as he did to

Maggie when she looked up. Dissatisfied with the pacific aspect of a

face which had no more than the faintest hint of flaxen eyebrow,

together with a pair of amiable blue-gray eyes and round pink cheeks

that refused to look formidable, let him frown as he would before the

looking-glass (Philip had once told him of a man who had a horseshoe

frown, and Tom had tried with all his frowning might to make a

horseshoe on his forehead), he had had recourse to that unfailing

source of the terrible, burnt cork, and had made himself a pair of

black eyebrows that met in a satisfactory manner over his nose, and

were matched by a less carefully adjusted blackness about the chin. He

had wound a red handkerchief round his cloth cap to give it the air of

a turban, and his red comforter across his breast as a scarf,--an

amount of red which, with the tremendous frown on his brow, and the

decision with which he grasped the sword, as he held it with its point

resting on the ground, would suffice to convey an approximate idea of

his fierce and bloodthirsty disposition.

Maggie looked bewildered for a moment, and Tom enjoyed that moment

keenly; but in the next she laughed, clapped her hands together, and

said, "Oh, Tom, you've made yourself like Bluebeard at the show."

It was clear she had not been struck with the presence of the

sword,--it was not unsheathed. Her frivolous mind required a more

direct appeal to its sense of the terrible, and Tom prepared for his

master-stroke. Frowning with a double amount of intention, if not of

corrugation, he (carefully) drew the sword from its sheath, and

pointed it at Maggie.

"Oh, Tom, please don't!" exclaimed Maggie, in a tone of suppressed

dread, shrinking away from him into the opposite corner. "I \_shall\_

scream--I'm sure I shall! Oh, don't I wish I'd never come upstairs!"

The corners of Tom's mouth showed an inclination to a smile of

complacency that was immediately checked as inconsistent with the

severity of a great warrior. Slowly he let down the scabbard on the

floor, lest it should make too much noise, and then said sternly,--

"I'm the Duke of Wellington! March!" stamping forward with the right

leg a little bent, and the sword still pointing toward Maggie, who,

trembling, and with tear-filled eyes, got upon the bed, as the only

means of widening the space between them.

Tom, happy in this spectator of his military performances, even though

the spectator was only Maggie, proceeded, with the utmost exertion of

his force, to such an exhibition of the cut and thrust as would

necessarily be expected of the Duke of Wellington.

"Tom, I \_will not\_ bear it, I \_will\_ scream," said Maggie, at the

first movement of the sword. "You'll hurt yourself; you'll cut your

head off!"

"One--two," said Tom, resolutely, though at "two" his wrist trembled a

little. "Three" came more slowly, and with it the sword swung

downward, and Maggie gave a loud shriek. The sword had fallen, with

its edge on Tom's foot, and in a moment after he had fallen too.

Maggie leaped from the bed, still shrieking, and immediately there was

a rush of footsteps toward the room. Mr. Stelling, from his upstairs

study, was the first to enter. He found both the children on the

floor. Tom had fainted, and Maggie was shaking him by the collar of

his jacket, screaming, with wild eyes. She thought he was dead, poor

child! and yet she shook him, as if that would bring him back to life.

In another minute she was sobbing with joy because Tom opened his

eyes. She couldn't sorrow yet that he had hurt his foot; it seemed as

if all happiness lay in his being alive.

Chapter VI

A Love-Scene

Poor Tom bore his severe pain heroically, and was resolute in not

"telling" of Mr. Poulter more than was unavoidable; the five-shilling

piece remained a secret even to Maggie. But there was a terrible dread

weighing on his mind, so terrible that he dared not even ask the

question which might bring the fatal "yes"; he dared not ask the

surgeon or Mr. Stelling, "Shall I be lame, Sir?" He mastered himself

so as not to cry out at the pain; but when his foot had been dressed,

and he was left alone with Maggie seated by his bedside, the children

sobbed together, with their heads laid on the same pillow. Tom was

thinking of himself walking about on crutches, like the wheelwright's

son; and Maggie, who did not guess what was in his mind, sobbed for

company. It had not occurred to the surgeon or to Mr. Stelling to

anticipate this dread in Tom's mind, and to reassure him by hopeful

words. But Philip watched the surgeon out of the house, and waylaid

Mr. Stelling to ask the very question that Tom had not dared to ask

for himself.

"I beg your pardon, sir,--but does Mr. Askern say Tulliver will be

lame?"

"Oh, no; oh, no," said Mr. Stelling, "not permanently; only for a

little while."

"Did he tell Tulliver so, sir, do you think?"

"No; nothing was said to him on the subject."

"Then may I go and tell him, sir?"

"Yes, to be sure; now you mention it, I dare say he may be troubling

about that. Go to his bedroom, but be very quiet at present."

It had been Philip's first thought when he heard of the

accident,--"Will Tulliver be lame? It will be very hard for him if he

is"; and Tom's hitherto unforgiven offences were washed out by that

pity. Philip felt that they were no longer in a state of repulsion,

but were being drawn into a common current of suffering and sad

privation. His imagination did not dwell on the outward calamity and

its future effect on Tom's life, but it made vividly present to him

the probable state of Tom's feeling. Philip had only lived fourteen

years, but those years had, most of them, been steeped in the sense of

a lot irremediably hard.

"Mr. Askern says you'll soon be all right again, Tulliver, did you

know?" he said rather timidly, as he stepped gently up to Tom's bed.

"I've just been to ask Mr. Stelling, and he says you'll walk as well

as ever again by-and-day."

Tom looked up with that momentary stopping of the breath which comes

with a sudden joy; then he gave a long sigh, and turned his blue-gray

eyes straight on Philip's face, as he had not done for a fortnight or

more. As for Maggie, this intimation of a possibility she had not

thought of before affected her as a new trouble; the bare idea of

Tom's being always lame overpowered the assurance that such a

misfortune was not likely to befall him, and she clung to him and

cried afresh.

"Don't be a little silly, Magsie," said Tom, tenderly, feeling very

brave now. "I shall soon get well."

"Good-by, Tulliver," said Philip, putting out his small, delicate

hand, which Tom clasped immediately with his more substantial fingers.

"I say," said Tom, "ask Mr. Stelling to let you come and sit with me

sometimes, till I get up again, Wakem; and tell me about Robert Bruce,

you know."

After that, Philip spent all his time out of school-hours with Tom and

Maggie. Tom liked to hear fighting stories as much as ever, but he

insisted strongly on the fact that those great fighters who did so

many wonderful things and came off unhurt, wore excellent armor from

head to foot, which made fighting easy work, he considered. He should

not have hurt his foot if he had had an iron shoe on. He listened with

great interest to a new story of Philip's about a man who had a very

bad wound in his foot, and cried out so dreadfully with the pain that

his friends could bear with him no longer, but put him ashore on a

desert island, with nothing but some wonderful poisoned arrows to kill

animals with for food.

"I didn't roar out a bit, you know," Tom said, "and I dare say my foot

was as bad as his. It's cowardly to roar."

But Maggie would have it that when anything hurt you very much, it was

quite permissible to cry out, and it was cruel of people not to bear

it. She wanted to know if Philoctetes had a sister, and why \_she\_

didn't go with him on the desert island and take care of him.

One day, soon after Philip had told this story, he and Maggie were in

the study alone together while Tom's foot was being dressed. Philip

was at his books, and Maggie, after sauntering idly round the room,

not caring to do anything in particular, because she would soon go to

Tom again, went and leaned on the table near Philip to see what he was

doing, for they were quite old friends now, and perfectly at home with

each other.

"What are you reading about in Greek?" she said. "It's poetry, I can

see that, because the lines are so short."

"It's about Philoctetes, the lame man I was telling you of yesterday,"

he answered, resting his head on his hand, and looking at her as if he

were not at all sorry to be interrupted. Maggie, in her absent way,

continued to lean forward, resting on her arms and moving her feet

about, while her dark eyes got more and more fixed and vacant, as if

she had quite forgotten Philip and his book.

"Maggie," said Philip, after a minute or two, still leaning on his

elbow and looking at her, "if you had had a brother like me, do you

think you should have loved him as well as Tom?"

Maggie started a little on being roused from her reverie, and said,

"What?" Philip repeated his question.

"Oh, yes, better," she answered immediately. "No, not better; because

I don't think I \_could\_ love you better than Tom. But I should be so

sorry,--\_so sorry\_ for you."

Philip colored; he had meant to imply, would she love him as well in

spite of his deformity, and yet when she alluded to it so plainly, he

winced under her pity. Maggie, young as she was, felt her mistake.

Hitherto she had instinctively behaved as if she were quite

unconscious of Philip's deformity; her own keen sensitiveness and

experience under family criticism sufficed to teach her this as well

as if she had been directed by the most finished breeding.

"But you are so very clever, Philip, and you can play and sing," she

added quickly. "I wish you \_were\_ my brother. I'm very fond of you.

And you would stay at home with me when Tom went out, and you would

teach me everything; wouldn't you,--Greek and everything?"

"But you'll go away soon, and go to school, Maggie," said Philip, "and

then you'll forget all about me, and not care for me any more. And

then I shall see you when you're grown up, and you'll hardly take any

notice of me."

"Oh, no, I sha'n't forget you, I'm sure," said Maggie, shaking her

head very seriously. "I never forget anything, and I think about

everybody when I'm away from them. I think about poor Yap; he's got a

lump in his throat, and Luke says he'll die. Only don't you tell Tom.

because it will vex him so. You never saw Yap; he's a queer little

dog,--nobody cares about him but Tom and me."

"Do you care as much about me as you do about Yap, Maggie?" said

Philip, smiling rather sadly.

"Oh, yes, I should think so," said Maggie, laughing.

"I'm very fond of \_you\_, Maggie; I shall never forget \_you\_," said

Philip, "and when I'm very unhappy, I shall always think of you, and

wish I had a sister with dark eyes, just like yours."

"Why do you like my eyes?" said Maggie, well pleased. She had never

heard any one but her father speak of her eyes as if they had merit.

"I don't know," said Philip. "They're not like any other eyes. They

seem trying to speak,--trying to speak kindly. I don't like other

people to look at me much, but I like you to look at me, Maggie."

"Why, I think you're fonder of me than Tom is," said Maggie, rather

sorrowfully. Then, wondering how she could convince Philip that she

could like him just as well, although he was crooked, she said:

"Should you like me to kiss you, as I do Tom? I will, if you like."

"Yes, very much; nobody kisses me."

Maggie put her arm round his neck and kissed him quite earnestly.

"There now," she said, "I shall always remember you, and kiss you when

I see you again, if it's ever so long. But I'll go now, because I

think Mr. Askern's done with Tom's foot."

When their father came the second time, Maggie said to him, "Oh,

father, Philip Wakem is so very good to Tom; he is such a clever boy,

and I \_do\_ love him. And you love him too, Tom, don't you? \_Say\_ you

love him," she added entreatingly.

Tom colored a little as he looked at his father, and said: "I sha'n't

be friends with him when I leave school, father; but we've made it up

now, since my foot has been bad, and he's taught me to play at

draughts, and I can beat him."

"Well, well," said Mr. Tulliver, "if he's good to you, try and make

him amends, and be good to \_him\_. He's a poor crooked creature, and

takes after his dead mother. But don't you be getting too thick with

him; he's got his father's blood in him too. Ay, ay, the gray colt may

chance to kick like his black sire."

The jarring natures of the two boys effected what Mr. Tulliver's

admonition alone might have failed to effect; in spite of Philip's new

kindness, and Tom's answering regard in this time of his trouble, they

never became close friends. When Maggie was gone, and when Tom

by-and-by began to walk about as usual, the friendly warmth that had

been kindled by pity and gratitude died out by degrees, and left them

in their old relation to each other. Philip was often peevish and

contemptuous; and Tom's more specific and kindly impressions gradually

melted into the old background of suspicion and dislike toward him as

a queer fellow, a humpback, and the son of a rogue. If boys and men

are to be welded together in the glow of transient feeling, they must

be made of metal that will mix, else they inevitably fall asunder when

the heat dies out.

Chapter VII

The Golden Gates Are Passed

So Tom went on even to the fifth half-year--till he was turned

sixteen--at King's Lorton, while Maggie was growing with a rapidity

which her aunts considered highly reprehensible, at Miss Firniss's

boarding-school in the ancient town of Laceham on the Floss, with

cousin Lucy for her companion. In her early letters to Tom she had

always sent her love to Philip, and asked many questions about him,

which were answered by brief sentences about Tom's toothache, and a

turf-house which he was helping to build in the garden, with other

items of that kind. She was pained to hear Tom say in the holidays

that Philip was as queer as ever again, and often cross. They were no

longer very good friends, she perceived; and when she reminded Tom

that he ought always to love Philip for being so good to him when his

foot was bad, he answered: "Well, it isn't my fault; \_I\_ don't do

anything to him." She hardly ever saw Philip during the remainder of

their school-life; in the Midsummer holidays he was always away at the

seaside, and at Christmas she could only meet him at long intervals in

the street of St. Ogg's. When they did meet, she remembered her

promise to kiss him, but, as a young lady who had been at a

boarding-school, she knew now that such a greeting was out of the

question, and Philip would not expect it. The promise was void, like

so many other sweet, illusory promises of our childhood; void as

promises made in Eden before the seasons were divided, and when the

starry blossoms grew side by side with the ripening peach,--impossible

to be fulfilled when the golden gates had been passed.

But when their father was actually engaged in the long-threatened

lawsuit, and Wakem, as the agent at once of Pivart and Old Harry, was

acting against him, even Maggie felt, with some sadness, that they

were not likely ever to have any intimacy with Philip again; the very

name of Wakem made her father angry, and she had once heard him say

that if that crook-backed son lived to inherit his father's ill-gotten

gains, there would be a curse upon him. "Have as little to do with him

at school as you can, my lad," he said to Tom; and the command was

obeyed the more easily because Mr. Sterling by this time had two

additional pupils; for though this gentleman's rise in the world was

not of that meteor-like rapidity which the admirers of his

extemporaneous eloquence had expected for a preacher whose voice

demanded so wide a sphere, he had yet enough of growing prosperity to

enable him to increase his expenditure in continued disproportion to

his income.

As for Tom's school course, it went on with mill-like monotony, his

mind continuing to move with a slow, half-stifled pulse in a medium

uninteresting or unintelligible ideas. But each vacation he brought

home larger and larger drawings with the satiny rendering of

landscape, and water-colors in vivid greens, together with manuscript

books full of exercises and problems, in which the handwriting was all

the finer because he gave his whole mind to it. Each vacation he

brought home a new book or two, indicating his progress through

different stages of history, Christian doctrine, and Latin literature;

and that passage was not entirely without results, besides the

possession of the books. Tom's ear and tongue had become accustomed to

a great many words and phrases which are understood to be signs of an

educated condition; and though he had never really applied his mind to

any one of his lessons, the lessons had left a deposit of vague,

fragmentary, ineffectual notions. Mr. Tulliver, seeing signs of

acquirement beyond the reach of his own criticism, thought it was

probably all right with Tom's education; he observed, indeed, that

there were no maps, and not enough "summing"; but he made no formal

complaint to Mr. Stelling. It was a puzzling business, this schooling;

and if he took Tom away, where could he send him with better effect?

By the time Tom had reached his last quarter at King's Lorton, the

years had made striking changes in him since the day we saw him

returning from Mr. Jacobs's academy. He was a tall youth now, carrying

himself without the least awkwardness, and speaking without more

shyness than was a becoming symptom of blended diffidence and pride;

he wore his tail-coat and his stand-up collars, and watched the down

on his lip with eager impatience, looking every day at his virgin

razor, with which he had provided himself in the last holidays. Philip

had already left,--at the autumn quarter,--that he might go to the

south for the winter, for the sake of his health; and this change

helped to give Tom the unsettled, exultant feeling that usually

belongs to the last months before leaving school. This quarter, too,

there was some hope of his father's lawsuit being decided; \_that\_ made

the prospect of home more entirely pleasurable. For Tom, who had

gathered his view of the case from his father's conversation, had no

doubt that Pivart would be beaten.

Tom had not heard anything from home for some weeks,--a fact which did

not surprise him, for his father and mother were not apt to manifest

their affection in unnecessary letters,--when, to his great surprise,

on the morning of a dark, cold day near the end of November, he was

told, soon after entering the study at nine o'clock, that his sister

was in the drawing-room. It was Mrs. Stelling who had come into the

study to tell him, and she left him to enter the drawing-room alone.

Maggie, too, was tall now, with braided and coiled hair; she was

almost as tall as Tom, though she was only thirteen; and she really

looked older than he did at that moment. She had thrown off her

bonnet, her heavy braids were pushed back from her forehead, as if it

would not bear that extra load, and her young face had a strangely

worn look, as her eyes turned anxiously toward the door. When Tom

entered she did not speak, but only went up to him, put her arms round

his neck, and kissed him earnestly. He was used to various moods of

hers, and felt no alarm at the unusual seriousness of her greeting.

"Why, how is it you're come so early this cold morning, Maggie? Did

you come in the gig?" said Tom, as she backed toward the sofa, and

drew him to her side.

"No, I came by the coach. I've walked from the turnpike."

"But how is it you're not at school? The holidays have not begun yet?"

"Father wanted me at home," said Maggie, with a slight trembling of

the lip. "I came home three or four days ago."

"Isn't my father well?" said Tom, rather anxiously.

"Not quite," said Maggie. "He's very unhappy, Tom. The lawsuit is

ended, and I came to tell you because I thought it would be better for

you to know it before you came home, and I didn't like only to send

you a letter."

"My father hasn't lost?" said Tom, hastily, springing from the sofa,

and standing before Maggie with his hands suddenly thrust into his

pockets.

"Yes, dear Tom," said Maggie, looking up at him with trembling.

Tom was silent a minute or two, with his eyes fixed on the floor. Then

he said:

"My father will have to pay a good deal of money, then?"

"Yes," said Maggie, rather faintly.

"Well, it can't be helped," said Tom, bravely, not translating the

loss of a large sum of money into any tangible results. "But my

father's very much vexed, I dare say?" he added, looking at Maggie,

and thinking that her agitated face was only part of her girlish way

of taking things.

"Yes," said Maggie, again faintly. Then, urged to fuller speech by

Tom's freedom from apprehension, she said loudly and rapidly, as if

the words \_would\_ burst from her: "Oh, Tom, he will lose the mill and

the land and everything; he will have nothing left."

Tom's eyes flashed out one look of surprise at her, before he turned

pale, and trembled visibly. He said nothing, but sat down on the sofa

again, looking vaguely out of the opposite window.

Anxiety about the future had never entered Tom's mind. His father had

always ridden a good horse, kept a good house, and had the cheerful,

confident air of a man who has plenty of property to fall back upon.

Tom had never dreamed that his father would "fail"; \_that\_ was a form

of misfortune which he had always heard spoken of as a deep disgrace,

and disgrace was an idea that he could not associate with any of his

relations, least of all with his father. A proud sense of family

respectability was part of the very air Tom had been born and brought

up in. He knew there were people in St. Ogg's who made a show without

money to support it, and he had always heard such people spoken of by

his own friends with contempt and reprobation. He had a strong belief,

which was a lifelong habit, and required no definite evidence to rest

on, that his father could spend a great deal of money if he chose; and

since his education at Mr. Stelling's had given him a more expensive

view of life, he had often thought that when he got older he would

make a figure in the world, with his horse and dogs and saddle, and

other accoutrements of a fine young man, and show himself equal to any

of his contemporaries at St. Ogg's, who might consider themselves a

grade above him in society because their fathers were professional

men, or had large oil-mills. As to the prognostics and headshaking of

his aunts and uncles, they had never produced the least effect on him,

except to make him think that aunts and uncles were disagreeable

society; he had heard them find fault in much the same way as long as

he could remember. His father knew better than they did.

The down had come on Tom's lip, yet his thoughts and expectations had

been hitherto only the reproduction, in changed forms, of the boyish

dreams in which he had lived three years ago. He was awakened now with

a violent shock.

Maggie was frightened at Tom's pale, trembling silence. There was

something else to tell him,--something worse. She threw her arms round

him at last, and said, with a half sob:

"Oh, Tom--dear, dear Tom, don't fret too much; try and bear it well."

Tom turned his cheek passively to meet her entreating kisses, and

there gathered a moisture in his eyes, which he just rubbed away with

his hand. The action seemed to rouse him, for he shook himself and

said: "I shall go home, with you, Maggie. Didn't my father say I was

to go?"

"No, Tom, father didn't wish it," said Maggie, her anxiety about \_his\_

feeling helping her to master her agitation. What \_would\_ he do when

she told him all? "But mother wants you to come,--poor mother!--she

cries so. Oh, Tom, it's very dreadful at home."

Maggie's lips grew whiter, and she began to tremble almost as Tom had

done. The two poor things clung closer to each other, both

trembling,--the one at an unshapen fear, the other at the image of a

terrible certainty. When Maggie spoke, it was hardly above a whisper.

"And--and--poor father----"

Maggie could not utter it. But the suspense was intolerable to Tom. A

vague idea of going to prison, as a consequence of debt, was the shape

his fears had begun to take.

"Where's my father?" he said impatiently. "\_Tell\_ me, Maggie."

"He's at home," said Maggie, finding it easier to reply to that

question. "But," she added, after a pause, "not himself--he fell off

his horse. He has known nobody but me ever since--he seems to have

lost his senses. O father, father----"

With these last words, Maggie's sobs burst forth with the more

violence for the previous struggle against them. Tom felt that

pressure of the heart which forbids tears; he had no distinct vision

of their troubles as Maggie had, who had been at home; he only felt

the crushing weight of what seemed unmitigated misfortune. He

tightened his arm almost convulsively round Maggie as she sobbed, but

his face looked rigid and tearless, his eyes blank,--as if a black

curtain of cloud had suddenly fallen on his path.

But Maggie soon checked herself abruptly; a single thought had acted

on her like a startling sound.

"We must set out, Tom, we must not stay. Father will miss me; we must

be at the turnpike at ten to meet the coach." She said this with hasty

decision, rubbing her eyes, and rising to seize her bonnet.

Tom at once felt the same impulse, and rose too. "Wait a minute,

Maggie," he said. "I must speak to Mr. Stelling, and then we'll go."

He thought he must go to the study where the pupils were; but on his

way he met Mr. Stelling, who had heard from his wife that Maggie

appeared to be in trouble when she asked for her brother, and now that

he thought the brother and sister had been alone long enough, was

coming to inquire and offer his sympathy.

"Please, sir, I must go home," Tom said abruptly, as he met Mr.

Stelling in the passage. "I must go back with my sister directly. My

father's lost his lawsuit--he's lost all his property--and he's very

ill."

Mr. Stelling felt like a kind-hearted man; he foresaw a probable money

loss for himself, but this had no appreciable share in his feeling,

while he looked with grave pity at the brother and sister for whom

youth and sorrow had begun together. When he knew how Maggie had come,

and how eager she was to get home again, he hurried their departure,

only whispering something to Mrs. Stelling, who had followed him, and

who immediately left the room.

Tom and Maggie were standing on the door-step, ready to set out, when

Mrs. Stelling came with a little basket, which she hung on Maggie's

arm, saying: "Do remember to eat something on the way, dear." Maggie's

heart went out toward this woman whom she had never liked, and she

kissed her silently. It was the first sign within the poor child of

that new sense which is the gift of sorrow,--that susceptibility to

the bare offices of humanity which raises them into a bond of loving

fellowship, as to haggard men among the ice-bergs the mere presence of

an ordinary comrade stirs the deep fountains of affection.

Mr. Stelling put his hand on Tom's shoulder and said: "God bless you,

my boy; let me know how you get on." Then he pressed Maggie's hand;

but there were no audible good-byes. Tom had so often thought how

joyful he should be the day he left school "for good"! And now his

school years seemed like a holiday that had come to an end.

The two slight youthful figures soon grew indistinct on the distant

road,--were soon lost behind the projecting hedgerow.

They had gone forth together into their life of sorrow, and they would

never more see the sunshine undimmed by remembered cares. They had

entered the thorny wilderness, and the golden gates of their childhood

had forever closed behind them.

Book III

\_The Downfall\_

Chapter I

What Had Happened at Home

When Mr. Tulliver first knew the fact that the law-suit was decided

against him, and that Pivart and Wakem were triumphant, every one who

happened to observe him at the time thought that, for so confident and

hot-tempered a man, he bore the blow remarkably well. He thought so

himself; he thought he was going to show that if Wakem or anybody else

considered him crushed, they would find themselves mistaken. He could

not refuse to see that the costs of this protracted suit would take

more than he possessed to pay them; but he appeared to himself to be

full of expedients by which he could ward off any results but such as

were tolerable, and could avoid the appearance of breaking down in the

world. All the obstinacy and defiance of his nature, driven out of

their old channel, found a vent for themselves in the immediate

formation of plans by which he would meet his difficulties, and remain

Mr. Tulliver of Dorlcote Mill in spite of them. There was such a rush

of projects in his brain, that it was no wonder his face was flushed

when he came away from his talk with his attorney, Mr. Gore, and

mounted his horse to ride home from Lindum. There was Furley, who held

the mortgage on the land,--a reasonable fellow, who would see his own

interest, Mr. Tulliver was convinced, and who would be glad not only

to purchase the whole estate, including the mill and homestead, but

would accept Mr. Tulliver as tenant, and be willing to advance money

to be repaid with high interest out of the profits of the business,

which would be made over to him, Mr. Tulliver only taking enough

barely to maintain himself and his family. Who would neglect such a

profitable investment? Certainly not Furley, for Mr. Tulliver had

determined that Furley should meet his plans with the utmost alacrity;

and there are men whoses brains have not yet been dangerously heated

by the loss of a lawsuit, who are apt to see in their own interest or

desires a motive for other men's actions. There was no doubt (in the

miller's mind) that Furley would do just what was desirable; and if he

did--why, things would not be so very much worse. Mr. Tulliver and his

family must live more meagrely and humbly, but it would only be till

the profits of the business had paid off Furley's advances, and that

might be while Mr. Tulliver had still a good many years of life before

him. It was clear that the costs of the suit could be paid without his

being obliged to turn out of his old place, and look like a ruined

man. It was certainly an awkward moment in his affairs. There was that

suretyship for poor Riley, who had died suddenly last April, and left

his friend saddled with a debt of two hundred and fifty pounds,--a

fact which had helped to make Mr. Tulliver's banking book less

pleasant reading than a man might desire toward Christmas. Well! he

had never been one of those poor-spirited sneaks who would refuse to

give a helping hand to a fellow-traveller in this puzzling world. The

really vexatious business was the fact that some months ago the

creditor who had lent him the five hundred pounds to repay Mrs. Glegg

had become uneasy about his money (set on by Wakem, of course), and

Mr. Tulliver, still confident that he should gain his suit, and

finding it eminently inconvenient to raise the said sum until that

desirable issue had taken place, had rashly acceded to the demand that

he should give a bill of sale on his household furniture and some

other effects, as security in lieu of the bond. It was all one, he had

said to himself; he should soon pay off the money, and there was no

harm in giving that security any more than another. But now the

consequences of this bill of sale occurred to him in a new light, and

he remembered that the time was close at hand when it would be

enforced unless the money were repaid. Two months ago he would have

declared stoutly that he would never be beholden to his wife's

friends; but now he told himself as stoutly that it was nothing but

right and natural that Bessy should go to the Pullets and explain the

thing to them; they would hardly let Bessy's furniture be sold, and it

might be security to Pullet if he advanced the money,--there would,

after all, be no gift or favor in the matter. Mr. Tulliver would never

have asked for anything from so poor-spirited a fellow for himself,

but Bessy might do so if she liked.

It is precisely the proudest and most obstinate men who are the most

liable to shift their position and contradict themselves in this

sudden manner; everything is easier to them than to face the simple

fact that they have been thoroughly defeated, and must begin life

anew. And Mr. Tulliver, you perceive, though nothing more than a

superior miller and maltster, was as proud and obstinate as if he had

been a very lofty personage, in whom such dispositions might be a

source of that conspicuous, far-echoing tragedy, which sweeps the

stage in regal robes, and makes the dullest chronicler sublime. The

pride and obstinacy of millers and other insignificant people, whom

you pass unnoticingly on the road every day, have their tragedy too;

but it is of that unwept, hidden sort that goes on from generation to

generation, and leaves no record,--such tragedy, perhaps, as lies in

the conflicts of young souls, hungry for joy, under a lot made

suddenly hard to them, under the dreariness of a home where the

morning brings no promise with it, and where the unexpectant

discontent of worn and disappointed parents weighs on the children

like a damp, thick air, in which all the functions of life are

depressed; or such tragedy as lies in the slow or sudden death that

follows on a bruised passion, though it may be a death that finds only

a parish funeral. There are certain animals to which tenacity of

position is a law of life,--they can never flourish again, after a

single wrench: and there are certain human beings to whom predominance

is a law of life,--they can only sustain humiliation so long as they

can refuse to believe in it, and, in their own conception, predominate

still.

Mr. Tulliver was still predominating, in his own imagination, as he

approached St. Ogg's, through which he had to pass on his way

homeward. But what was it that suggested to him, as he saw the Laceham

coach entering the town, to follow it to the coach-office, and get the

clerk there to write a letter, requiring Maggie to come home the very

next day? Mr. Tulliver's own hand shook too much under his excitement

for him to write himself, and he wanted the letter to be given to the

coachman to deliver at Miss Firniss's school in the morning. There was

a craving which he would not account for to himself, to have Maggie

near him, without delay,--she must come back by the coach to-morrow.

To Mrs. Tulliver, when he got home, he would admit no difficulties,

and scolded down her burst of grief on hearing that the lawsuit was

lost, by angry assertions that there was nothing to grieve about. He

said nothing to her that night about the bill of sale and the

application to Mrs. Pullet, for he had kept her in ignorance of the

nature of that transaction, and had explained the necessity for taking

an inventory of the goods as a matter connected with his will. The

possession of a wife conspicuously one's inferior in intellect is,

like other high privileges, attended with a few inconveniences, and,

among the rest, with the occasional necessity for using a little

deception.

The next day Mr. Tulliver was again on horseback in the afternoon, on

his way to Mr. Gore's office at St. Ogg's. Gore was to have seen

Furley in the morning, and to have sounded him in relation to Mr.

Tulliver's affairs. But he had not gone half-way when he met a clerk

from Mr. Gore's office, who was bringing a letter to Mr. Tulliver. Mr.

Gore had been prevented by a sudden call of business from waiting at

his office to see Mr. Tulliver, according to appointment, but would be

at his office at eleven to-morrow morning, and meanwhile had sent some

important information by letter.

"Oh!" said Mr. Tulliver, taking the letter, but not opening it. "Then

tell Gore I'll see him to-morrow at eleven"; and he turned his horse.

The clerk, struck with Mr. Tulliver's glistening, excited glance,

looked after him for a few moments, and then rode away. The reading of

a letter was not the affair of an instant to Mr. Tulliver; he took in

the sense of a statement very slowly through the medium of written or

even printed characters; so he had put the letter in his pocket,

thinking he would open it in his armchair at home. But by-and-by it

occurred to him that there might be something in the letter Mrs.

Tulliver must not know about, and if so, it would be better to keep it

out of her sight altogether. He stopped his horse, took out the

letter, and read it. It was only a short letter; the substance was,

that Mr. Gore had ascertained, on secret, but sure authority, that

Furley had been lately much straitened for money, and had parted with

his securities,--among the rest, the mortgage on Mr. Tulliver's

property, which he had transferred to----Wakem.

In half an hour after this Mr. Tulliver's own wagoner found him lying

by the roadside insensible, with an open letter near him, and his gray

horse snuffing uneasily about him.

When Maggie reached home that evening, in obedience to her father's

call, he was no longer insensible. About an hour before he had become

conscious, and after vague, vacant looks around him, had muttered

something about "a letter," which he presently repeated impatiently.

At the instance of Mr. Turnbull, the medical man, Gore's letter was

brought and laid on the bed, and the previous impatience seemed to be

allayed. The stricken man lay for some time with his eyes fixed on the

letter, as if he were trying to knit up his thoughts by its help. But

presently a new wave of memory seemed to have come and swept the other

away; he turned his eyes from the letter to the door, and after

looking uneasily, as if striving to see something his eyes were too

dim for, he said, "The little wench."

He repeated the words impatiently from time to time, appearing

entirely unconscious of everything except this one importunate want,

and giving no sign of knowing his wife or any one else; and poor Mrs.

Tulliver, her feeble faculties almost paralyzed by this sudden

accumulation of troubles, went backward and forward to the gate to see

if the Laceham coach were coming, though it was not yet time.

But it came at last, and set down the poor anxious girl, no longer the

"little wench," except to her father's fond memory.

"Oh, mother, what is the matter?" Maggie said, with pale lips, as her

mother came toward her crying. She didn't think her father was ill,

because the letter had come at his dictation from the office at St.

Ogg's.

But Mr. Turnbull came now to meet her; a medical man is the good angel

of the troubled house, and Maggie ran toward the kind old friend, whom

she remembered as long as she could remember anything, with a

trembling, questioning look.

"Don't alarm yourself too much, my dear," he said, taking her hand.

"Your father has had a sudden attack, and has not quite recovered his

memory. But he has been asking for you, and it will do him good to see

you. Keep as quiet as you can; take off your things, and come upstairs

with me."

Maggie obeyed, with that terrible beating of the heart which makes

existence seem simply a painful pulsation. The very quietness with

which Mr. Turnbull spoke had frightened her susceptible imagination.

Her father's eyes were still turned uneasily toward the door when she

entered and met the strange, yearning, helpless look that had been

seeking her in vain. With a sudden flash and movement, he raised

himself in the bed; she rushed toward him, and clasped him with

agonized kisses.

Poor child! it was very early for her to know one of those supreme

moments in life when all we have hoped or delighted in, all we can

dread or endure, falls away from our regard as insignificant; is lost,

like a trivial memory, in that simple, primitive love which knits us

to the beings who have been nearest to us, in their times of

helplessness or of anguish.

But that flash of recognition had been too great a strain on the

father's bruised, enfeebled powers. He sank back again in renewed

insensibility and rigidity, which lasted for many hours, and was only

broken by a flickering return of consciousness, in which he took

passively everything that was given to him, and seemed to have a sort

of infantine satisfaction in Maggie's near presence,--such

satisfaction as a baby has when it is returned to the nurse's lap.

Mrs. Tulliver sent for her sisters, and there was much wailing and

lifting up of hands below stairs. Both uncles and aunts saw that the

ruin of Bessy and her family was as complete as they had ever

foreboded it, and there was a general family sense that a judgment had

fallen on Mr. Tulliver, which it would be an impiety to counteract by

too much kindness. But Maggie heard little of this, scarcely ever

leaving her father's bedside, where she sat opposite him with her hand

on his. Mrs. Tulliver wanted to have Tom fetched home, and seemed to

be thinking more of her boy even than of her husband; but the aunts

and uncles opposed this. Tom was better at school, since Mr. Turnbull

said there was no immediate danger, he believed. But at the end of the

second day, when Maggie had become more accustomed to her father's

fits of insensibility, and to the expectation that he would revive

from them, the thought of Tom had become urgent with \_her\_ too; and

when her mother sate crying at night and saying, "My poor lad--it's

nothing but right he should come home," Maggie said, "Let me go for

him, and tell him, mother; I'll go to-morrow morning if father doesn't

know me and want me. It would be so hard for Tom to come home and not

know anything about it beforehand."

And the next morning Maggie went, as we have seen. Sitting on the

coach on their way home, the brother and sister talked to each other

in sad, interrupted whispers.

"They say Mr. Wakem has got a mortgage or something on the land, Tom,"

said Maggie. "It was the letter with that news in it that made father

ill, they think."

"I believe that scoundrel's been planning all along to ruin my

father," said Tom, leaping from the vaguest impressions to a definite

conclusion. "I'll make him feel for it when I'm a man. Mind you never

speak to Philip again."

"Oh, Tom!" said Maggie, in a tone of sad remonstrance; but she had no

spirit to dispute anything then, still less to vex Tom by opposing

him.

Chapter II

Mrs. Tulliver's Teraphim, or Household Gods

When the coach set down Tom and Maggie, it was five hours since she

had started from home, and she was thinking with some trembling that

her father had perhaps missed her, and asked for "the little wench" in

vain. She thought of no other change that might have happened.

She hurried along the gravel-walk and entered the house before Tom;

but in the entrance she was startled by a strong smell of tobacco. The

parlor door was ajar; that was where the smell came from. It was very

strange; could any visitor be smoking at a time like this? Was her

mother there? If so, she must be told that Tom was come. Maggie, after

this pause of surprise, was only in the act of opening the door when

Tom came up, and they both looked into the parlor together.

There was a coarse, dingy man, of whose face Tom had some vague

recollection, sitting in his father's chair, smoking, with a jug and

glass beside him.

The truth flashed on Tom's mind in an instant. To "have the bailiff in

the house," and "to be sold up," were phrases which he had been used

to, even as a little boy; they were part of the disgrace and misery of

"failing," of losing all one's money, and being ruined,--sinking into

the condition of poor working people. It seemed only natural this

should happen, since his father had lost all his property, and he

thought of no more special cause for this particular form of

misfortune than the loss of the lawsuit. But the immediate presence of

this disgrace was so much keener an experience to Tom than the worst

form of apprehension, that he felt at this moment as if his real

trouble had only just begin; it was a touch on the irritated nerve

compared with its spontaneous dull aching.

"How do you do, sir?" said the man, taking the pipe out of his mouth,

with rough, embarrassed civility. The two young startled faces made

him a little uncomfortable.

But Tom turned away hastily without speaking; the sight was too

hateful. Maggie had not understood the appearance of this stranger, as

Tom had. She followed him, whispering: "Who can it be, Tom? What is

the matter?" Then, with a sudden undefined dread lest this stranger

might have something to do with a change in her father, she rushed

upstairs, checking herself at the bedroom door to throw off her

bonnet, and enter on tiptoe. All was silent there; her father was

lying, heedless of everything around him, with his eyes closed as when

she had left him. A servant was there, but not her mother.

"Where's my mother?" she whispered. The servant did not know.

Maggie hastened out, and said to Tom; "Father is lying quiet; let us

go and look for my mother. I wonder where she is."

Mrs. Tulliver was not downstairs, not in any of the bedrooms. There

was but one room below the attic which Maggie had left unsearched; it

was the storeroom, where her mother kept all her linen and all the

precious "best things" that were only unwrapped and brought out on

special occasions.

Tom, preceding Maggie, as they returned along the passage, opened the

door of this room, and immediately said, "Mother!"

Mrs. Tulliver was seated there with all her laid-up treasures. One of

the linen chests was open; the silver teapot was unwrapped from its

many folds of paper, and the best china was laid out on the top of the

closed linen-chest; spoons and skewers and ladles were spread in rows

on the shelves; and the poor woman was shaking her head and weeping,

with a bitter tension of the mouth, over the mark, "Elizabeth Dodson,"

on the corner of some tablecloths she held in her lap.

She dropped them, and started up as Tom spoke.

"Oh, my boy, my boy!" she said, clasping him round the neck. "To think

as I should live to see this day! We're ruined--everything's going to

be sold up--to think as your father should ha' married me to bring me

to this! We've got nothing--we shall be beggars--we must go to the

workhouse----"

She kissed him, then seated herself again, and took another tablecloth

on her lap, unfolding it a little way to look at the pattern, while

the children stood by in mute wretchedness, their minds quite filled

for the moment with the words "beggars" and "workhouse."

"To think o' these cloths as I spun myself," she went on, lifting

things out and turning them over with an excitement all the more

strange and piteous because the stout blond woman was usually so

passive,--if she had been ruffled before, it was at the surface

merely,--"and Job Haxey wove 'em, and brought the piece home on his

back, as I remember standing at the door and seeing him come, before I

ever thought o' marrying your father! And the pattern as I chose

myself, and bleached so beautiful, and I marked 'em so as nobody ever

saw such marking,--they must cut the cloth to get it out, for it's a

particular stitch. And they're all to be sold, and go into strange

people's houses, and perhaps be cut with the knives, and wore out

before I'm dead. You'll never have one of 'em, my boy," she said,

looking up at Tom with her eyes full of tears, "and I meant 'em for

you. I wanted you to have all o' this pattern. Maggie could have had

the large check--it never shows so well when the dishes are on it."

Tom was touched to the quick, but there was an angry reaction

immediately. His face flushed as he said:

"But will my aunts let them be sold, mother? Do they know about it?

They'll never let your linen go, will they? Haven't you sent to them?"

"Yes, I sent Luke directly they'd put the bailies in, and your aunt

Pullet's been--and, oh dear, oh dear, she cries so and says your

father's disgraced my family and made it the talk o' the country; and

she'll buy the spotted cloths for herself, because she's never had so

many as she wanted o' that pattern, and they sha'n't go to strangers,

but she's got more checks a'ready nor she can do with." (Here Mrs.

Tulliver began to lay back the tablecloths in the chest, folding and

stroking them automatically.) "And your uncle Glegg's been too, and he

says things must be bought in for us to lie down on, but he must talk

to your aunt; and they're all coming to consult. But I know they'll

none of 'em take my chany," she added, turning toward the cups and

saucers, "for they all found fault with 'em when I bought 'em, 'cause

o' the small gold sprig all over 'em, between the flowers. But there's

none of 'em got better chany, not even your aunt Pullet herself; and I

bought it wi' my own money as I'd saved ever since I was turned

fifteen; and the silver teapot, too,--your father never paid for 'em.

And to think as he should ha' married me, and brought me to this."

Mrs. Tulliver burst out crying afresh, and she sobbed with her

handkerchief at her eyes a few moments, but then removing it, she said

in a deprecating way, still half sobbing, as if she were called upon

to speak before she could command her voice,--

"And I \_did\_ say to him times and times, 'Whativer you do, don't go to

law,' and what more could I do? I've had to sit by while my own

fortin's been spent, and what should ha' been my children's, too.

You'll have niver a penny, my boy--but it isn't your poor mother's

fault."

She put out one arm toward Tom, looking up at him piteously with her

helpless, childish blue eyes. The poor lad went to her and kissed her,

and she clung to him. For the first time Tom thought of his father

with some reproach. His natural inclination to blame, hitherto kept

entirely in abeyance toward his father by the predisposition to think

him always right, simply on the ground that he was Tom Tulliver's

father, was turned into this new channel by his mother's plaints; and

with his indignation against Wakem there began to mingle some

indignation of another sort. Perhaps his father might have helped

bringing them all down in the world, and making people talk of them

with contempt, but no one should talk long of Tom Tulliver with

contempt.

The natural strength and firmness of his nature was beginning to

assert itself, urged by the double stimulus of resentment against his

aunts, and the sense that he must behave like a man and take care of

his mother.

"Don't fret, mother," he said tenderly. "I shall soon be able to get

money; I'll get a situation of some sort."

"Bless you, my boy!" said Mrs. Tulliver, a little soothed. Then,

looking round sadly, "But I shouldn't ha' minded so much if we could

ha' kept the things wi' my name on 'em."

Maggie had witnessed this scene with gathering anger. The implied

reproaches against her father--her father, who was lying there in a

sort of living death--neutralized all her pity for griefs about

tablecloths and china; and her anger on her father's account was

heightened by some egoistic resentment at Tom's silent concurrence

with her mother in shutting her out from the common calamity. She had

become almost indifferent to her mother's habitual depreciation of

her, but she was keenly alive to any sanction of it, however passive,

that she might suspect in Tom. Poor Maggie was by no means made up of

unalloyed devotedness, but put forth large claims for herself where

she loved strongly. She burst out at last in an agitated, almost

violent tone: "Mother, how can you talk so; as if you cared only for

things with \_your\_ name on, and not for what has my father's name too;

and to care about anything but dear father himself!--when he's lying

there, and may never speak to us again. Tom, you ought to say so too;

you ought not to let any one find fault with my father."

Maggie, almost choked with mingled grief and anger, left the room, and

took her old place on her father's bed. Her heart went out to him with

a stronger movement than ever, at the thought that people would blame

him. Maggie hated blame; she had been blamed all her life, and nothing

had come of it but evil tempers.

Her father had always defended and excused her, and her loving

remembrance of his tenderness was a force within her that would enable

her to do or bear anything for his sake.

Tom was a little shocked at Maggie's outburst,--telling \_him\_ as well

as his mother what it was right to do! She ought to have learned

better than have those hectoring, assuming manners, by this time. But

he presently went into his father's room, and the sight there touched

him in a way that effaced the slighter impressions of the previous

hour. When Maggie saw how he was moved, she went to him and put her

arm round his neck as he sat by the bed, and the two children forgot

everything else in the sense that they had one father and one sorrow.

Chapter III

The Family Council

It was at eleven o'clock the next morning that the aunts and uncles

came to hold their consultation. The fire was lighted in the large

parlor, and poor Mrs. Tulliver, with a confused impression that it was

a great occasion, like a funeral, unbagged the bell-rope tassels, and

unpinned the curtains, adjusting them in proper folds, looking round

and shaking her head sadly at the polished tops and legs of the

tables, which sister Pullet herself could not accuse of insufficient

brightness.

Mr. Deane was not coming, he was away on business; but Mrs. Deane

appeared punctually in that handsome new gig with the head to it, and

the livery-servant driving it, which had thrown so clear a light on

several traits in her character to some of her female friends in St.

Ogg's. Mr. Deane had been advancing in the world as rapidly as Mr.

Tulliver had been going down in it; and in Mrs. Deane's house the

Dodson linen and plate were beginning to hold quite a subordinate

position, as a mere supplement to the handsomer articles of the same

kind, purchased in recent years,--a change which had caused an

occasional coolness in the sisterly intercourse between her and Mrs.

Glegg, who felt that Susan was getting "like the rest," and there

would soon be little of the true Dodson spirit surviving except in

herself, and, it might be hoped, in those nephews who supported the

Dodson name on the family land, far away in the Wolds.

People who live at a distance are naturally less faulty than those

immediately under our own eyes; and it seems superfluous, when we

consider the remote geographical position of the Ethiopians, and how

very little the Greeks had to do with them, to inquire further why

Homer calls them "blameless."

Mrs. Deane was the first to arrive; and when she had taken her seat in

the large parlor, Mrs. Tulliver came down to her with her comely face

a little distorted, nearly as it would have been if she had been

crying. She was not a woman who could shed abundant tears, except in

moments when the prospect of losing her furniture became unusually

vivid, but she felt how unfitting it was to be quite calm under

present circumstances.

"Oh, sister, what a world this is!" she exclaimed as she entered;

"what trouble, oh dear!"

Mrs. Deane was a thin-lipped woman, who made small well-considered

speeches on peculiar occasions, repeating them afterward to her

husband, and asking him if she had not spoken very properly.

"Yes, sister," she said deliberately, "this is a changing world, and

we don't know to-day what may happen tomorrow. But it's right to be

prepared for all things, and if trouble's sent, to remember as it

isn't sent without a cause. I'm very sorry for you as a sister, and if

the doctor orders jelly for Mr. Tulliver, I hope you'll let me know.

I'll send it willingly; for it is but right he should have proper

attendance while he's ill."

"Thank you, Susan," said Mrs. Tulliver, rather faintly, withdrawing

her fat hand from her sister's thin one. "But there's been no talk o'

jelly yet." Then after a moment's pause she added, "There's a dozen o'

cut jelly-glasses upstairs--I shall never put jelly into 'em no more."

Her voice was rather agitated as she uttered the last words, but the

sound of wheels diverted her thoughts. Mr. and Mrs. Glegg were come,

and were almost immediately followed by Mr. and Mrs. Pullet.

Mrs. Pullet entered crying, as a compendious mode, at all times, of

expressing what were her views of life in general, and what, in brief,

were the opinions she held concerning the particular case before her.

Mrs. Glegg had on her fuzziest front, and garments which appeared to

have had a recent resurrection from rather a creasy form of burial; a

costume selected with the high moral purpose of instilling perfect

humility into Bessy and her children.

"Mrs. G., won't you come nearer the fire?" said her husband, unwilling

to take the more comfortable seat without offering it to her.

"You see I've seated myself here, Mr. Glegg," returned this superior

woman; "\_you\_ can roast yourself, if you like."

"Well," said Mr. Glegg, seating himself good-humoredly, "and how's the

poor man upstairs?"

"Dr. Turnbull thought him a deal better this morning," said Mrs.

Tulliver; "he took more notice, and spoke to me; but he's never known

Tom yet,--looks at the poor lad as if he was a stranger, though he

said something once about Tom and the pony. The doctor says his

memory's gone a long way back, and he doesn't know Tom because he's

thinking of him when he was little. Eh dear, eh dear!"

"I doubt it's the water got on his brain," said aunt Pullet, turning

round from adjusting her cap in a melancholy way at the pier-glass.

"It's much if he ever gets up again; and if he does, he'll most like

be childish, as Mr. Carr was, poor man! They fed him with a spoon as

if he'd been a babby for three year. He'd quite lost the use of his

limbs; but then he'd got a Bath chair, and somebody to draw him; and

that's what you won't have, I doubt, Bessy."

"Sister Pullet," said Mrs. Glegg, severely, "if I understand right,

we've come together this morning to advise and consult about what's to

be done in this disgrace as has fallen upon the family, and not to

talk o' people as don't belong to us. Mr. Carr was none of our blood,

nor noways connected with us, as I've ever heared."

"Sister Glegg," said Mrs. Pullet, in a pleading tone, drawing on her

gloves again, and stroking the fingers in an agitated manner, "if

you've got anything disrespectful to say o' Mr. Carr, I do beg of you

as you won't say it to me. \_I\_ know what he was," she added, with a

sigh; "his breath was short to that degree as you could hear him two

rooms off."

"Sophy!" said Mrs. Glegg, with indignant disgust, "you \_do\_ talk o'

people's complaints till it's quite undecent. But I say again, as I

said before, I didn't come away from home to talk about acquaintances,

whether they'd short breath or long. If we aren't come together for

one to hear what the other 'ull do to save a sister and her children

from the parish, \_I\_ shall go back. \_One\_ can't act without the other,

I suppose; it isn't to be expected as \_I\_ should do everything."

"Well, Jane," said Mrs. Pullet, "I don't see as you've been so very

forrard at doing. So far as I know, this is the first time as here

you've been, since it's been known as the bailiff's in the house; and

I was here yesterday, and looked at all Bessy's linen and things, and

I told her I'd buy in the spotted tablecloths. I couldn't speak

fairer; for as for the teapot as she doesn't want to go out o' the

family, it stands to sense I can't do with two silver teapots, not if

it \_hadn't\_ a straight spout, but the spotted damask I was allays fond

on."

"I wish it could be managed so as my teapot and chany and the best

castors needn't be put up for sale," said poor Mrs. Tulliver,

beseechingly, "and the sugar-tongs the first things ever I bought."

"But that can't be helped, you know," said Mr. Glegg. "If one o' the

family chooses to buy 'em in, they can, but one thing must be bid for

as well as another."

"And it isn't to be looked for," said uncle Pullet, with unwonted

independence of idea, "as your own family should pay more for things

nor they'll fetch. They may go for an old song by auction."

"Oh dear, oh dear," said Mrs. Tulliver, "to think o' my chany being

sold i' that way, and I bought it when I was married, just as you did

yours, Jane and Sophy; and I know you didn't like mine, because o' the

sprig, but I was fond of it; and there's never been a bit broke, for

I've washed it myself; and there's the tulips on the cups, and the

roses, as anybody might go and look at 'em for pleasure. You wouldn't

like \_your\_ chany to go for an old song and be broke to pieces, though

yours has got no color in it, Jane,--it's all white and fluted, and

didn't cost so much as mine. And there's the castors, sister Deane, I

can't think but you'd like to have the castors, for I've heard you say

they're pretty."

"Well, I've no objection to buy some of the best things," said Mrs.

Deane, rather loftily; "we can do with extra things in our house."

"Best things!" exclaimed Mrs. Glegg, with severity, which had gathered

intensity from her long silence. "It drives me past patience to hear

you all talking o' best things, and buying in this, that, and the

other, such as silver and chany. You must bring your mind to your

circumstances, Bessy, and not be thinking o' silver and chany; but

whether you shall get so much as a flock-bed to lie on, and a blanket

to cover you, and a stool to sit on. You must remember, if you get

'em, it'll be because your friends have bought 'em for you, for you're

dependent upon \_them\_ for everything; for your husband lies there

helpless, and hasn't got a penny i' the world to call his own. And

it's for your own good I say this, for it's right you should feel what

your state is, and what disgrace your husband's brought on your own

family, as you've got to look to for everything, and be humble in your

mind."

Mrs. Glegg paused, for speaking with much energy for the good of

others is naturally exhausting.

Mrs. Tulliver, always borne down by the family predominance of sister

Jane, who had made her wear the yoke of a younger sister in very

tender years, said pleadingly:

"I'm sure, sister, I've never asked anybody to do anything, only buy

things as it 'ud be a pleasure to 'em to have, so as they mightn't go

and be spoiled i' strange houses. I never asked anybody to buy the

things in for me and my children; though there's the linen I spun, and

I thought when Tom was born,--I thought one o' the first things when

he was lying i' the cradle, as all the things I'd bought wi' my own

money, and been so careful of, 'ud go to him. But I've said nothing as

I wanted my sisters to pay their money for me. What my husband has

done for \_his\_ sister's unknown, and we should ha' been better off

this day if it hadn't been as he's lent money and never asked for it

again."

"Come, come," said Mr. Glegg, kindly, "don't let us make things too

dark. What's done can't be undone. We shall make a shift among us to

buy what's sufficient for you; though, as Mrs. G. says, they must be

useful, plain things. We mustn't be thinking o' what's unnecessary. A

table, and a chair or two, and kitchen things, and a good bed, and

such-like. Why, I've seen the day when I shouldn't ha' known myself if

I'd lain on sacking i'stead o' the floor. We get a deal o' useless

things about us, only because we've got the money to spend."

"Mr. Glegg," said Mrs. G., "if you'll be kind enough to let me speak,

i'stead o' taking the words out o' my mouth,--I was going to say,

Bessy, as it's fine talking for you to say as you've never asked us to

buy anything for you; let me tell you, you \_ought\_ to have asked us.

Pray, how are you to be purvided for, if your own family don't help

you? You must go to the parish, if they didn't. And you ought to know

that, and keep it in mind, and ask us humble to do what we can for

you, i'stead o' saying, and making a boast, as you've never asked us

for anything."

"You talked o' the Mosses, and what Mr. Tulliver's done for 'em," said

uncle Pullet, who became unusually suggestive where advances of money

were concerned. "Haven't \_they\_ been anear you? They ought to do

something as well as other folks; and if he's lent 'em money, they

ought to be made to pay it back."

"Yes, to be sure," said Mrs. Deane; "I've been thinking so. How is it

Mr. and Mrs. Moss aren't here to meet us? It is but right they should

do their share."

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Tulliver, "I never sent 'em word about Mr.

Tulliver, and they live so back'ard among the lanes at Basset, they

niver hear anything only when Mr. Moss comes to market. But I niver

gave 'em a thought. I wonder Maggie didn't, though, for she was allays

so fond of her aunt Moss."

"Why don't your children come in, Bessy?" said Mrs. Pullet, at the

mention of Maggie. "They should hear what their aunts and uncles have

got to say; and Maggie,--when it's me as have paid for half her

schooling, she ought to think more of her aunt Pullet than of aunt

Moss. I may go off sudden when I get home to-day; there's no telling."

"If I'd had \_my\_ way," said Mrs. Glegg, "the children 'ud ha' been in

the room from the first. It's time they knew who they've to look to,

and it's right as \_somebody\_ should talk to 'em, and let 'em know

their condition i' life, and what they're come down to, and make 'em

feel as they've got to suffer for their father's faults."

"Well, I'll go and fetch 'em, sister," said Mrs. Tulliver, resignedly.

She was quite crushed now, and thought of the treasures in the

storeroom with no other feeling than blank despair.

She went upstairs to fetch Tom and Maggie, who were both in their

father's room, and was on her way down again, when the sight of the

storeroom door suggested a new thought to her. She went toward it, and

left the children to go down by themselves.

The aunts and uncles appeared to have been in warm discussion when the

brother and sister entered,--both with shrinking reluctance; for

though Tom, with a practical sagacity which had been roused into

activity by the strong stimulus of the new emotions he had undergone

since yesterday, had been turning over in his mind a plan which he

meant to propose to one of his aunts or uncles, he felt by no means

amicably toward them, and dreaded meeting them all at once as he would

have dreaded a large dose of concentrated physic, which was but just

endurable in small draughts. As for Maggie, she was peculiarly

depressed this morning; she had been called up, after brief rest, at

three o'clock, and had that strange dreamy weariness which comes from

watching in a sick-room through the chill hours of early twilight and

breaking day,--in which the outside day-light life seems to have no

importance, and to be a mere margin to the hours in the darkened

chamber. Their entrance interrupted the conversation. The shaking of

hands was a melancholy and silent ceremony, till uncle Pullet

observed, as Tom approached him:

"Well, young sir, we've been talking as we should want your pen and

ink; you can write rarely now, after all your schooling, I should

think."

"Ay, ay," said uncle Glegg, with admonition which he meant to be kind,

"we must look to see the good of all this schooling, as your father's

sunk so much money in, now,--

'When land is gone and money's spent,

Then learning is most excellent.'

Now's the time, Tom, to let us see the good o' your learning. Let us

see whether you can do better than I can, as have made my fortin

without it. But I began wi' doing with little, you see; I could live

on a basin o' porridge and a crust o' bread-and-cheese. But I doubt

high living and high learning 'ull make it harder for you, young man,

nor it was for me."

"But he must do it," interposed aunt Glegg, energetically, "whether

it's hard or no. He hasn't got to consider what's hard; he must

consider as he isn't to trusten to his friends to keep him in idleness

and luxury; he's got to bear the fruits of his father's misconduct,

and bring his mind to fare hard and to work hard. And he must be

humble and grateful to his aunts and uncles for what they're doing for

his mother and father, as must be turned out into the streets and go

to the workhouse if they didn't help 'em. And his sister, too,"

continued Mrs. Glegg, looking severely at Maggie, who had sat down on

the sofa by her aunt Deane, drawn to her by the sense that she was

Lucy's mother, "she must make up her mind to be humble and work; for

there'll be no servants to wait on her any more,--she must remember

that. She must do the work o' the house, and she must respect and love

her aunts as have done so much for her, and saved their money to leave

to their nepheys and nieces."

Tom was still standing before the table in the centre of the group.

There was a heightened color in his face, and he was very far from

looking humbled, but he was preparing to say, in a respectful tone,

something he had previously meditated, when the door opened and his

mother re-entered.

Poor Mrs. Tulliver had in her hands a small tray, on which she had

placed her silver teapot, a specimen teacup and saucer, the castors,

and sugar-tongs.

"See here, sister," she said, looking at Mrs. Deane, as she set the

tray on the table, "I thought, perhaps, if you looked at the teapot

again,--it's a good while since you saw it,--you might like the

pattern better; it makes beautiful tea, and there's a stand and

everything; you might use it for every day, or else lay it by for Lucy

when she goes to housekeeping. I should be so loath for 'em to buy it

at the Golden Lion," said the poor woman, her heart swelling, and the

tears coming,--"my teapot as I bought when I was married, and to think

of its being scratched, and set before the travellers and folks, and

my letters on it,--see here, E. D.,--and everybody to see 'em."

"Ah, dear, dear!" said aunt Pullet, shaking her head with deep

sadness, "it's very bad,--to think o' the family initials going about

everywhere--it niver was so before; you're a very unlucky sister,

Bessy. But what's the use o' buying the teapot, when there's the linen

and spoons and everything to go, and some of 'em with your full

name,--and when it's got that straight spout, too."

"As to disgrace o' the family," said Mrs. Glegg, "that can't be helped

wi' buying teapots. The disgrace is, for one o' the family to ha'

married a man as has brought her to beggary. The disgrace is, as

they're to be sold up. We can't hinder the country from knowing that."

Maggie had started up from the sofa at the allusion to her father, but

Tom saw her action and flushed face in time to prevent her from

speaking. "Be quiet, Maggie," he said authoritatively, pushing her

aside. It was a remarkable manifestation of self-command and practical

judgment in a lad of fifteen, that when his aunt Glegg ceased, he

began to speak in a quiet and respectful manner, though with a good

deal of trembling in his voice; for his mother's words had cut him to

the quick.

"Then, aunt," he said, looking straight at Mrs. Glegg, "if you think

it's a disgrace to the family that we should be sold up, wouldn't it

be better to prevent it altogether? And if you and aunt Pullet," he

continued, looking at the latter, "think of leaving any money to me

and Maggie, wouldn't it be better to give it now, and pay the debt

we're going to be sold up for, and save my mother from parting with

her furniture?"

There was silence for a few moments, for every one, including Maggie,

was astonished at Tom's sudden manliness of tone. Uncle Glegg was the

first to speak.

"Ay, ay, young man, come now! You show some notion o' things. But

there's the interest, you must remember; your aunts get five per cent

on their money, and they'd lose that if they advanced it; you haven't

thought o' that."

"I could work and pay that every year," said Tom, promptly. "I'd do

anything to save my mother from parting with her things."

"Well done!" said uncle Glegg, admiringly. He had been drawing Tom

out, rather than reflecting on the practicability of his proposal. But

he had produced the unfortunate result of irritating his wife.

"Yes, Mr. Glegg!" said that lady, with angry sarcasm. "It's pleasant

work for you to be giving my money away, as you've pretended to leave

at my own disposal. And my money, as was my own father's gift, and not

yours, Mr. Glegg; and I've saved it, and added to it myself, and had

more to put out almost every year, and it's to go and be sunk in other

folks' furniture, and encourage 'em in luxury and extravagance as

they've no means of supporting; and I'm to alter my will, or have a

codicil made, and leave two or three hundred less behind me when I

die,--me as have allays done right and been careful, and the eldest o'

the family; and my money's to go and be squandered on them as have had

the same chance as me, only they've been wicked and wasteful. Sister

Pullet, \_you\_ may do as you like, and you may let your husband rob you

back again o' the money he's given you, but that isn't \_my\_ sperrit."

"La, Jane, how fiery you are!" said Mrs. Pullet. "I'm sure you'll have

the blood in your head, and have to be cupped. I'm sorry for Bessy and

her children,--I'm sure I think of 'em o' nights dreadful, for I sleep

very bad wi' this new medicine,--but it's no use for me to think o'

doing anything, if you won't meet me half-way."

"Why, there's this to be considered," said Mr. Glegg. "It's no use to

pay off this debt and save the furniture, when there's all the law

debts behind, as 'ud take every shilling, and more than could be made

out o' land and stock, for I've made that out from Lawyer Gore. We'd

need save our money to keep the poor man with, instead o' spending it

on furniture as he can neither eat nor drink. You \_will\_ be so hasty,

Jane, as if I didn't know what was reasonable."

"Then speak accordingly, Mr. Glegg!" said his wife, with slow, loud

emphasis, bending her head toward him significantly.

Tom's countenance had fallen during this conversation, and his lip

quivered; but he was determined not to give way. He would behave like

a man. Maggie, on the contrary, after her momentary delight in Tom's

speech, had relapsed into her state of trembling indignation. Her

mother had been standing close by Tom's side, and had been clinging to

his arm ever since he had last spoken; Maggie suddenly started up and

stood in front of them, her eyes flashing like the eyes of a young

lioness.

"Why do you come, then," she burst out, "talking and interfering with

us and scolding us, if you don't mean to do anything to help my poor

mother--your own sister,--if you've no feeling for her when she's in

trouble, and won't part with anything, though you would never miss it,

to save her from pain? Keep away from us then, and don't come to find

fault with my father,--he was better than any of you; he was kind,--he

would have helped \_you\_, if you had been in trouble. Tom and I don't

ever want to have any of your money, if you won't help my mother. We'd

rather not have it! We'll do without you."

Maggie, having hurled her defiance at aunts and uncles in this way,

stood still, with her large dark eyes glaring at them, as if she were

ready to await all consequences.

Mrs. Tulliver was frightened; there was something portentous in this

mad outbreak; she did not see how life could go on after it. Tom was

vexed; it was no \_use\_ to talk so. The aunts were silent with surprise

for some moments. At length, in a case of aberration such as this,

comment presented itself as more expedient than any answer.

"You haven't seen the end o' your trouble wi' that child, Bessy," said

Mrs. Pullet; "she's beyond everything for boldness and unthankfulness.

It's dreadful. I might ha' let alone paying for her schooling, for

she's worse nor ever."

"It's no more than what I've allays said," followed Mrs. Glegg. "Other

folks may be surprised, but I'm not. I've said over and over

again,--years ago I've said,--'Mark my words; that child 'ull come to

no good; there isn't a bit of our family in her.' And as for her

having so much schooling, I never thought well o' that. I'd my reasons

when I said \_I\_ wouldn't pay anything toward it."

"Come, come," said Mr. Glegg, "let's waste no more time in

talking,--let's go to business. Tom, now, get the pen and ink----"

While Mr. Glegg was speaking, a tall dark figure was seen hurrying

past the window.

"Why, there's Mrs. Moss," said Mrs. Tulliver. "The bad news must ha'

reached her, then"; and she went out to open the door, Maggie eagerly

following her.

"That's fortunate," said Mrs. Glegg. "She can agree to the list o'

things to be bought in. It's but right she should do her share when

it's her own brother."

Mrs. Moss was in too much agitation to resist Mrs. Tulliver's

movement, as she drew her into the parlor automatically, without

reflecting that it was hardly kind to take her among so many persons

in the first painful moment of arrival. The tall, worn, dark-haired

woman was a strong contrast to the Dodson sisters as she entered in

her shabby dress, with her shawl and bonnet looking as if they had

been hastily huddled on, and with that entire absence of

self-consciousness which belongs to keenly felt trouble. Maggie was

clinging to her arm; and Mrs. Moss seemed to notice no one else except

Tom, whom she went straight up to and took by the hand.

"Oh, my dear children," she burst out, "you've no call to think well

o' me; I'm a poor aunt to you, for I'm one o' them as take all and

give nothing. How's my poor brother?"

"Mr. Turnbull thinks he'll get better," said Maggie. "Sit down, aunt

Gritty. Don't fret."

"Oh, my sweet child, I feel torn i' two," said Mrs. Moss, allowing

Maggie to lead her to the sofa, but still not seeming to notice the

presence of the rest. "We've three hundred pounds o' my brother's

money, and now he wants it, and you all want it, poor things!--and yet

we must be sold up to pay it, and there's my poor children,--eight of

'em, and the little un of all can't speak plain. And I feel as if I

was a robber. But I'm sure I'd no thought as my brother----"

The poor woman was interrupted by a rising sob.

"Three hundred pounds! oh dear, dear," said Mrs. Tulliver, who, when

she had said that her husband had done "unknown" things for his

sister, had not had any particular sum in her mind, and felt a wife's

irritation at having been kept in the dark.

"What madness, to be sure!" said Mrs. Glegg. "A man with a family!

He'd no right to lend his money i' that way; and without security,

I'll be bound, if the truth was known."

Mrs. Glegg's voice had arrested Mrs. Moss's attention, and looking up,

she said:

"Yes, there \_was\_ security; my husband gave a note for it. We're not

that sort o' people, neither of us, as 'ud rob my brother's children;

and we looked to paying back the money, when the times got a bit

better."

"Well, but now," said Mr. Glegg, gently, "hasn't your husband no way

o' raising this money? Because it 'ud be a little fortin, like, for

these folks, if we can do without Tulliver's being made a bankrupt.

Your husband's got stock; it is but right he should raise the money,

as it seems to me,--not but what I'm sorry for you, Mrs. Moss."

"Oh, sir, you don't know what bad luck my husband's had with his

stock. The farm's suffering so as never was for want o' stock; and

we've sold all the wheat, and we're behind with our rent,--not but

what we'd like to do what's right, and I'd sit up and work half the

night, if it 'ud be any good; but there's them poor children,--four of

'em such little uns----"

"Don't cry so, aunt; don't fret," whispered Maggie, who had kept hold

of Mrs. Moss's hand.

"Did Mr. Tulliver let you have the money all at once?" said Mrs.

Tulliver, still lost in the conception of things which had been "going

on" without her knowledge.

"No; at twice," said Mrs. Moss, rubbing her eyes and making an effort

to restrain her tears. "The last was after my bad illness four years

ago, as everything went wrong, and there was a new note made then.

What with illness and bad luck, I've been nothing but cumber all my

life."

"Yes, Mrs. Moss," said Mrs. Glegg, with decision, "yours is a very

unlucky family; the more's the pity for \_my\_ sister."

"I set off in the cart as soon as ever I heard o' what had happened,"

said Mrs. Moss, looking at Mrs. Tulliver. "I should never ha' stayed

away all this while, if you'd thought well to let me know. And it

isn't as I'm thinking all about ourselves, and nothing about my

brother, only the money was so on my mind, I couldn't help speaking

about it. And my husband and me desire to do the right thing, sir,"

she added, looking at Mr. Glegg, "and we'll make shift and pay the

money, come what will, if that's all my brother's got to trust to.

We've been used to trouble, and don't look for much else. It's only

the thought o' my poor children pulls me i' two."

"Why, there's this to be thought on, Mrs. Moss," said Mr. Glegg, "and

it's right to warn you,--if Tulliver's made a bankrupt, and he's got a

note-of-hand of your husband's for three hundred pounds, you'll be

obliged to pay it; th' assignees 'ull come on you for it."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said Mrs. Tulliver, thinking of the bankruptcy,

and not of Mrs. Moss's concern in it. Poor Mrs. Moss herself listened

in trembling submission, while Maggie looked with bewildered distress

at Tom to see if \_he\_ showed any signs of understanding this trouble,

and caring about poor aunt Moss. Tom was only looking thoughtful, with

his eyes on the tablecloth.

"And if he isn't made bankrupt," continued Mr. Glegg, "as I said

before, three hundred pounds 'ud be a little fortin for him, poor man.

We don't know but what he may be partly helpless, if he ever gets up

again. I'm very sorry if it goes hard with you, Mrs. Moss, but my

opinion is, looking at it one way, it'll be right for you to raise the

money; and looking at it th' other way, you'll be obliged to pay it.

You won't think ill o' me for speaking the truth."

"Uncle," said Tom, looking up suddenly from his meditative view of the

tablecloth, "I don't think it would be right for my aunt Moss to pay

the money if it would be against my father's will for her to pay it;

would it?"

Mr. Glegg looked surprised for a moment or two before he said: "Why,

no, perhaps not, Tom; but then he'd ha' destroyed the note, you know.

We must look for the note. What makes you think it 'ud be against his

will?"

"Why," said Tom, coloring, but trying to speak firmly, in spite of a

boyish tremor, "I remember quite well, before I went to school to Mr.

Stelling, my father said to me one night, when we were sitting by the

fire together, and no one else was in the room----"

Tom hesitated a little, and then went on.

"He said something to me about Maggie, and then he said: 'I've always

been good to my sister, though she married against my will, and I've

lent Moss money; but I shall never think of distressing him to pay it;

I'd rather lose it. My children must not mind being the poorer for

that.' And now my father's ill, and not able to speak for himself, I

shouldn't like anything to be done contrary to what he said to me."

"Well, but then, my boy," said Uncle Glegg, whose good feeling led him

to enter into Tom's wish, but who could not at once shake off his

habitual abhorrence of such recklessness as destroying securities, or

alienating anything important enough to make an appreciable difference

in a man's property, "we should have to make away wi' the note, you

know, if we're to guard against what may happen, supposing your

father's made bankrupt----"

"Mr. Glegg," interrupted his wife, severely, "mind what you're saying.

You're putting yourself very forrard in other folks's business. If you

speak rash, don't say it was my fault."

"That's such a thing as I never heared of before," said uncle Pullet,

who had been making haste with his lozenge in order to express his

amazement,--"making away with a note! I should think anybody could set

the constable on you for it."

"Well, but," said Mrs. Tulliver, "if the note's worth all that money,

why can't we pay it away, and save my things from going away? We've no

call to meddle with your uncle and aunt Moss, Tom, if you think your

father 'ud be angry when he gets well."

Mrs. Tulliver had not studied the question of exchange, and was

straining her mind after original ideas on the subject.

"Pooh, pooh, pooh! you women don't understand these things," said

uncle Glegg. "There's no way o' making it safe for Mr. and Mrs. Moss

but destroying the note."

"Then I hope you'll help me do it, uncle," said Tom, earnestly. "If my

father shouldn't get well, I should be very unhappy to think anything

had been done against his will that I could hinder. And I'm sure he

meant me to remember what he said that evening. I ought to obey my

father's wish about his property."

Even Mrs. Glegg could not withhold her approval from Tom's words; she

felt that the Dodson blood was certainly speaking in him, though, if

his father had been a Dodson, there would never have been this wicked

alienation of money. Maggie would hardly have restrained herself from

leaping on Tom's neck, if her aunt Moss had not prevented her by

herself rising and taking Tom's hand, while she said, with rather a

choked voice:

"You'll never be the poorer for this, my dear boy, if there's a God

above; and if the money's wanted for your father, Moss and me 'ull pay

it, the same as if there was ever such security. We'll do as we'd be

done by; for if my children have got no other luck, they've got an

honest father and mother."

"Well," said Mr. Glegg, who had been meditating after Tom's words, "we

shouldn't be doing any wrong by the creditors, supposing your father

\_was\_ bankrupt. I've been thinking o' that, for I've been a creditor

myself, and seen no end o' cheating. If he meant to give your aunt the

money before ever he got into this sad work o' lawing, it's the same

as if he'd made away with the note himself; for he'd made up his mind

to be that much poorer. But there's a deal o' things to be considered,

young man," Mr. Glegg added, looking admonishingly at Tom, "when you

come to money business, and you may be taking one man's dinner away to

make another man's breakfast. You don't understand that, I doubt?"

"Yes, I do," said Tom, decidedly. "I know if I owe money to one man,

I've no right to give it to another. But if my father had made up his

mind to give my aunt the money before he was in debt, he had a right

to do it."

"Well done, young man! I didn't think you'd been so sharp," said uncle

Glegg, with much candor. "But perhaps your father \_did\_ make away with

the note. Let us go and see if we can find it in the chest."

"It's in my father's room. Let us go too, aunt Gritty," whispered

Maggie.

Chapter IV

A Vanishing Gleam

Mr. Tulliver, even between the fits of spasmodic rigidity which had

recurred at intervals ever since he had been found fallen from his

horse, was usually in so apathetic a condition that the exits and

entrances into his room were not felt to be of great importance. He

had lain so still, with his eyes closed, all this morning, that Maggie

told her aunt Moss she must not expect her father to take any notice

of them.

They entered very quietly, and Mrs. Moss took her seat near the head

of the bed, while Maggie sat in her old place on the bed, and put her

hand on her father's without causing any change in his face.

Mr. Glegg and Tom had also entered, treading softly, and were busy

selecting the key of the old oak chest from the bunch which Tom had

brought from his father's bureau. They succeeded in opening the

chest,--which stood opposite the foot of Mr. Tulliver's bed,--and

propping the lid with the iron holder, without much noise.

"There's a tin box," whispered Mr. Glegg; "he'd most like put a small

thing like a note in there. Lift it out, Tom; but I'll just lift up

these deeds,--they're the deeds o' the house and mill, I suppose,--and

see what there is under 'em."

Mr. Glegg had lifted out the parchments, and had fortunately drawn

back a little, when the iron holder gave way, and the heavy lid fell

with a loud bang that resounded over the house.

Perhaps there was something in that sound more than the mere fact of

the strong vibration that produced the instantaneous effect on the

frame of the prostrate man, and for the time completely shook off the

obstruction of paralysis. The chest had belonged to his father and his

father's father, and it had always been rather a solemn business to

visit it. All long-known objects, even a mere window fastening or a

particular door-latch, have sounds which are a sort of recognized

voice to us,--a voice that will thrill and awaken, when it has been

used to touch deep-lying fibres. In the same moment, when all the eyes

in the room were turned upon him, he started up and looked at the

chest, the parchments in Mr. Glegg's hand, and Tom holding the tin

box, with a glance of perfect consciousness and recognition.

"What are you going to do with those deeds?" he said, in his ordinary

tone of sharp questioning whenever he was irritated. "Come here, Tom.

What do you do, going to my chest?"

Tom obeyed, with some trembling; it was the first time his father had

recognized him. But instead of saying anything more to him, his father

continued to look with a growing distinctness of suspicion at Mr.

Glegg and the deeds.

"What's been happening, then?" he said sharply. "What are you meddling

with my deeds for? Is Wakem laying hold of everything? Why don't you

tell me what you've been a-doing?" he added impatiently, as Mr. Glegg

advanced to the foot of the bed before speaking.

"No, no, friend Tulliver," said Mr. Glegg, in a soothing tone.

"Nobody's getting hold of anything as yet. We only came to look and

see what was in the chest. You've been ill, you know, and we've had to

look after things a bit. But let's hope you'll soon be well enough to

attend to everything yourself."

Mr. Tulliver looked around him meditatively, at Tom, at Mr. Glegg, and

at Maggie; then suddenly appearing aware that some one was seated by

his side at the head of the bed he turned sharply round and saw his

sister.

"Eh, Gritty!" he said, in the half-sad, affectionate tone in which he

had been wont to speak to her. "What! you're there, are you? How could

you manage to leave the children?"

"Oh, brother!" said good Mrs. Moss, too impulsive to be prudent, "I'm

thankful I'm come now to see you yourself again; I thought you'd never

know us any more."

"What! have I had a stroke?" said Mr. Tulliver, anxiously, looking at

Mr. Glegg.

"A fall from your horse--shook you a bit,--that's all, I think," said

Mr. Glegg. "But you'll soon get over it, let's hope."

Mr. Tulliver fixed his eyes on the bed-clothes, and remained silent

for two or three minutes. A new shadow came over his face. He looked

up at Maggie first, and said in a lower tone, "You got the letter,

then, my wench?"

"Yes, father," she said, kissing him with a full heart. She felt as if

her father were come back to her from the dead, and her yearning to

show him how she had always loved him could be fulfilled.

"Where's your mother?" he said, so preoccupied that he received the

kiss as passively as some quiet animal might have received it.

"She's downstairs with my aunts, father. Shall I fetch her?"

"Ay, ay; poor Bessy!" and his eyes turned toward Tom as Maggie left

the room.

"You'll have to take care of 'em both if I die, you know, Tom. You'll

be badly off, I doubt. But you must see and pay everybody. And

mind,--there's fifty pound o' Luke's as I put into the business,--he

gave me a bit at a time, and he's got nothing to show for it. You must

pay him first thing."

Uncle Glegg involuntarily shook his head, and looked more concerned

than ever, but Tom said firmly:

"Yes, father. And haven't you a note from my uncle Moss for three

hundred pounds? We came to look for that. What do you wish to be done

about it, father?"

"Ah! I'm glad you thought o' that, my lad," said Mr. Tulliver. "I

allays meant to be easy about that money, because o' your aunt. You

mustn't mind losing the money, if they can't pay it,--and it's like

enough they can't. The note's in that box, mind! I allays meant to be

good to you, Gritty," said Mr. Tulliver, turning to his sister; "but

you know you aggravated me when you would have Moss."

At this moment Maggie re-entered with her mother, who came in much

agitated by the news that her husband was quite himself again.

"Well, Bessy," he said, as she kissed him, "you must forgive me if

you're worse off than you ever expected to be. But it's the fault o'

the law,--it's none o' mine," he added angrily. "It's the fault o'

raskills. Tom, you mind this: if ever you've got the chance, you make

Wakem smart. If you don't, you're a good-for-nothing son. You might

horse-whip him, but he'd set the law on you,--the law's made to take

care o' raskills."

Mr. Tulliver was getting excited, and an alarming flush was on his

face. Mr. Glegg wanted to say something soothing, but he was prevented

by Mr. Tulliver's speaking again to his wife. "They'll make a shift to

pay everything, Bessy," he said, "and yet leave you your furniture;

and your sisters'll do something for you--and Tom'll grow up--though

what he's to be I don't know--I've done what I could--I've given him a

eddication--and there's the little wench, she'll get married--but it's

a poor tale----"

The sanative effect of the strong vibration was exhausted, and with

the last words the poor man fell again, rigid and insensible. Though

this was only a recurrence of what had happened before, it struck all

present as if it had been death, not only from its contrast with the

completeness of the revival, but because his words had all had

reference to the possibility that his death was near. But with poor

Tulliver death was not to be a leap; it was to be a long descent under

thickening shadows.

Mr. Turnbull was sent for; but when he heard what had passed, he said

this complete restoration, though only temporary, was a hopeful sign,

proving that there was no permanent lesion to prevent ultimate

recovery.

Among the threads of the past which the stricken man had gathered up,

he had omitted the bill of sale; the flash of memory had only lit up

prominent ideas, and he sank into forgetfulness again with half his

humiliation unlearned.

But Tom was clear upon two points,--that his uncle Moss's note must be

destroyed; and that Luke's money must be paid, if in no other way, out

of his own and Maggie's money now in the savings bank. There were

subjects, you perceive, on which Tom was much quicker than on the

niceties of classical construction, or the relations of a mathematical

demonstration.

Chapter V

Tom Applies His Knife to the Oyster

The next day, at ten o'clock, Tom was on his way to St. Ogg's, to see

his uncle Deane, who was to come home last night, his aunt had said;

and Tom had made up his mind that his uncle Deane was the right person

to ask for advice about getting some employment. He was in a great way

of business; he had not the narrow notions of uncle Glegg; and he had

risen in the world on a scale of advancement which accorded with Tom's

ambition.

It was a dark, chill, misty morning, likely to end in rain,--one of

those mornings when even happy people take refuge in their hopes. And

Tom was very unhappy; he felt the humiliation as well as the

prospective hardships of his lot with all the keenness of a proud

nature; and with all his resolute dutifulness toward his father there

mingled an irrepressible indignation against him which gave misfortune

the less endurable aspect of a wrong. Since these were the

consequences of going to law, his father was really blamable, as his

aunts and uncles had always said he was; and it was a significant

indication of Tom's character, that though he thought his aunts ought

to do something more for his mother, he felt nothing like Maggie's

violent resentment against them for showing no eager tenderness and

generosity. There were no impulses in Tom that led him to expect what

did not present itself to him as a right to be demanded. Why should

people give away their money plentifully to those who had not taken

care of their own money? Tom saw some justice in severity; and all the

more, because he had confidence in himself that he should never

deserve that just severity. It was very hard upon him that he should

be put at this disadvantage in life by his father's want of prudence;

but he was not going to complain and to find fault with people because

they did not make everything easy for him. He would ask no one to help

him, more than to give him work and pay him for it. Poor Tom was not

without his hopes to take refuge in under the chill damp imprisonment

of the December fog, which seemed only like a part of his home

troubles. At sixteen, the mind that has the strongest affinity for

fact cannot escape illusion and self-flattery; and Tom, in sketching

his future, had no other guide in arranging his facts than the

suggestions of his own brave self-reliance. Both Mr. Glegg and Mr.

Deane, he knew, had been very poor once; he did not want to save money

slowly and retire on a moderate fortune like his uncle Glegg, but he

would be like his uncle Deane--get a situation in some great house of

business and rise fast. He had scarcely seen anything of his uncle

Deane for the last three years--the two families had been getting

wider apart; but for this very reason Tom was the more hopeful about

applying to him. His uncle Glegg, he felt sure, would never encourage

any spirited project, but he had a vague imposing idea of the

resources at his uncle Deane's command. He had heard his father say,

long ago, how Deane had made himself so valuable to Guest & Co. that

they were glad enough to offer him a share in the business; that was

what Tom resolved \_he\_ would do. It was intolerable to think of being

poor and looked down upon all one's life. He would provide for his

mother and sister, and make every one say that he was a man of high

character. He leaped over the years in this way, and, in the haste of

strong purpose and strong desire, did not see how they would be made

up of slow days, hours, and minutes.

By the time he had crossed the stone bridge over the Floss and was

entering St. Ogg's, he was thinking that he would buy his father's

mill and land again when he was rich enough, and improve the house and

live there; he should prefer it to any smarter, newer place, and he

could keep as many horses and dogs as he liked.

Walking along the street with a firm, rapid step, at this point in his

reverie he was startled by some one who had crossed without his

notice, and who said to him in a rough, familiar voice:

"Why, Master Tom, how's your father this morning?" It was a publican

of St. Ogg's, one of his father's customers.

Tom disliked being spoken to just then; but he said civilly, "He's

still very ill, thank you."

"Ay, it's been a sore chance for you, young man, hasn't it,--this

lawsuit turning out against him?" said the publican, with a confused,

beery idea of being good-natured.

Tom reddened and passed on; he would have felt it like the handling of

a bruise, even if there had been the most polite and delicate

reference to his position.

"That's Tulliver's son," said the publican to a grocer standing on the

adjacent door-step.

"Ah!" said the grocer, "I thought I knew his features. He takes after

his mother's family; she was a Dodson. He's a fine, straight youth;

what's he been brought up to?"

"Oh! to turn up his nose at his father's customers, and be a fine

gentleman,--not much else, I think."

Tom, roused from his dream of the future to a thorough consciousness

of the present, made all the greater haste to reach the warehouse

offices of Guest & Co., where he expected to find his uncle Deane. But

this was Mr. Deane's morning at the band, a clerk told him, and with

some contempt for his ignorance; Mr. Deane was not to be found in

River Street on a Thursday morning.

At the bank Tom was admitted into the private room where his uncle

was, immediately after sending in his name. Mr. Deane was auditing

accounts; but he looked up as Tom entered, and putting out his hand,

said, "Well, Tom, nothing fresh the matter at home, I hope? How's your

father?"

"Much the same, thank you, uncle," said Tom, feeling nervous. "But I

want to speak to you, please, when you're at liberty."

"Sit down, sit down," said Mr. Deane, relapsing into his accounts, in

which he and the managing-clerk remained so absorbed for the next

half-hour that Tom began to wonder whether he should have to sit in

this way till the bank closed,--there seemed so little tendency toward

a conclusion in the quiet, monotonous procedure of these sleek,

prosperous men of business. Would his uncle give him a place in the

bank? It would be very dull, prosy work, he thought, writing there

forever to the loud ticking of a timepiece. He preferred some other

way of getting rich. But at last there was a change; his uncle took a

pen and wrote something with a flourish at the end.

"You'll just step up to Torry's now, Mr. Spence, will you?" said Mr.

Deane, and the clock suddenly became less loud and deliberate in Tom's

ears.

"Well, Tom," said Mr. Deane, when they were alone, turning his

substantial person a little in his chair, and taking out his

snuff-box; "what's the business, my boy; what's the business?" Mr.

Deane, who had heard from his wife what had passed the day before,

thought Tom was come to appeal to him for some means of averting the

sale.

"I hope you'll excuse me for troubling you, uncle," said Tom,

coloring, but speaking in a tone which, though, tremulous, had a

certain proud independence in it; "but I thought you were the best

person to advise me what to do."

"Ah!" said Mr. Deane, reserving his pinch of snuff, and looking at Tom

with new attention, "let us hear."

"I want to get a situation, uncle, so that I may earn some money,"

said Tom, who never fell into circumlocution.

"A situation?" said Mr. Deane, and then took his pinch of snuff with

elaborate justice to each nostril. Tom thought snuff-taking a most

provoking habit.

"Why, let me see, how old are you?" said Mr. Deane, as he threw

himself backward again.

"Sixteen; I mean, I am going in seventeen," said Tom, hoping his uncle

noticed how much beard he had.

"Let me see; your father had some notion of making you an engineer, I

think?"

"But I don't think I could get any money at that for a long while,

could I?"

"That's true; but people don't get much money at anything, my boy,

when they're only sixteen. You've had a good deal of schooling,

however; I suppose you're pretty well up in accounts, eh? You

understand book keeping?"

"No," said Tom, rather falteringly. "I was in Practice. But Mr.

Stelling says I write a good hand, uncle. That's my writing," added

Tom, laying on the table a copy of the list he had made yesterday.

"Ah! that's good, that's good. But, you see, the best hand in the

world'll not get you a better place than a copying-clerk's, if you

know nothing of book-keeping,--nothing of accounts. And a

copying-clerk's a cheap article. But what have you been learning at

school, then?"

Mr. Deane had not occupied himself with methods of education, and had

no precise conception of what went forward in expensive schools.

"We learned Latin," said Tom, pausing a little between each item, as

if he were turning over the books in his school-desk to assist his

memory,--"a good deal of Latin; and the last year I did Themes, one

week in Latin and one in English; and Greek and Roman history; and

Euclid; and I began Algebra, but I left it off again; and we had one

day every week for Arithmetic. Then I used to have drawing-lessons;

and there were several other books we either read or learned out

of,--English Poetry, and HorÃ¦ PaulinÃ© and Blair's Rhetoric, the last

half."

Mr. Deane tapped his snuff-box again and screwed up his mouth; he felt

in the position of many estimable persons when they had read the New

Tariff, and found how many commodities were imported of which they

knew nothing; like a cautious man of business, he was not going to

speak rashly of a raw material in which he had had no experience. But

the presumption was, that if it had been good for anything, so

successful a man as himself would hardly have been ignorant of it.

About Latin he had an opinion, and thought that in case of another

war, since people would no longer wear hair-powder, it would be well

to put a tax upon Latin, as a luxury much run upon by the higher

classes, and not telling at all on the ship-owning department. But,

for what he knew, the HorÃ© PaulinÃ© might be something less neutral. On

the whole, this list of acquirements gave him a sort of repulsion

toward poor Tom.

"Well," he said at last, in rather a cold, sardonic tone, "you've had

three years at these things,--you must be pretty strong in 'em. Hadn't

you better take up some line where they'll come in handy?"

Tom colored, and burst out, with new energy:

"I'd rather not have any employment of that sort, uncle. I don't like

Latin and those things. I don't know what I could do with them unless

I went as usher in a school; and I don't know them well enough for

that! besides, I would as soon carry a pair of panniers. I don't want

to be that sort of person. I should like to enter into some business

where I can get on,--a manly business, where I should have to look

after things, and get credit for what I did. And I shall want to keep

my mother and sister."

"Ah, young gentleman," said Mr. Deane, with that tendency to repress

youthful hopes which stout and successful men of fifty find one of

their easiest duties, "that's sooner said than done,--sooner said than

done."

"But didn't \_you\_ get on in that way, uncle?" said Tom, a little

irritated that Mr. Deane did not enter more rapidly into his views. "I

mean, didn't you rise from one place to another through your abilities

and good conduct?"

"Ay, ay, sir," said Mr. Deane, spreading himself in his chair a

little, and entering with great readiness into a retrospect of his own

career. "But I'll tell you how I got on. It wasn't by getting astride

a stick and thinking it would turn into a horse if I sat on it long

enough. I kept my eyes and ears open, sir, and I wasn't too fond of my

own back, and I made my master's interest my own. Why, with only

looking into what went on in the mill,, I found out how there was a

waste of five hundred a-year that might be hindered. Why, sir, I

hadn't more schooling to begin with than a charity boy; but I saw

pretty soon that I couldn't get on far enough without mastering

accounts, and I learned 'em between working hours, after I'd been

unlading. Look here." Mr. Deane opened a book and pointed to the page.

"I write a good hand enough, and I'll match anybody at all sorts of

reckoning by the head; and I got it all by hard work, and paid for it

out of my own earnings,--often out of my own dinner and supper. And I

looked into the nature of all the things we had to do in the business,

and picked up knowledge as I went about my work, and turned it over in

my head. Why, I'm no mechanic,--I never pretended to be--but I've

thought of a thing or two that the mechanics never thought of, and

it's made a fine difference in our returns. And there isn't an article

shipped or unshipped at our wharf but I know the quality of it. If I

got places, sir, it was because I made myself fit for 'em. If you want

to slip into a round hole, you must make a ball of yourself; that's

where it is."

Mr. Deane tapped his box again. He had been led on by pure enthusiasm

in his subject, and had really forgotten what bearing this

retrospective survey had on his listener. He had found occasion for

saying the same thing more than once before, and was not distinctly

aware that he had not his port-wine before him.

"Well, uncle," said Tom, with a slight complaint in his tone, "that's

what I should like to do. Can't \_I\_ get on in the same way?"

"In the same way?" said Mr. Deane, eyeing Tom with quiet deliberation.

"There go two or three questions to that, Master Tom. That depends on

what sort of material you are, to begin with, and whether you've been

put into the right mill. But I'll tell you what it is. Your poor

father went the wrong way to work in giving you an education. It

wasn't my business, and I didn't interfere; but it is as I thought it

would be. You've had a sort of learning that's all very well for a

young fellow like our Mr. Stephen Guest, who'll have nothing to do but

sign checks all his life, and may as well have Latin inside his head

as any other sort of stuffing."

"But, uncle," said Tom, earnestly, "I don't see why the Latin need

hinder me from getting on in business. I shall soon forget it all; it

makes no difference to me. I had to do my lessons at school, but I

always thought they'd never be of any use to me afterward; I didn't

care about them."

"Ay, ay, that's all very well," said Mr. Deane; "but it doesn't alter

what I was going to say. Your Latin and rigmarole may soon dry off

you, but you'll be but a bare stick after that. Besides, it's whitened

your hands and taken the rough work out of you. And what do you know?

Why, you know nothing about book-keeping, to begin with, and not so

much of reckoning as a common shopman. You'll have to begin at a low

round of the ladder, let me tell you, if you mean to get on in life.

It's no use forgetting the education your father's been paying for, if

you don't give yourself a new un."

Tom bit his lips hard; he felt as if the tears were rising, and he

would rather die than let them.

"You want me to help you to a situation," Mr. Deane went on; "well,

I've no fault to find with that. I'm willing to do something for you.

But you youngsters nowadays think you're to begin with living well and

working easy; you've no notion of running afoot before you get

horseback. Now, you must remember what you are,--you're a lad of

sixteen, trained to nothing particular. There's heaps of your sort,

like so many pebbles, made to fit in nowhere. Well, you might be

apprenticed to some business,--a chemist's and druggist's perhaps;

your Latin might come in a bit there----"

Tom was going to speak, but Mr. Deane put up his hand and said:

"Stop! hear what I've got to say. You don't want to be a 'prentice,--I

know, I know,--you want to make more haste, and you don't want to

stand behind a counter. But if you're a copying-clerk, you'll have to

stand behind a desk, and stare at your ink and paper all day; there

isn't much out-look there, and you won't be much wiser at the end of

the year than at the beginning. The world isn't made of pen, ink, and

paper, and if you're to get on in the world, young man, you must know

what the world's made of. Now the best chance for you 'ud be to have a

place on a wharf, or in a warehouse, where you'd learn the smell of

things, but you wouldn't like that, I'll be bound; you'd have to stand

cold and wet, and be shouldered about by rough fellows. You're too

fine a gentleman for that."

Mr. Deane paused and looked hard at Tom, who certainly felt some

inward struggle before he could reply.

"I would rather do what will be best for me in the end, sir; I would

put up with what was disagreeable."

"That's well, if you can carry it out. But you must remember it isn't

only laying hold of a rope, you must go on pulling. It's the mistake

you lads make that have got nothing either in your brains or your

pocket, to think you've got a better start in the world if you stick

yourselves in a place where you can keep your coats clean, and have

the shopwenches take you for fine gentlemen. That wasn't the way \_I\_

started, young man; when I was sixteen, my jacket smelt of tar, and I

wasn't afraid of handling cheeses. That's the reason I can wear good

broadcloth now, and have my legs under the same table with the head

of the best firms in St. Ogg's."

Uncle Deane tapped his box, and seemed to expand a little under his

waistcoat and gold chain, as he squared his shoulders in the chair.

"Is there any place at liberty that you know of now, uncle, that I

should do for? I should like to set to work at once," said Tom, with a

slight tremor in his voice.

"Stop a bit, stop a bit; we mustn't be in too great a hurry. You must

bear in mind, if I put you in a place you're a bit young for, because

you happen to be my nephew, I shall be responsible for you. And

there's no better reason, you know, than your being my nephew; because

it remains to be seen whether you're good for anything."

"I hope I shall never do you any discredit, uncle," said Tom, hurt, as

all boys are at the statement of the unpleasant truth that people feel

no ground for trusting them. "I care about my own credit too much for

that."

"Well done, Tom, well done! That's the right spirit, and I never

refuse to help anybody if they've a mind to do themselves justice.

There's a young man of two-and-twenty I've got my eye on now. I shall

do what I can for that young man; he's got some pith in him. But then,

you see, he's made good use of his time,--a first-rate calculator,--

can tell you the cubic contents of anything in no time, and put me up

the other day to a new market for Swedish bark; he's uncommonly

knowing in manufactures, that young fellow."

"I'd better set about learning book-keeping, hadn't I, uncle?" said

Tom, anxious to prove his readiness to exert himself.

"Yes, yes, you can't do amiss there. But--Ah, Spence, you're back

again. Well Tom, there's nothing more to be said just now, I think,

and I must go to business again. Good-by. Remember me to your mother."

Mr. Deane put out his hand, with an air of friendly dismissal, and Tom

had not courage to ask another question, especially in the presence of

Mr. Spence. So he went out again into the cold damp air. He had to

call at his uncle Glegg's about the money in the Savings Bank, and by

the time he set out again the mist had thickened, and he could not see

very far before him; but going along River Street again, he was

startled, when he was within two yards of the projecting side of a

shop-window, by the words "Dorlcote Mill" in large letters on a

hand-bill, placed as if on purpose to stare at him. It was the

catalogue of the sale to take place the next week; it was a reason for

hurrying faster out of the town.

Poor Tom formed no visions of the distant future as he made his way

homeward; he only felt that the present was very hard. It seemed a

wrong toward him that his uncle Deane had no confidence in him,--did

not see at once that he should acquit himself well, which Tom himself

was as certain of as of the daylight. Apparently he, Tom Tulliver, was

likely to be held of small account in the world; and for the first

time he felt a sinking of heart under the sense that he really was

very ignorant, and could do very little. Who was that enviable young

man that could tell the cubic contents of things in no time, and make

suggestions about Swedish bark! Tom had been used to be so entirely

satisfied with himself, in spite of his breaking down in a

demonstration, and construing \_nunc illas promite vires\_ as "now

promise those men"; but now he suddenly felt at a disadvantage,

because he knew less than some one else knew. There must be a world of

things connected with that Swedish bark, which, if he only knew them,

might have helped him to get on. It would have been much easier to

make a figure with a spirited horse and a new saddle.

Two hours ago, as Tom was walking to St. Ogg's, he saw the distant

future before him as he might have seen a tempting stretch of smooth

sandy beach beyond a belt of flinty shingles; he was on the grassy

bank then, and thought the shingles might soon be passed. But now his

feet were on the sharp stones; the belt of shingles had widened, and

the stretch of sand had dwindled into narrowness.

"What did my Uncle Deane say, Tom?" said Maggie, putting her arm

through Tom's as he was warming himself rather drearily by the kitchen

fire. "Did he say he would give you a situation?"

"No, he didn't say that. He didn't quite promise me anything; he

seemed to think I couldn't have a very good situation. I'm too young."

"But didn't he speak kindly, Tom?"

"Kindly? Pooh! what's the use of talking about that? I wouldn't care

about his speaking kindly, if I could get a situation. But it's such a

nuisance and bother; I've been at school all this while learning Latin

and things,--not a bit of good to me,--and now my uncle says I must

set about learning book-keeping and calculation, and those things. He

seems to make out I'm good for nothing."

Tom's mouth twitched with a bitter expression as he looked at the

fire.

"Oh, what a pity we haven't got Dominie Sampson!" said Maggie, who

couldn't help mingling some gayety with their sadness. "If he had

taught me book-keeping by double entry and after the Italian method,

as he did Lucy Bertram, I could teach you, Tom."

"\_You\_ teach! Yes, I dare say. That's always the tone you take," said

Tom.

"Dear Tom, I was only joking," said Maggie, putting her cheek against

his coat-sleeve.

"But it's always the same, Maggie," said Tom, with the little frown he

put on when he was about to be justifiably severe. "You're always

setting yourself up above me and every one else, and I've wanted to

tell you about it several times. You ought not to have spoken as you

did to my uncles and aunts; you should leave it to me to take care of

my mother and you, and not put yourself forward. You think you know

better than any one, but you're almost always wrong. I can judge much

better than you can."

Poor Tom! he had just come from being lectured and made to feel his

inferiority; the reaction of his strong, self-asserting nature must

take place somehow; and here was a case in which he could justly show

himself dominant. Maggie's cheek flushed and her lip quivered with

conflicting resentment and affection, and a certain awe as well as

admiration of Tom's firmer and more effective character. She did not

answer immediately; very angry words rose to her lips, but they were

driven back again, and she said at last:

"You often think I'm conceited, Tom, when I don't mean what I say at

all in that way. I don't mean to put myself above you; I know you

behaved better than I did yesterday. But you are always so harsh to

me, Tom."

With the last words the resentment was rising again.

"No, I'm not harsh," said Tom, with severe decision. "I'm always kind

to you, and so I shall be; I shall always take care of you. But you

must mind what I say."

Their mother came in now, and Maggie rushed away, that her burst of

tears, which she felt must come, might not happen till she was safe

upstairs. They were very bitter tears; everybody in the world seemed

so hard and unkind to Maggie; there was no indulgence, no fondness,

such as she imagined when she fashioned the world afresh in her own

thoughts. In books there were people who were always agreeable or

tender, and delighted to do things that made one happy, and who did

not show their kindness by finding fault. The world outside the books

was not a happy one, Maggie felt; it seemed to be a world where people

behaved the best to those they did not pretend to love, and that did

not belong to them. And if life had no love in it, what else was there

for Maggie? Nothing but poverty and the companionship of her mother's

narrow griefs, perhaps of her father's heart-cutting childish

dependence. There is no hopelessness so sad as that of early youth,

when the soul is made up of wants, and has no long memories, no

superadded life in the life of others; though we who looked on think

lightly of such premature despair, as if our vision of the future

lightened the blind sufferer's present.

Maggie, in her brown frock, with her eyes reddened and her heavy hair

pushed back, looking from the bed where her father lay to the dull

walls of this sad chamber which was the centre of her world, was a

creature full of eager, passionate longings for all that was beautiful

and glad; thirsty for all knowledge; with an ear straining after

dreamy music that died away and would not come near to her; with a

blind, unconscious yearning for something that would link together the

wonderful impressions of this mysterious life, and give her soul a

sense of home in it.

No wonder, when there is this contrast between the outward and the

inward, that painful collisions come of it.

Chapter VI

Tending to Refute the Popular Prejudice against the Present of a

Pocket-Knife

In that dark time of December, the sale of the household furniture

lasted beyond the middle of the second day. Mr. Tulliver, who had

begun, in his intervals of consciousness, to manifest an irritability

which often appeared to have as a direct effect the recurrence of

spasmodic rigidity and insensibility, had lain in this living death

throughout the critical hours when the noise of the sale came nearest

to his chamber. Mr. Turnbull had decided that it would be a less risk

to let him remain where he was than to remove him to Luke's

cottage,--a plan which the good Luke had proposed to Mrs. Tulliver,

thinking it would be very bad if the master were "to waken up" at the

noise of the sale; and the wife and children had sat imprisoned in the

silent chamber, watching the large prostrate figure on the bed, and

trembling lest the blank face should suddenly show some response to

the sounds which fell on their own ears with such obstinate, painful

repetition.

But it was over at last, that time of importunate certainty and

eye-straining suspense. The sharp sound of a voice, almost as metallic

as the rap that followed it, had ceased; the tramping of footsteps on

the gravel had died out. Mrs. Tulliver's blond face seemed aged ten

years by the last thirty hours; the poor woman's mind had been busy

divining when her favorite things were being knocked down by the

terrible hammer; her heart had been fluttering at the thought that

first one thing and then another had gone to be identified as hers in

the hateful publicity of the Golden Lion; and all the while she had to

sit and make no sign of this inward agitation. Such things bring lines

in well-rounded faces, and broaden the streaks of white among the

hairs that once looked as if they had been dipped in pure sunshine.

Already, at three o'clock, Kezia, the good-hearted, bad-tempered

housemaid, who regarded all people that came to the sale as her

personal enemies, the dirt on whose feet was of a peculiarly vile

quality, had begun to scrub and swill with an energy much assisted by

a continual low muttering against "folks as came to buy up other

folk's things," and made light of "scrazing" the tops of mahogany

tables over which better folks than themselves had had to--suffer a

waste of tissue through evaporation. She was not scrubbing

indiscriminately, for there would be further dirt of the same

atrocious kind made by people who had still to fetch away their

purchases; but she was bent on bringing the parlor, where that

"pipe-smoking pig," the bailiff, had sat, to such an appearance of

scant comfort as could be given to it by cleanliness and the few

articles of furniture bought in for the family. Her mistress and the

young folks should have their tea in it that night, Kezia was

determined.

It was between five and six o'clock, near the usual teatime, when she

came upstairs and said that Master Tom was wanted. The person who

wanted him was in the kitchen, and in the first moments, by the

imperfect fire and candle light, Tom had not even an indefinite sense

of any acquaintance with the rather broad-set but active figure,

perhaps two years older than himself, that looked at him with a pair

of blue eyes set in a disc of freckles, and pulled some curly red

locks with a strong intention of respect. A low-crowned

oilskin-covered hat, and a certain shiny deposit of dirt on the rest

of the costume, as of tablets prepared for writing upon, suggested a

calling that had to do with boats; but this did not help Tom's memory.

"Sarvant, Master Tom," said he of the red locks, with a smile which

seemed to break through a self-imposed air of melancholy. "You don't

know me again, I doubt," he went on, as Tom continued to look at him

inquiringly; "but I'd like to talk to you by yourself a bit, please."

"There's a fire i' the parlor, Master Tom," said Kezia, who objected

to leaving the kitchen in the crisis of toasting.

"Come this way, then," said Tom, wondering if this young fellow

belonged to Guest & Co.'s Wharf, for his imagination ran continually

toward that particular spot; and uncle Deane might any time be sending

for him to say that there was a situation at liberty.

The bright fire in the parlor was the only light that showed the few

chairs, the bureau, the carpetless floor, and the one table--no, not

the \_one\_ table; there was a second table, in a corner, with a large

Bible and a few other books upon it. It was this new strange bareness

that Tom felt first, before he thought of looking again at the face

which was also lit up by the fire, and which stole a half-shy,

questioning glance at him as the entirely strange voice said:

"Why! you don't remember Bob, then, as you gen the pocket-knife to,

Mr. Tom?"

The rough-handled pocket-knife was taken out in the same moment, and

the largest blade opened by way of irresistible demonstration.

"What! Bob Jakin?" said Tom, not with any cordial delight, for he felt

a little ashamed of that early intimacy symbolized by the

pocket-knife, and was not at all sure that Bob's motives for recalling

it were entirely admirable.

"Ay, ay, Bob Jakin, if Jakin it must be, 'cause there's so many Bobs

as you went arter the squerrils with, that day as I plumped right down

from the bough, and bruised my shins a good un--but I got the squerril

tight for all that, an' a scratter it was. An' this littlish blade's

broke, you see, but I wouldn't hev a new un put in, 'cause they might

be cheatin' me an' givin' me another knife instid, for there isn't

such a blade i' the country,--it's got used to my hand, like. An'

there was niver nobody else gen me nothin' but what I got by my own

sharpness, only you, Mr. Tom; if it wasn't Bill Fawks as gen me the

terrier pup istid o' drowndin't it, an' I had to jaw him a good un

afore he'd give it me."

Bob spoke with a sharp and rather treble volubility, and got through

his long speech with surprising despatch, giving the blade of his

knife an affectionate rub on his sleeve when he had finished.

"Well, Bob," said Tom, with a slight air of patronage, the foregoing

reminscences having disposed him to be as friendly as was becoming,

though there was no part of his acquaintance with Bob that he

remembered better than the cause of their parting quarrel; "is there

anything I can do for you?"

"Why, no, Mr. Tom," answered Bob, shutting up his knife with a click

and returning it to his pocket, where he seemed to be feeling for

something else. "I shouldn't ha' come back upon you now ye're i'

trouble, an' folks say as the master, as I used to frighten the birds

for, an' he flogged me a bit for fun when he catched me eatin' the

turnip, as they say he'll niver lift up his head no more,--I shouldn't

ha' come now to ax you to gi' me another knife 'cause you gen me one

afore. If a chap gives me one black eye, that's enough for me; I

sha'n't ax him for another afore I sarve him out; an' a good turn's

worth as much as a bad un, anyhow. I shall niver grow down'ards again,

Mr. Tom, an' you war the little chap as I liked the best when \_I\_ war

a little chap, for all you leathered me, and wouldn't look at me

again. There's Dick Brumby, there, I could leather him as much as I'd

a mind; but lors! you get tired o' leatherin' a chap when you can

niver make him see what you want him to shy at. I'n seen chaps as 'ud

stand starin' at a bough till their eyes shot out, afore they'd see as

a bird's tail warn't a leaf. It's poor work goin' wi' such raff. But

you war allays a rare un at shying, Mr. Tom, an' I could trusten to

you for droppin' down wi' your stick in the nick o' time at a runnin'

rat, or a stoat, or that, when I war a-beatin' the bushes."

Bob had drawn out a dirty canvas bag, and would perhaps not have

paused just then if Maggie had not entered the room and darted a look

of surprise and curiosity at him, whereupon he pulled his red locks

again with due respect. But the next moment the sense of the altered

room came upon Maggie with a force that overpowered the thought of

Bob's presence. Her eyes had immediately glanced from him to the place

where the bookcase had hung; there was nothing now but the oblong

unfaded space on the wall, and below it the small table with the Bible

and the few other books.

"Oh, Tom!" she burst out, clasping her hands, "where are the books? I

thought my uncle Glegg said he would buy them. Didn't he? Are those

all they've left us?"

"I suppose so," said Tom, with a sort of desperate indifference. "Why

should they buy many books when they bought so little furniture?"

"Oh, but, Tom," said Maggie, her eyes filling with tears, as she

rushed up to the table to see what books had been rescued. "Our dear

old Pilgrim's Progress that you colored with your little paints; and

that picture of Pilgrim with a mantle on, looking just like a

turtle--oh dear!" Maggie went on, half sobbing as she turned over the

few books, "I thought we should never part with that while we lived;

everything is going away from us; the end of our lives will have

nothing in it like the beginning!"

Maggie turned away from the table and threw herself into a chair, with

the big tears ready to roll down her cheeks, quite blinded to the

presence of Bob, who was looking at her with the pursuant gaze of an

intelligent dumb animal, with perceptions more perfect than his

comprehension.

"Well, Bob," said Tom, feeling that the subject of the books was

unseasonable, "I suppose you just came to see me because we're in

trouble? That was very good-natured of you."

"I'll tell you how it is, Master Tom," said Bob, beginning to untwist

his canvas bag. "You see, I'n been with a barge this two 'ear; that's

how I'n been gettin' my livin',--if it wasn't when I was tentin' the

furnace, between whiles, at Torry's mill. But a fortni't ago I'd a

rare bit o' luck,--I allays thought I was a lucky chap, for I niver

set a trap but what I catched something; but this wasn't trap, it was

a fire i' Torry's mill, an' I doused it, else it 'ud set th' oil

alight, an' the genelman gen me ten suvreigns; he gen me 'em himself

last week. An' he said first, I was a sperrited chap,--but I knowed

that afore,--but then he outs wi' the ten suvreigns, an' that war

summat new. Here they are, all but one!" Here Bob emptied the canvas

bag on the table. "An' when I'd got 'em, my head was all of a boil

like a kettle o' broth, thinkin' what sort o' life I should take to,

for there war a many trades I'd thought on; for as for the barge, I'm

clean tired out wi't, for it pulls the days out till they're as long

as pigs' chitterlings. An' I thought first I'd ha' ferrets an' dogs,

an' be a rat-catcher; an' then I thought as I should like a bigger way

o' life, as I didn't know so well; for I'n seen to the bottom o'

rat-catching; an' I thought, an' thought, till at last I settled I'd

be a packman,--for they're knowin' fellers, the packmen are,--an' I'd

carry the lightest things I could i' my pack; an' there'd be a use for

a feller's tongue, as is no use neither wi' rats nor barges. An' I

should go about the country far an' wide, an' come round the women wi'

my tongue, an' get my dinner hot at the public,--lors! it 'ud be a

lovely life!"

Bob paused, and then said, with defiant decision, as if resolutely

turning his back on that paradisaic picture:

"But I don't mind about it, not a chip! An' I'n changed one o' the

suvreigns to buy my mother a goose for dinner, an' I'n bought a blue

plush wescoat, an' a sealskin cap,--for if I meant to be a packman,

I'd do it respectable. But I don't mind about it, not a chip! My yead

isn't a turnip, an' I shall p'r'aps have a chance o' dousing another

fire afore long. I'm a lucky chap. So I'll thank you to take the nine

suvreigns, Mr. Tom, and set yoursen up with 'em somehow, if it's true

as the master's broke. They mayn't go fur enough, but they'll help."

Tom was touched keenly enough to forget his pride and suspicion.

"You're a very kind fellow, Bob," he said, coloring, with that little

diffident tremor in his voice which gave a certain charm even to Tom's

pride and severity, "and I sha'n't forget you again, though I didn't

know you this evening. But I can't take the nine sovereigns; I should

be taking your little fortune from you, and they wouldn't do me much

good either."

"Wouldn't they, Mr. Tom?" said Bob, regretfully. "Now don't say so

'cause you think I want 'em. I aren't a poor chap. My mother gets a

good penn'orth wi' picking feathers an' things; an' if she eats

nothin' but bread-an'-water, it runs to fat. An' I'm such a lucky

chap; an' I doubt you aren't quite so lucky, Mr. Tom,--th' old master

isn't, anyhow,--an' so you might take a slice o' my luck, an' no harm

done. Lors! I found a leg o' pork i' the river one day; it had tumbled

out o' one o' them round-sterned Dutchmen, I'll be bound. Come, think

better on it, Mr. Tom, for old 'quinetance' sake, else I shall think

you bear me a grudge."

Bob pushed the sovereigns forward, but before Tom could speak Maggie,

clasping her hands, and looking penitently at Bob, said:

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Bob; I never thought you were so good. Why, I think

you're the kindest person in the world!"

Bob had not been aware of the injurious opinion for which Maggie was

performing an inward act of penitence, but he smiled with pleasure at

this handsome eulogy,--especially from a young lass who, as he

informed his mother that evening, had "such uncommon eyes, they looked

somehow as they made him feel nohow."

"No, indeed Bob, I can't take them," said Tom; "but don't think I feel

your kindness less because I say no. I don't want to take anything

from anybody, but to work my own way. And those sovereigns wouldn't

help me much--they wouldn't really--if I were to take them. Let me

shake hands with you instead."

Tom put out his pink palm, and Bob was not slow to place his hard,

grimy hand within it.

"Let me put the sovereigns in the bag again," said Maggie; "and you'll

come and see us when you've bought your pack, Bob."

"It's like as if I'd come out o' make believe, o' purpose to show 'em

you," said Bob, with an air of discontent, as Maggie gave him the bag

again, "a-taking 'em back i' this way. I \_am\_ a bit of a Do, you know;

but it isn't that sort o' Do,--it's on'y when a feller's a big rogue,

or a big flat, I like to let him in a bit, that's all."

"Now, don't you be up to any tricks, Bob," said Tom, "else you'll get

transported some day."

"No, no; not me, Mr. Tom," said Bob, with an air of cheerful

confidence. "There's no law again' flea-bites. If I wasn't to take a

fool in now and then, he'd niver get any wiser. But, lors! hev a

suvreign to buy you and Miss summat, on'y for a token--just to match

my pocket-knife."

While Bob was speaking he laid down the sovereign, and resolutely

twisted up his bag again. Tom pushed back the gold, and said, "No,

indeed, Bob; thank you heartily, but I can't take it." And Maggie,

taking it between her fingers, held it up to Bob and said, more

persuasively:

"Not now, but perhaps another time. If ever Tom or my father wants

help that you can give, we'll let you know; won't we, Tom? That's what

you would like,--to have us always depend on you as a friend that we

can go to,--isn't it, Bob?"

"Yes, Miss, and thank you," said Bob, reluctantly taking the money;

"that's what I'd like, anything as you like. An' I wish you good-by,

Miss, and good-luck, Mr. Tom, and thank you for shaking hands wi' me,

\_though\_ you wouldn't take the money."

Kezia's entrance, with very black looks, to inquire if she shouldn't

bring in the tea now, or whether the toast was to get hardened to a

brick, was a seasonable check on Bob's flux of words, and hastened his

parting bow.

Chapter VII

How a Hen Takes to Stratagem

The days passed, and Mr. Tulliver showed, at least to the eyes of the

medical man, stronger and stronger symptoms of a gradual return to his

normal condition; the paralytic obstruction was, little by little,

losing its tenacity, and the mind was rising from under it with fitful

struggles, like a living creature making its way from under a great

snowdrift, that slides and slides again, and shuts up the newly made

opening.

Time would have seemed to creep to the watchers by the bed, if it had

only been measured by the doubtful, distant hope which kept count of

the moments within the chamber; but it was measured for them by a

fast-approaching dread which made the nights come too quickly. While

Mr. Tulliver was slowly becoming himself again, his lot was hastening

toward its moment of most palpable change. The taxing-masters had done

their work like any respectable gunsmith conscientiously preparing the

musket, that, duly pointed by a brave arm, will spoil a life or two.

Allocaturs, filing of bills in Chancery, decrees of sale, are legal

chain-shot or bomb-shells that can never hit a solitary mark, but must

fall with widespread shattering. So deeply inherent is it in this life

of ours that men have to suffer for each other's sins, so inevitably

diffusive is human suffering, that even justice makes its victims, and

we can conceive no retribution that does not spread beyond its mark in

pulsations of unmerited pain.

By the beginning of the second week in January, the bills were out

advertising the sale, under a decree of Chancery, of Mr. Tulliver's

farming and other stock, to be followed by a sale of the mill and

land, held in the proper after-dinner hour at the Golden Lion. The

miller himself, unaware of the lapse of time, fancied himself still in

that first stage of his misfortunes when expedients might be thought

of; and often in his conscious hours talked in a feeble, disjointed

manner of plans he would carry out when he "got well." The wife and

children were not without hope of an issue that would at least save

Mr. Tulliver from leaving the old spot, and seeking an entirely

strange life. For uncle Deane had been induced to interest himself in

this stage of the business. It would not, he acknowledged, be a bad

speculation for Guest & Co. to buy Dorlcote Mill, and carry on the

business, which was a good one, and might be increased by the addition

of steam power; in which case Tulliver might be retained as manager.

Still, Mr. Deane would say nothing decided about the matter; the fact

that Wakem held the mortgage on the land might put it into his head to

bid for the whole estate, and further, to outbid the cautious firm of

Guest &Co., who did not carry on business on sentimental grounds. Mr.

Deane was obliged to tell Mrs. Tulliver something to that effect, when

he rode over to the mill to inspect the books in company with Mrs.

Glegg; for she had observed that "if Guest &Co. would only think about

it, Mr. Tulliver's father and grandfather had been carrying on

Dorlcote Mill long before the oil-mill of that firm had been so much

as thought of."

Mr. Deane, in reply, doubted whether that was precisely the relation

between the two mills which would determine their value as

investments. As for uncle Glegg, the thing lay quite beyond his

imagination; the good-natured man felt sincere pity for the Tulliver

family, but his money was all locked up in excellent mortgages, and he

could run no risk; that would be unfair to his own relatives; but he

had made up his mind that Tulliver should have some new flannel

waistcoats which he had himself renounced in favor of a more elastic

commodity, and that he would buy Mrs. Tulliver a pound of tea now and

then; it would be a journey which his benevolence delighted in

beforehand, to carry the tea and see her pleasure on being assured it

was the best black.

Still, it was clear that Mr. Deane was kindly disposed toward the

Tullivers. One day he had brought Lucy, who was come home for the

Christmas holidays, and the little blond angel-head had pressed itself

against Maggie's darker cheek with many kisses and some tears. These

fair slim daughters keep up a tender spot in the heart of many a

respectable partner in a respectable firm, and perhaps Lucy's anxious,

pitying questions about her poor cousins helped to make uncle Deane

more prompt in finding Tom a temporary place in the warehouse, and in

putting him in the way of getting evening lessons in book-keeping and

calculation.

That might have cheered the lad and fed his hopes a little, if there

had not come at the same time the much-dreaded blow of finding that

his father must be a bankrupt, after all; at least, the creditors must

be asked to take less than their due, which to Tom's untechnical mind

was the same thing as bankruptcy. His father must not only be said to

have "lost his property," but to have "failed,"--the word that carried

the worst obloquy to Tom's mind. For when the defendant's claim for

costs had been satisfied, there would remain the friendly bill of Mr.

Gore, and the deficiency at the bank, as well as the other debts which

would make the assets shrink into unequivocal disproportion; "not more

than ten or twelve shillings in the pound," predicted Mr. Deane, in a

decided tone, tightening his lips; and the words fell on Tom like a

scalding liquied, leaving a continual smart.

He was sadly in want of something to keep up his spirits a little in

the unpleasant newness of his position,--suddenly transported from the

easy carpeted \_ennui\_ of study-hours at Mr. Stelling's, and the busy

idleness of castle-building in a "last half" at school, to the

companionship of sacks and hides, and bawling men thundering down

heavy weights at his elbow. The first step toward getting on in the

world was a chill, dusty, noisy affair, and implied going without

one's tea in order to stay in St. Ogg's and have an evening lesson

from a one-armed elderly clerk, in a room smelling strongly of bad

tobacco. Tom's young pink-and-white face had its colors very much

deadened by the time he took off his hat at home, and sat down with

keen hunger to his supper. No wonder he was a little cross if his

mother or Maggie spoke to him.

But all this while Mrs. Tulliver was brooding over a scheme by which

she, and no one else, would avert the result most to be dreaded, and

prevent Wakem from entertaining the purpose of bidding for the mill.

Imagine a truly respectable and amiable hen, by some portentous

anomaly, taking to reflection and inventing combinations by which she

might prevail on Hodge not to wring her neck, or send her and her

chicks to market; the result could hardly be other than much cackling

and fluttering. Mrs. Tulliver, seeing that everything had gone wrong,

had begun to think she had been too passive in life; and that, if she

had applied her mind to business, and taken a strong resolution now

and then, it would have been all the better for her and her family.

Nobody, it appeared, had thought of going to speak to Wakem on this

business of the mill; and yet, Mrs. Tulliver reflected, it would have

been quite the shortest method of securing the right end. It would

have been of no use, to be sure, for Mr. Tulliver to go,--even if he

had been able and willing,--for he had been "going to law against

Wakem" and abusing him for the last ten years; Wakem was always likely

to have a spite against him. And now that Mrs. Tulliver had come to

the conclusion that her husband was very much in the wrong to bring

her into this trouble, she was inclined to think that his opinion of

Wakem was wrong too. To be sure, Wakem had "put the bailies in the

house, and sold them up"; but she supposed he did that to please the

man that lent Mr. Tulliver the money, for a lawyer had more folks to

please than one, and he wasn't likely to put Mr. Tulliver, who had

gone to law with him, above everybody else in the world. The attorney

might be a very reasonable man; why not? He had married a Miss Clint,

and at the time Mrs. Tulliver had heard of that marriage, the summer

when she wore her blue satin spencer, and had not yet any thoughts of

Mr. Tulliver, she knew no harm of Wakem. And certainly toward herself,

whom he knew to have been a Miss Dodson, it was out of all possibility

that he could entertain anything but good-will, when it was once

brought home to his observation that she, for her part, had never

wanted to go to law, and indeed was at present disposed to take Mr.

Wakem's view of all subjects rather than her husband's. In fact, if

that attorney saw a respectable matron like herself disposed "to give

him good words," why shouldn't he listen to her representations? For

she would put the matter clearly before him, which had never been done

yet. And he would never go and bid for the mill on purpose to spite

her, an innocent woman, who thought it likely enough that she had

danced with him in their youth at Squire Darleigh's, for at those big

dances she had often and often danced with young men whose names she

had forgotten.

Mrs. Tulliver hid these reasonings in her own bosom; for when she had

thrown out a hint to Mr. Deane and Mr. Glegg that she wouldn't mind

going to speak to Wakem herself, they had said, "No, no, no," and

"Pooh, pooh," and "Let Wakem alone," in the tone of men who were not

likely to give a candid attention to a more definite exposition of her

project; still less dared she mention the plan to Tom and Maggie, for

"the children were always so against everything their mother said";

and Tom, she observed, was almost as much set against Wakem as his

father was. But this unusual concentration of thought naturally gave

Mrs. Tulliver an unusual power of device and determination: and a day

or two before the sale, to be held at the Golden Lion, when there was

no longer any time to be lost, she carried out her plan by a

stratagem. There were pickles in question, a large stock of pickles

and ketchup which Mrs. Tulliver possessed, and which Mr. Hyndmarsh,

the grocer, would certainly purchase if she could transact the

business in a personal interview, so she would walk with Tom to St.

Ogg's that morning; and when Tom urged that she might let the pickles

be at present,--he didn't like her to go about just yet,--she appeared

so hurt at this conduct in her son, contradicting her about pickles

which she had made after the family receipts inherited from his own

grandmother, who had died when his mother was a little girl, that he

gave way, and they walked together until she turned toward Danish

Street, where Mr. Hyndmarsh retailed his grocery, not far from the

offices of Mr. Wakem.

That gentleman was not yet come to his office; would Mrs. Tulliver sit

down by the fire in his private room and wait for him? She had not

long to wait before the punctual attorney entered, knitting his brow

with an examining glance at the stout blond woman who rose, curtsying

deferentially,--a tallish man, with an aquiline nose and abundant

iron-gray hair. You have never seen Mr. Wakem before, and are possibly

wondering whether he was really as eminent a rascal, and as crafty,

bitter an enemy of honest humanity in general, and of Mr. Tulliver in

particular, as he is represented to be in that eidolon or portrait of

him which we have seen to exist in the miller's mind.

It is clear that the irascible miller was a man to interpret any

chance-shot that grazed him as an attempt on his own life, and was

liable to entanglements in this puzzling world, which, due

consideration had to his own infallibility, required the hypothesis of

a very active diabolical agency to explain them. It is still possible

to believe that the attorney was not more guilty toward him than an

ingenious machine, which performs its work with much regularity, is

guilty toward the rash man who, venturing too near it, is caught up by

some fly-wheel or other, and suddenly converted into unexpected

mince-meat.

But it is really impossible to decide this question by a glance at his

person; the lines and lights of the human countenance are like other

symbols,--not always easy to read without a key. On an \_a priori\_ view

of Wakem's aquiline nose, which offended Mr. Tulliver, there was not

more rascality than in the shape of his stiff shirt-collar, though

this too along with his nose, might have become fraught with damnatory

meaning when once the rascality was ascertained.

"Mrs. Tulliver, I think?" said Mr. Wakem.

"Yes, sir; Miss Elizabeth Dodson as was."

"Pray be seated. You have some business with me?"

"Well, sir, yes," said Mrs. Tulliver, beginning to feel alarmed at her

own courage, now she was really in presence of the formidable man, and

reflecting that she had not settled with herself how she should begin.

Mr. Wakem felt in his waistcoat pockets, and looked at her in silence.

"I hope, sir," she began at last,--"I hope, sir, you're not a-thinking

as \_I\_ bear you any ill-will because o' my husband's losing his

lawsuit, and the bailies being put in, and the linen being sold,--oh

dear!--for I wasn't brought up in that way. I'm sure you remember my

father, sir, for he was close friends with Squire Darleigh, and we

allays went to the dances there, the Miss Dodsons,--nobody could be

more looked on,--and justly, for there was four of us, and you're

quite aware as Mrs. Glegg and Mrs. Deane are my sisters. And as for

going to law and losing money, and having sales before you're dead, I

never saw anything o' that before I was married, nor for a long while

after. And I'm not to be answerable for my bad luck i' marrying out o'

my own family into one where the goings-on was different. And as for

being drawn in t' abuse you as other folks abuse you, sir, \_that\_ I

niver was, and nobody can say it of me."

Mrs. Tulliver shook her head a little, and looked at the hem of her

pocket-handkerchief.

"I've no doubt of what you say, Mrs. Tulliver," said Mr. Wakem, with

cold politeness. "But you have some question to ask me?"

"Well, sir, yes. But that's what I've said to myself,--I've said you'd

had some nat'ral feeling; and as for my husband, as hasn't been

himself for this two months, I'm not a-defending him, in no way, for

being so hot about th' erigation,--not but what there's worse men, for

he never wronged nobody of a shilling nor a penny, not willingly; and

as for his fieriness and lawing, what could I do? And him struck as if

it was with death when he got the letter as said you'd the hold upo'

the land. But I can't believe but what you'll behave as a gentleman."

"What does all this mean, Mrs. Tulliver?" said Mr. Wakem rather

sharply. "What do you want to ask me?"

"Why, sir, if you'll be so good," said Mrs. Tulliver, starting a

little, and speaking more hurriedly,--"if you'll be so good not to buy

the mill an' the land,--the land wouldn't so much matter, only my

husband ull' be like mad at your having it."

Something like a new thought flashed across Mr. Wakem's face as he

said, "Who told you I meant to buy it?"

"Why, sir, it's none o' my inventing, and I should never ha' thought

of it; for my husband, as ought to know about the law, he allays used

to say as lawyers had never no call to buy anything,--either lands or

houses,--for they allays got 'em into their hands other ways. An' I

should think that 'ud be the way with you, sir; and I niver said as

you'd be the man to do contrairy to that."

"Ah, well, who was it that \_did\_ say so?" said Wakem, opening his

desk, and moving things about, with the accompaniment of an almost

inaudible whistle.

"Why, sir, it was Mr. Glegg and Mr. Deane, as have all the management;

and Mr. Deane thinks as Guest &Co. 'ud buy the mill and let Mr.

Tulliver work it for 'em, if you didn't bid for it and raise the

price. And it 'ud be such a thing for my husband to stay where he is,

if he could get his living: for it was his father's before him, the

mill was, and his grandfather built it, though I wasn't fond o' the

noise of it, when first I was married, for there was no mills in our

family,--not the Dodson's,--and if I'd known as the mills had so much

to do with the law, it wouldn't have been me as 'ud have been the

first Dodson to marry one; but I went into it blindfold, that I did,

erigation and everything."

"What! Guest &Co. would keep the mill in their own hands, I suppose,

and pay your husband wages?"

"Oh dear, sir, it's hard to think of," said poor Mrs. Tulliver, a

little tear making its way, "as my husband should take wage. But it

'ud look more like what used to be, to stay at the mill than to go

anywhere else; and if you'll only think--if you was to bid for the

mill and buy it, my husband might be struck worse than he was before,

and niver get better again as he's getting now."

"Well, but if I bought the mill, and allowed your husband to act as my

manager in the same way, how then?" said Mr. Wakem.

"Oh, sir, I doubt he could niver be got to do it, not if the very mill

stood still to beg and pray of him. For your name's like poison to

him, it's so as never was; and he looks upon it as you've been the

ruin of him all along, ever since you set the law on him about the

road through the meadow,--that's eight year ago, and he's been going

on ever since--as I've allays told him he was wrong----"

"He's a pig-headed, foul-mouthed fool!" burst out Mr. Wakem,

forgetting himself.

"Oh dear, sir!" said Mrs. Tulliver, frightened at a result so

different from the one she had fixed her mind on; "I wouldn't wish to

contradict you, but it's like enough he's changed his mind with this

illness,--he's forgot a many things he used to talk about. And you

wouldn't like to have a corpse on your mind, if he was to die; and

they \_do\_ say as it's allays unlucky when Dorlcote Mill changes hands,

and the water might all run away, and \_then\_--not as I'm wishing you

any ill-luck, sir, for I forgot to tell you as I remember your wedding

as if it was yesterday; Mrs. Wakem was a Miss Clint, I know \_that;\_

and my boy, as there isn't a nicer, handsomer, straighter boy nowhere,

went to school with your son----"

Mr. Wakem rose, opened the door, and called to one of his clerks.

"You must excuse me for interrupting you, Mrs. Tulliver; I have

business that must be attended to; and I think there is nothing more

necessary to be said."

"But if you \_would\_ bear it in mind, sir," said Mrs. Tulliver, rising,

"and not run against me and my children; and I'm not denying Mr.

Tulliver's been in the wrong, but he's been punished enough, and

there's worse men, for it's been giving to other folks has been his

fault. He's done nobody any harm but himself and his family,--the

more's the pity,--and I go and look at the bare shelves every day, and

think where all my things used to stand."

"Yes, yes, I'll bear it in mind," said Mr. Wakem, hastily, looking

toward the open door.

"And if you'd please not to say as I've been to speak to you, for my

son 'ud be very angry with me for demeaning myself, I know he would,

and I've trouble enough without being scolded by my children."

Poor Mrs. Tulliver's voice trembled a little, and she could make no

answer to the attorney's "good morning," but curtsied and walked out

in silence.

"Which day is it that Dorlcote Mill is to be sold? Where's the bill?"

said Mr. Wakem to his clerk when they were alone.

"Next Friday is the day,--Friday at six o'clock."

"Oh, just run to Winship's the auctioneer, and see if he's at home. I

have some business for him; ask him to come up."

Although, when Mr. Wakem entered his office that morning, he had had

no intention of purchasing Dorlcote Mill, his mind was already made

up. Mrs. Tulliver had suggested to him several determining motives,

and his mental glance was very rapid; he was one of those men who can

be prompt without being rash, because their motives run in fixed

tracks, and they have no need to reconcile conflicting aims.

To suppose that Wakem had the same sort of inveterate hatred toward

Tulliver that Tulliver had toward him would be like supposing that a

pike and a roach can look at each other from a similar point of view.

The roach necessarily abhors the mode in which the pike gets his

living, and the pike is likely to think nothing further even of the

most indignant roach than that he is excellent good eating; it could

only be when the roach choked him that the pike could entertain a

strong personal animosity. If Mr. Tulliver had ever seriously injured

or thwarted the attorney, Wakem would not have refused him the

distinction of being a special object of his vindictiveness. But when

Mr. Tulliver called Wakem a rascal at the market dinner-table, the

attorneys' clients were not a whit inclined to withdraw their business

from him; and if, when Wakem himself happened to be present, some

jocose cattle-feeder, stimulated by opportunity and brandy, made a

thrust at him by alluding to old ladies' wills, he maintained perfect

\_sang froid\_, and knew quite well that the majority of substantial men

then present were perfectly contented with the fact that "Wakem was

Wakem"; that is to say, a man who always knew the stepping-stones that

would carry him through very muddy bits of practice. A man who had

made a large fortune, had a handsome house among the trees at Tofton,

and decidedly the finest stock of port-wine in the neighborhood of St.

Ogg's, was likely to feel himself on a level with public opinion. And

I am not sure that even honest Mr. Tulliver himself, with his general

view of law as a cockpit, might not, under opposite circumstances,

have seen a fine appropriateness in the truth that "Wakem was Wakem";

since I have understood from persons versed in history, that mankind

is not disposed to look narrowly into the conduct of great victors

when their victory is on the right side. Tulliver, then, could be no

obstruction to Wakem; on the contrary, he was a poor devil whom the

lawyer had defeated several times; a hot-tempered fellow, who would

always give you a handle against him. Wakem's conscience was not

uneasy because he had used a few tricks against the miller; why should

he hate that unsuccessful plaintiff, that pitiable, furious bull

entangled in the meshes of a net?

Still, among the various excesses to which human nature is subject,

moralists have never numbered that of being too fond of the people who

openly revile us. The successful Yellow candidate for the borough of

Old Topping, perhaps, feels no pursuant meditative hatred toward the

Blue editor who consoles his subscribers with vituperative rhetoric

against Yellow men who sell their country, and are the demons of

private life; but he might not be sorry, if law and opportunity

favored, to kick that Blue editor to a deeper shade of his favorite

color. Prosperous men take a little vengeance now and then, as they

take a diversion, when it comes easily in their way, and is no

hindrance to business; and such small unimpassioned revenges have an

enormous effect in life, running through all degrees of pleasant

infliction, blocking the fit men out of places, and blackening

characters in unpremeditated talk. Still more, to see people who have

been only insignificantly offensive to us reduced in life and

humiliated, without any special effort of ours, is apt to have a

soothing, flattering influence. Providence or some other prince of

this world, it appears, has undertaken the task of retribution for us;

and really, by an agreeable constitution of things, our enemies

somehow \_don't\_ prosper.

Wakem was not without this parenthetic vindictiveness toward the

uncomplimentary miller; and now Mrs. Tulliver had put the notion into

his head, it presented itself to him as a pleasure to do the very

thing that would cause Mr. Tulliver the most deadly mortification,--

and a pleasure of a complex kind, not made up of crude malice, but

mingling with it the relish of self-approbation. To see an enemy

humiliated gives a certain contentment, but this is jejune compared

with the highly blent satisfaction of seeing him humiliated by your

benevolent action or concession on his behalf. That is a sort of

revenge which falls into the scale of virtue, and Wakem was not without

an intention of keeping that scale respectably filled. He had once

had the pleasure of putting an old enemy of his into one of the St.

Ogg's alms-houses, to the rebuilding of which he had given a large

subscription; and here was an opportunity of providing for another by

making him his own servant. Such things give a completeness to

prosperity, and contribute elements of agreeable consciousness that

are not dreamed of by that short-sighted, overheated vindictiveness

which goes out its way to wreak itself in direct injury. And Tulliver,

with his rough tongue filed by a sense of obligation, would make a

better servant than any chance-fellow who was cap-in-hand for a

situation. Tulliver was known to be a man of proud honesty, and Wakem

was too acute not to believe in the existence of honesty. He was given

too observing individuals, not to judging of them according to maxims,

and no one knew better than he that all men were not like himself.

Besides, he intended to overlook the whole business of land and mill

pretty closely; he was fond of these practical rural matters. But

there were good reasons for purchasing Dorlcote Mill, quite apart from

any benevolent vengeance on the miller. It was really a capital

investment; besides, Guest &Co. were going to bid for it. Mr. Guest

and Mr. Wakem were on friendly dining terms, and the attorney liked to

predominate over a ship-owner and mill-owner who was a little too loud

in the town affairs as well as in his table-talk. For Wakem was not a

mere man of business; he was considered a pleasant fellow in the upper

circles of St. Ogg's--chatted amusingly over his port-wine, did a

little amateur farming, and had certainly been an excellent husband

and father; at church, when he went there, he sat under the handsomest

of mural monuments erected to the memory of his wife. Most men would

have married again under his circumstances, but he was said to be more

tender to his deformed son than most men were to their best-shapen

offspring. Not that Mr. Wakem had not other sons beside Philip; but

toward them he held only a chiaroscuro parentage, and provided for

them in a grade of life duly beneath his own. In this fact, indeed,

there lay the clenching motive to the purchase of Dorlcote Mill. While

Mrs. Tulliver was talking, it had occurred to the rapid-minded lawyer,

among all the other circumstances of the case, that this purchase

would, in a few years to come, furnish a highly suitable position for

a certain favorite lad whom he meant to bring on in the world.

These were the mental conditions on which Mrs. Tulliver had undertaken

to act persuasively, and had failed; a fact which may receive some

illustration from the remark of a great philosopher, that fly-fishers

fail in preparing their bait so as to make it alluring in the right

quarter, for want of a due acquaintance with the subjectivity of

fishes.

Chapter VIII

Daylight on the Wreck

It was a clear frosty January day on which Mr. Tulliver first came

downstairs. The bright sun on the chestnut boughs and the roofs

opposite his window had made him impatiently declare that he would be

caged up no longer; he thought everywhere would be more cheery under

this sunshine than his bedroom; for he knew nothing of the bareness

below, which made the flood of sunshine importunate, as if it had an

unfeeling pleasure in showing the empty places, and the marks where

well-known objects once had been. The impression on his mind that it

was but yesterday when he received the letter from Mr. Gore was so

continually implied in his talk, and the attempts to convey to him the

idea that many weeks had passed and much had happened since then had

been so soon swept away by recurrent forgetfulness, that even Mr.

Turnbull had begun to despair of preparing him to meet the facts by

previous knowledge. The full sense of the present could only be

imparted gradually by new experience,--not by mere words, which must

remain weaker than the impressions left by the \_old\_ experience. This

resolution to come downstairs was heard with trembling by the wife and

children. Mrs. Tulliver said Tom must not go to St. Ogg's at the usual

hour, he must wait and see his father downstairs; and Tom complied,

though with an intense inward shrinking from the painful scene. The

hearts of all three had been more deeply dejected than ever during the

last few days. For Guest & Co. had not bought the mill; both mill and

land had been knocked down to Wakem, who had been over the premises,

and had laid before Mr. Deane and Mr. Glegg, in Mrs. Tulliver's

presence, his willingness to employ Mr. Tulliver, in case of his

recovery, as a manager of the business. This proposition had

occasioned much family debating. Uncles and aunts were almost

unanimously of opinion that such an offer ought not to be rejected

when there was nothing in the way but a feeling in Mr. Tulliver's

mind, which, as neither aunts nor uncles shared it, was regarded as

entirely unreasonable and childish,--indeed, as a transferring toward

Wakem of that indignation and hatred which Mr. Tulliver ought properly

to have directed against himself for his general quarrelsomeness, and

his special exhibition of it in going to law. Here was an opportunity

for Mr. Tulliver to provide for his wife and daughter without any

assistance from his wife's relations, and without that too evident

descent into pauperism which makes it annoying to respectable people

to meet the degraded member of the family by the wayside. Mr.

Tulliver, Mrs. Glegg considered, must be made to feel, when he came to

his right mind, that he could never humble himself enough; for \_that\_

had come which she had always foreseen would come of his insolence in

time past "to them as were the best friends he'd got to look to." Mr

Glegg and Mr. Deane were less stern in their views, but they both of

them thought Tulliver had done enough harm by his hot-tempered

crotchets and ought to put them out of the question when a livelihood

was offered him; Wakem showed a right feeling about the matter,--\_he\_

had no grudge against Tulliver.

Tom had protested against entertaining the proposition. He shouldn't

like his father to be under Wakem; he thought it would look

mean-spirited; but his mother's main distress was the utter

impossibility of ever "turning Mr. Tulliver round about Wakem," or

getting him to hear reason; no, they would all have to go and live in

a pigsty on purpose to spite Wakem, who spoke "so as nobody could be

fairer." Indeed, Mrs. Tulliver's mind was reduced to such confusion by

living in this strange medium of unaccountable sorrow, against which

she continually appealed by asking, "Oh dear, what \_have\_ I done to

deserve worse than other women?" that Maggie began to suspect her poor

mother's wits were quite going.

"Tom," she said, when they were out of their father's room together,

"we \_must\_ try to make father understand a little of what has happened

before he goes downstairs. But we must get my mother away. She will

say something that will do harm. Ask Kezia to fetch her down, and keep

her engaged with something in the kitchen."

Kezia was equal to the task. Having declared her intention of staying

till the master could get about again, "wage or no wage," she had

found a certain recompense in keeping a strong hand over her mistress,

scolding her for "moithering" herself, and going about all day without

changing her cap, and looking as if she was "mushed." Altogether, this

time of trouble was rather a Saturnalian time to Kezia; she could

scold her betters with unreproved freedom. On this particular occasion

there were drying clothes to be fetched in; she wished to know if one

pair of hands could do everything in-doors and out, and observed that

\_she\_ should have thought it would be good for Mrs. Tulliver to put on

her bonnet, and get a breath of fresh air by doing that needful piece

of work. Poor Mrs. Tulliver went submissively downstairs; to be

ordered about by a servant was the last remnant of her household

dignities,--she would soon have no servant to scold her. Mr. Tulliver

was resting in his chair a little after the fatigue of dressing, and

Maggie and Tom were seated near him, when Luke entered to ask if he

should help master downstairs.

"Ay, ay, Luke; stop a bit, sit down," said Mr. Tulliver pointing his

stick toward a chair, and looking at him with that pursuant gaze which

convalescent persons often have for those who have tended them,

reminding one of an infant gazing about after its nurse. For Luke had

been a constant night-watcher by his master's bed.

"How's the water now, eh, Luke?" said Mr. Tulliver. "Dix hasn't been

choking you up again, eh?"

"No, sir, it's all right."

"Ay, I thought not; he won't be in a hurry at that again, now Riley's

been to settle him. That was what I said to Riley yesterday--I

said----"

Mr. Tulliver leaned forward, resting his elbows on the armchair, and

looking on the ground as if in search of something, striving after

vanishing images like a man struggling against a doze. Maggie looked

at Tom in mute distress, their father's mind was so far off the

present, which would by-and-by thrust itself on his wandering

consciousness! Tom was almost ready to rush away, with that impatience

of painful emotion which makes one of the differences between youth

and maiden, man and woman.

"Father," said Maggie, laying her hand on his, "don't you remember

that Mr. Riley is dead?"

"Dead?" said Mr. Tulliver, sharply, looking in her face with a

strange, examining glance.

"Yes, he died of apoplexy nearly a year ago. I remember hearing you

say you had to pay money for him; and he left his daughters badly off;

one of them is under-teacher at Miss Firniss's, where I've been to

school, you know."

"Ah?" said her father, doubtfully, still looking in her face. But as

soon as Tom began to speak he turned to look at \_him\_ with the same

inquiring glances, as if he were rather surprised at the presence of

these two young people. Whenever his mind was wandering in the far

past, he fell into this oblivion of their actual faces; they were not

those of the lad and the little wench who belonged to that past.

"It's a long while since you had the dispute with Dix, father," said

Tom. "I remember your talking about it three years ago, before I went

to school at Mr. Stelling's. I've been at school there three years;

don't you remember?"

Mr. Tulliver threw himself backward again, losing the childlike

outward glance under a rush of new ideas, which diverted him from

external impressions.

"Ay, ay," he said, after a minute or two, "I've paid a deal o'

money--I was determined my son should have a good eddication; I'd none

myself, and I've felt the miss of it. And he'll want no other fortin,

that's what I say--if Wakem was to get the better of me again----"

The thought of Wakem roused new vibrations, and after a moment's pause

he began to look at the coat he had on, and to feel in his

side-pocket. Then he turned to Tom, and said in his old sharp way,

"Where have they put Gore's letter?"

It was close at hand in a drawer, for he had often asked for it

before.

"You know what there is in the letter, father?" said Tom, as he gave

it to him.

"To be sure I do," said Mr. Tulliver, rather angrily. "What o' that?

If Furley can't take to the property, somebody else can; there's

plenty o' people in the world besides Furley. But it's hindering--my

not being well--go and tell 'em to get the horse in the gig, Luke; I

can get down to St. Ogg's well enough--Gore's expecting me."

"No, dear father!" Maggie burst out entreatingly; "it's a very long

while since all that; you've been ill a great many weeks,--more than

two months; everything is changed."

Mr. Tulliver looked at them all three alternately with a startled

gaze; the idea that much had happened of which he knew nothing had

often transiently arrested him before, but it came upon him now with

entire novelty.

"Yes, father," said Tom, in answer to the gaze. "You needn't trouble

your mind about business until you are quite well; everything is

settled about that for the present,--about the mill and the land and

the debts."

"What's settled, then?" said his father, angrily.

"Don't you take on too much bout it, sir," said Luke. "You'd ha' paid

iverybody if you could,--that's what I said to Master Tom,--I said

you'd ha' paid iverybody if you could."

Good Luke felt, after the manner of contented hard-working men whose

lives have been spent in servitude, that sense of natural fitness in

rank which made his master's downfall a tragedy to him. He was urged,

in his slow way, to say something that would express his share in the

family sorrow; and these words, which he had used over and over again

to Tom when he wanted to decline the full payment of his fifty pounds

out of the children's money, were the most ready to his tongue. They

were just the words to lay the most painful hold on his master's

bewildered mind.

"Paid everybody?" he said, with vehement agitation, his face flushing,

and his eye lighting up. "Why--what--have they made me a \_bankrupt?\_"

"Oh, father, dear father!" said Maggie, who thought that terrible word

really represented the fact; "bear it well, because we love you; your

children will always love you. Tom will pay them all; he says he will,

when he's a man."

She felt her father beginning to tremble; his voice trembled too, as

he said, after a few moments:

"Ay, my little wench, but I shall never live twice o'er."

"But perhaps you will live to see me pay everybody, father," said Tom,

speaking with a great effort.

"Ah, my lad," said Mr. Tulliver, shaking his head slowly, "but what's

broke can never be whole again; it 'ud be your doing, not mine." Then

looking up at him, "You're only sixteen; it's an up-hill fight for

you, but you mustn't throw it at your father; the raskills have been

too many for him. I've given you a good eddication,--that'll start

you."

Something in his throat half choked the last words; the flush, which

had alarmed his children because it had so often preceded a recurrence

of paralysis, had subsided, and his face looked pale and tremulous.

Tom said nothing; he was still struggling against his inclination to

rush away. His father remained quiet a minute or two, but his mind did

not seem to be wandering again.

"Have they sold me up, then?" he said more clamly, as if he were

possessed simply by the desire to know what had happened.

"Everything is sold, father; but we don't know all about the mill and

the land yet," said Tom, anxious to ward off any question leading to

the fact that Wakem was the purchaser.

"You must not be surprised to see the room look very bare downstairs,

father," said Maggie; "but there's your chair and the bureau;

\_they're\_ not gone."

"Let us go; help me down, Luke,--I'll go and see everything," said Mr.

Tulliver, leaning on his stick, and stretching out his other hand

toward Luke.

"Ay, sir," said Luke, as he gave his arm to his master, "you'll make

up your mind to't a bit better when you've seen iverything; you'll get

used to't. That's what my mother says about her shortness o'

breath,--she says she's made friends wi't now, though she fought

again' it sore when it just come on."

Maggie ran on before to see that all was right in the dreary parlor,

where the fire, dulled by the frosty sunshine, seemed part of the

general shabbiness. She turned her father's chair, and pushed aside

the table to make an easy way for him, and then stood with a beating

heart to see him enter and look round for the first time. Tom advanced

before him, carrying the leg-rest, and stood beside Maggie on the

hearth. Of those two young hearts Tom's suffered the most unmixed

pain, for Maggie, with all her keen susceptibility, yet felt as if the

sorrow made larger room for her love to flow in, and gave

breathing-space to her passionate nature. No true boy feels that; he

would rather go and slay the Nemean lion, or perform any round of

heroic labors, than endure perpetual appeals to his pity, for evils

over which he can make no conquest.

Mr. Tulliver paused just inside the door, resting on Luke, and looking

round him at all the bare places, which for him were filled with the

shadows of departed objects,--the daily companions of his life. His

faculties seemed to be renewing their strength from getting a footing

on this demonstration of the senses.

"Ah!" he said slowly, moving toward his chair, "they've sold me

up--they've sold me up."

Then seating himself, and laying down his stick, while Luke left the

room, he looked round again.

"They've left the big Bible," he said. "It's got everything in,--when

I was born and married; bring it me, Tom."

The quarto Bible was laid open before him at the fly-leaf, and while

he was reading with slowly travelling eyes Mrs. Tulliver entered the

room, but stood in mute surprise to find her husband down already, and

with the great Bible before him.

"Ah," he said, looking at a spot where his finger rested, "my mother

was Margaret Beaton; she died when she was forty-seven,--hers wasn't a

long-lived family; we're our mother's children, Gritty and me are,--we

shall go to our last bed before long."

He seemed to be pausing over the record of his sister's birth and

marriage, as if it were suggesting new thoughts to him; then he

suddenly looked up at Tom, and said, in a sharp tone of alarm:

"They haven't come upo' Moss for the money as I lent him, have they?"

"No, father," said Tom; "the note was burnt."

Mr. Tulliver turned his eyes on the page again, and presently said:

"Ah--Elizabeth Dodson--it's eighteen year since I married her----"

"Come next Ladyday," said Mrs. Tulliver, going up to his side and

looking at the page.

Her husband fixed his eyes earnestly on her face.

"Poor Bessy," he said, "you was a pretty lass then,--everybody said

so,--and I used to think you kept your good looks rarely. But you're

sorely aged; don't you bear me ill-will--I meant to do well by you--we

promised one another for better or for worse----"

"But I never thought it 'ud be so for worse as this," said poor Mrs.

Tulliver, with the strange, scared look that had come over her of

late; "and my poor father gave me away--and to come on so all at

once----"

"Oh, mother!" said Maggie, "don't talk in that way."

"No, I know you won't let your poor mother speak--that's been the way

all my life--your father never minded what I said--it 'ud have been o'

no use for me to beg and pray--and it 'ud be no use now, not if I was

to go down o' my hands and knees----"

"Don't say so, Bessy," said Mr. Tulliver, whose pride, in these first

moments of humiliation, was in abeyance to the sense of some justice

in his wife's reproach. "It there's anything left as I could do to

make you amends, I wouldn't say you nay."

"Then we might stay here and get a living, and I might keep among my

own sisters,--and me been such a good wife to you, and never crossed

you from week's end to week's end--and they all say so--they say it

'ud be nothing but right, only you're so turned against Wakem."

"Mother," said Tom, severely, "this is not the time to talk about

that."

"Let her be," said Mr. Tulliver. "Say what you mean, Bessy."

"Why, now the mill and the land's all Wakem's, and he's got everything

in his hands, what's the use o' setting your face against him, when he

says you may stay here, and speaks as fair as can be, and says you may

manage the business, and have thirty shillings a-week, and a horse to

ride about to market? And where have we got to put our heads? We must

go into one o' the cottages in the village,--and me and my children

brought down to that,--and all because you must set your mind against

folks till there's no turning you."

Mr. Tulliver had sunk back in his chair trembling.

"You may do as you like wi' me, Bessy," he said, in a low voice; "I've

been the bringing of you to poverty--this world's too many for me--I'm

nought but a bankrupt; it's no use standing up for anything now."

"Father," said Tom, "I don't agree with my mother or my uncles, and I

don't think you ought to submit to be under Wakem. I get a pound

a-week now, and you can find something else to do when you get well."

"Say no more, Tom, say no more; I've had enough for this day. Give me

a kiss, Bessy, and let us bear one another no ill-will; we shall never

be young again--this world's been too many for me."

Chapter IX

An Item Added to the Family Register

That first moment of renunciation and submission was followed by days

of violent struggle in the miller's mind, as the gradual access of

bodily strength brought with it increasing ability to embrace in one

view all the conflicting conditions under which he found himself.

Feeble limbs easily resign themselves to be tethered, and when we are

subdued by sickness it seems possible to us to fulfil pledges which

the old vigor comes back and breaks. There were times when poor

Tulliver thought the fulfilment of his promise to Bessy was something

quite too hard for human nature; he had promised her without knowing

what she was going to say,--she might as well have asked him to carry

a ton weight on his back. But again, there were many feelings arguing

on her side, besides the sense that life had been made hard to her by

having married him. He saw a possibility, by much pinching, of saving

money out of his salary toward paying a second dividend to his

creditors, and it would not be easy elsewhere to get a situation such

as he could fill.

He had led an easy life, ordering much and working little, and had no

aptitude for any new business. He must perhaps take to day-labor, and

his wife must have help from her sisters,--a prospect doubly bitter to

him, now they had let all Bessy's precious things be sold, probably

because they liked to set her against him, by making her feel that he

had brought her to that pass. He listened to their admonitory talk,

when they came to urge on him what he was bound to do for poor Bessy's

sake, with averted eyes, that every now and then flashed on them

furtively when their backs were turned. Nothing but the dread of

needing their help could have made it an easier alternative to take

their advice.

But the strongest influence of all was the love of the old premises

where he had run about when he was a boy, just as Tom had done after

him. The Tullivers had lived on this spot for generations, and he had

sat listening on a low stool on winter evenings while his father

talked of the old half-timbered mill that had been there before the

last great floods which damaged it so that his grandfather pulled it

down and built the new one. It was when he got able to walk about and

look at all the old objects that he felt the strain of his clinging

affection for the old home as part of his life, part of himself. He

couldn't bear to think of himself living on any other spot than this,

where he knew the sound of every gate door, and felt that the shape

and color of every roof and weather-stain and broken hillock was good,

because his growing senses had been fed on them. Our instructed

vagrancy, which was hardly time to linger by the hedgerows, but runs

away early to the tropics, and is at home with palms and

banyans,--which is nourished on books of travel and stretches the

theatre of its imagination to the Zambesi,--can hardly get a dim

notion of what an old-fashioned man like Tulliver felt for this spot,

where all his memories centred, and where life seemed like a familiar

smooth-handled tool that the fingers clutch with loving ease. And just

now he was living in that freshened memory of the far-off time which

comes to us in the passive hours of recovery from sickness.

"Ay, Luke," he said one afternoon, as he stood looking over the

orchard gate, "I remember the day they planted those apple-trees. My

father was a huge man for planting,--it was like a merry-making to him

to get a cart full o' young trees; and I used to stand i' the cold

with him, and follow him about like a dog."

Then he turned round, and leaning against the gate-post, looked at the

opposite buildings.

"The old mill 'ud miss me, I think, Luke. There's a story as when the

mill changes hands, the river's angry; I've heard my father say it

many a time. There's no telling whether there mayn't be summat \_in\_

the story, for this is a puzzling world, and Old Harry's got a finger

in it--it's been too many for me, I know."

"Ay, sir," said Luke, with soothing sympathy, "what wi' the rust on

the wheat, an' the firin' o' the ricks an' that, as I've seen i' my

time,--things often looks comical; there's the bacon fat wi' our last

pig run away like butter,--it leaves nought but a scratchin'."

"It's just as if it was yesterday, now," Mr. Tulliver went on, "when

my father began the malting. I remember, the day they finished the

malt-house, I thought summat great was to come of it; for we'd a

plum-pudding that day and a bit of a feast, and I said to my

mother,--she was a fine dark-eyed woman, my mother was,--the little

wench 'ull be as like her as two peas." Here Mr. Tulliver put his

stick between his legs, and took out his snuff-box, for the greater

enjoyment of this anecdote, which dropped from him in fragments, as if

he every other moment lost narration in vision. "I was a little chap

no higher much than my mother's knee,--she was sore fond of us

children, Gritty and me,--and so I said to her, 'Mother,' I said,

'shall we have plum-pudding \_every\_ day because o' the malt-house? She

used to tell me o' that till her dying day. She was but a young woman

when she died, my mother was. But it's forty good year since they

finished the malt-house, and it isn't many days out of 'em all as I

haven't looked out into the yard there, the first thing in the

morning,--all weathers, from year's end to year's end. I should go off

my head in a new place. I should be like as if I'd lost my way. It's

all hard, whichever way I look at it,--the harness 'ull gall me, but

it 'ud be summat to draw along the old road, instead of a new un."

"Ay, sir," said Luke, "you'd be a deal better here nor in some new

place. I can't abide new places mysen: things is allays

awk'ard,--narrow-wheeled waggins, belike, and the stiles all another

sort, an' oat-cake i' some places, tow'rt th' head o' the Floss,

there. It's poor work, changing your country-side."

"But I doubt, Luke, they'll be for getting rid o' Ben, and making you

do with a lad; and I must help a bit wi' the mill. You'll have a worse

place."

"Ne'er mind, sir," said Luke, "I sha'n't plague mysen. I'n been wi'

you twenty year, an' you can't get twenty year wi' whistlin' for 'em,

no more nor you can make the trees grow: you mun wait till God

A'mighty sends 'em. I can't abide new victual nor new faces, \_I\_

can't,--you niver know but what they'll gripe you."

The walk was finished in silence after this, for Luke had disburthened

himself of thoughts to an extent that left his conversational

resources quite barren, and Mr. Tulliver had relapsed from his

recollections into a painful meditation on the choice of hardships

before him. Maggie noticed that he was unusually absent that evening

at tea; and afterward he sat leaning forward in his chair, looking at

the ground, moving his lips, and shaking his head from time to time.

Then he looked hard at Mrs. Tulliver, who was knitting opposite him,

then at Maggie, who, as she bent over her sewing, was intensely

conscious of some drama going forward in her father's mind. Suddenly

he took up the poker and broke the large coal fiercely.

"Dear heart, Mr. Tulliver, what can you be thinking of?" said his

wife, looking up in alarm; "it's very wasteful, breaking the coal, and

we've got hardly any large coal left, and I don't know where the rest

is to come from."

"I don't think you're quite so well to-night, are you, father?" said

Maggie; "you seem uneasy."

"Why, how is it Tom doesn't come?" said Mr. Tulliver, impatiently.

"Dear heart, is it time? I must go and get his supper," said Mrs.

Tulliver, laying down her knitting, and leaving the room.

"It's nigh upon half-past eight," said Mr. Tulliver. "He'll be here

soon. Go, go and get the big Bible, and open it at the beginning,

where everything's set down. And get the pen and ink."

Maggie obeyed, wondering; but her father gave no further orders, and

only sat listening for Tom's footfall on the gravel, apparently

irritated by the wind, which had risen, and was roaring so as to drown

all other sounds. There was a strange light in his eyes that rather

frightened Maggie; \_she\_ began to wish that Tom would come, too.

"There he is, then," said Mr. Tulliver, in an excited way, when the

knock came at last. Maggie went to open the door, but her mother came

out of the kitchen hurriedly, saying, "Stop a bit, Maggie; I'll open

it."

Mrs. Tulliver had begun to be a little frightened at her boy, but she

was jealous of every office others did for him.

"Your supper's ready by the kitchen-fire, my boy," she said, as he

took off his hat and coat. "You shall have it by yourself, just as you

like, and I won't speak to you."

"I think my father wants Tom, mother," said Maggie; "he must come into

the parlor first."

Tom entered with his usual saddened evening face, but his eyes fell

immediately on the open Bible and the inkstand, and he glanced with a

look of anxious surprise at his father, who was saying,--

"Come, come, you're late; I want you."

"Is there anything the matter, father?" said Tom.

"You sit down, all of you," said Mr. Tulliver, peremptorily.

"And, Tom, sit down here; I've got something for you to write i' the

Bible."

They all three sat down, looking at him. He began to speak slowly,

looking first at his wife.

"I've made up my mind, Bessy, and I'll be as good as my word to you.

There'll be the same grave made for us to lie down in, and we mustn't

be bearing one another ill-will. I'll stop in the old place, and I'll

serve under Wakem, and I'll serve him like an honest man; there's no

Tulliver but what's honest, mind that, Tom,"--here his voice

rose,--"they'll have it to throw up against me as I paid a dividend,

but it wasn't my fault; it was because there's raskills in the world.

They've been too many for me, and I must give in. I'll put my neck in

harness,--for you've a right to say as I've brought you into trouble,

Bessy,--and I'll serve him as honest as if he was no raskill; I'm an

honest man, though I shall never hold my head up no more. I'm a tree

as is broke--a tree as is broke."

He paused and looked on the ground. Then suddenly raising his head, he

said, in a louder yet deeper tone:

"But I won't forgive him! I know what they say, he never meant me any

harm. That's the way Old Harry props up the rascals. He's been at the

bottom of everything; but he's a fine gentleman,--I know, I know. I

shouldn't ha' gone to law, they say. But who made it so as there was

no arbitratin', and no justice to be got? It signifies nothing to him,

I know that; he's one o' them fine gentlemen as get money by doing

business for poorer folks, and when he's made beggars of 'em he'll

give 'em charity. I won't forgive him! I wish he might be punished

with shame till his own son 'ud like to forget him. I wish he may do

summat as they'd make him work at the treadmill! But he won't,--he's

too big a raskill to let the law lay hold on him. And you mind this,

Tom,--you never forgive him neither, if you mean to be my son.

There'll maybe come a time when you may make him feel; it'll never

come to me; I'n got my head under the yoke. Now write--write it i' the

Bible."

"Oh, father, what?" said Maggie, sinking down by his knee, pale and

trembling. "It's wicked to curse and bear malice."

"It isn't wicked, I tell you," said her father, fiercely. "It's wicked

as the raskills should prosper; it's the Devil's doing. Do as I tell

you, Tom. Write."

"What am I to write?" said Tom, with gloomy submission.

"Write as your father, Edward Tulliver, took service under John Wakem,

the man as had helped to ruin him, because I'd promised my wife to

make her what amends I could for her trouble, and because I wanted to

die in th' old place where I was born and my father was born. Put that

i' the right words--you know how--and then write, as I don't forgive

Wakem for all that; and for all I'll serve him honest, I wish evil may

befall him. Write that."

There was a dead silence as Tom's pen moved along the paper; Mrs.

Tulliver looked scared, and Maggie trembled like a leaf.

"Now let me hear what you've wrote," said Mr. Tulliver, Tom read aloud

slowly.

"Now write--write as you'll remember what Wakem's done to your father,

and you'll make him and his feel it, if ever the day comes. And sign

your name Thomas Tulliver."

"Oh no, father, dear father!" said Maggie, almost choked with fear.

"You shouldn't make Tom write that."

"Be quiet, Maggie!" said Tom. "I \_shall\_ write it."

Book IV

\_The Valley of Humiliation\_

Chapter I

A Variation of Protestantism Unknown to Bossuet

Journeying down the Rhone on a summer's day, you have perhaps felt the

sunshine made dreary by those ruined villages which stud the banks in

certain parts of its course, telling how the swift river once rose,

like an angry, destroying god, sweeping down the feeble generations

whose breath is in their nostrils, and making their dwellings a

desolation. Strange contrast, you may have thought, between the

effect produced on us by these dismal remnants of commonplace

houses, which in their best days were but the sign of a sordid life,

belonging in all its details to our own vulgar era, and the effect

produced by those ruins on the castled Rhine, which have crumbled and

mellowed into such harmony with the green and rocky steeps that they

seem to have a natural fitness, like the mountain-pine; nay, even in

the day when they were built they must have had this fitness, as if

they had been raised by an earth-born race, who had inherited from

their mighty parent a sublime instinct of form. And that was a day of

romance; If those robber-barons were somewhat grim and drunken ogres,

they had a certain grandeur of the wild beast in them,--they were

forest boars with tusks, tearing and rending, not the ordinary

domestic grunter; they represented the demon forces forever in

collision with beauty, virtue, and the gentle uses of life; they made

a fine contrast in the picture with the wandering minstrel, the

soft-lipped princess, the pious recluse, and the timid Israelite. That

was a time of color, when the sunlight fell on glancing steel and

floating banners; a time of adventure and fierce struggle,--nay, of

living, religious art and religious enthusiasm; for were not

cathedrals built in those days, and did not great emperors leave their

Western palaces to die before the infidel strongholds in the sacred

East? Therefore it is that these Rhine castles thrill me with a sense

of poetry; they belong to the grand historic life of humanity, and

raise up for me the vision of an echo. But these dead-tinted,

hollow-eyed, angular skeletons of villages on the Rhone oppress me

with the feeling that human life--very much of it--is a narrow, ugly,

grovelling existence, which even calamity does not elevate, but rather

tends to exhibit in all its bare vulgarity of conception; and I have a

cruel conviction that the lives these ruins are the traces of were

part of a gross sum of obscure vitality, that will be swept into the

same oblivion with the generations of ants and beavers.

Perhaps something akin to this oppressive feeling may have weighed

upon you in watching this old-fashioned family life on the banks of

the Floss, which even sorrow hardly suffices to lift above the level

of the tragi-comic. It is a sordid life, you say, this of the

Tullivers and Dodsons, irradiated by no sublime principles, no

romantic visions, no active, self-renouncing faith; moved by none of

those wild, uncontrollable passions which create the dark shadows of

misery and crime; without that primitive, rough simplicity of wants,

that hard, submissive, ill-paid toil, that childlike spelling-out of

what nature has written, which gives its poetry to peasant life. Here

one has conventional worldly notions and habits without instruction

and without polish, surely the most prosaic form of human life; proud

respectability in a gig of unfashionable build; worldliness without

side-dishes. Observing these people narrowly, even when the iron hand

of misfortune has shaken them from their unquestioning hold on the

world, one sees little trace of religion, still less of a

distinctively Christian creed. Their belief in the Unseen, so far as

it manifests itself at all, seems to be rather a pagan kind; their

moral notions, though held with strong tenacity, seem to have no

standard beyond hereditary custom. You could not live among such

people; you are stifled for want of an outlet toward something

beautiful, great, or noble; you are irritated with these dull men and

women, as a kind of population out of keeping with the earth on which

they live,--with this rich plain where the great river flows forever

onward, and links the small pulse of the old English town with the

beatings of the world's mighty heart. A vigorous superstition, that

lashes its gods or lashes its own back, seems to be more congruous

with the mystery of the human lot, than the mental condition of these

emmet-like Dodsons and Tullivers.

I share with you this sense of oppressive narrowness; but it is

necessary that we should feel it, if we care to understand how it

acted on the lives of Tom and Maggie,--how it has acted on young

natures in many generations, that in the onward tendency of human

things have risen above the mental level of the generation before

them, to which they have been nevertheless tied by the strongest

fibres of their hearts. The suffering, whether of martyr or victim,

which belongs to every historical advance of mankind, is represented

in this way in every town, and by hundreds of obscure hearths; and we

need not shrink from this comparison of small things with great; for

does not science tell us that its highest striving is after the

ascertainment of a unity which shall bind the smallest things with the

greatest? In natural science, I have understood, there is nothing

petty to the mind that has a large vision of relations, and to which

every single object suggests a vast sum of conditions. It is surely

the same with the observation of human life.

Certainly the religious and moral ideas of the Dodsons and Tullivers

were of too specific a kind to be arrived at deductively, from the

statement that they were part of the Protestant population of Great

Britain. Their theory of life had its core of soundness, as all

theories must have on which decent and prosperous families have been

reared and have flourished; but it had the very slightest tincture of

theology. If, in the maiden days of the Dodson sisters, their Bibles

opened more easily at some parts than others, it was because of dried

tulip-petals, which had been distributed quite impartially, without

preference for the historical, devotional, or doctrinal. Their

religion was of a simple, semi-pagan kind, but there was no heresy in

it,--if heresy properly means choice,--for they didn't know there was

any other religion, except that of chapel-goers, which appeared to run

in families, like asthma. How \_should\_ they know? The vicar of their

pleasant rural parish was not a controversialist, but a good hand at

whist, and one who had a joke always ready for a blooming female

parishioner. The religion of the Dodsons consisted in revering

whatever was customary and respectable; it was necessary to be

baptized, else one could not be buried in the church-yard, and to take

the sacrament before death, as a security against more dimly

understood perils; but it was of equal necessity to have the proper

pall-bearers and well-cured hams at one's funeral, and to leave an

unimpeachable will. A Dodson would not be taxed with the omission of

anything that was becoming, or that belonged to that eternal fitness

of things which was plainly indicated in the practice of the most

substantial parishioners, and in the family traditions,--such as

obedience to parents, faithfulness to kindred, industry, rigid

honesty, thrift, the thorough scouring of wooden and copper utensils,

the hoarding of coins likely to disappear from the currency, the

production of first-rate commodities for the market, and the general

preference of whatever was home-made. The Dodsons were a very proud

race, and their pride lay in the utter frustration of all desire to

tax them with a breach of traditional duty or propriety. A wholesome

pride in many respects, since it identified honor with perfect

integrity, thoroughness of work, and faithfulness to admitted rules;

and society owes some worthy qualities in many of her members to

mothers of the Dodson class, who made their butter and their fromenty

well, and would have felt disgraced to make it otherwise. To be honest

and poor was never a Dodson motto, still less to seem rich though

being poor; rather, the family badge was to be honest and rich, and

not only rich, but richer than was supposed. To live respected, and

have the proper bearers at your funeral, was an achievement of the

ends of existence that would be entirely nullified if, on the reading

of your will, you sank in the opinion of your fellow-men, either by

turning out to be poorer than they expected, or by leaving your money

in a capricious manner, without strict regard to degrees of kin. The

right thing must always be done toward kindred. The right thing was to

correct them severely, if they were other than a credit to the family,

but still not to alienate from them the smallest rightful share in the

family shoebuckles and other property. A conspicuous quality in the

Dodson character was its genuineness; its vices and virtues alike were

phases of a proud honest egoism, which had a hearty dislike to

whatever made against its own credit and interest, and would be

frankly hard of speech to inconvenient "kin," but would never forsake

or ignore them,--would not let them want bread, but only require them

to eat it with bitter herbs.

The same sort of traditional belief ran in the Tulliver veins, but it

was carried in richer blood, having elements of generous imprudence,

warm affection, and hot-tempered rashness. Mr. Tulliver's grandfather

had been heard to say that he was descended from one Ralph Tulliver, a

wonderfully clever fellow, who had ruined himself. It is likely enough

that the clever Ralph was a high liver, rode spirited horses, and was

very decidedly of his own opinion. On the other hand, nobody had ever

heard of a Dodson who had ruined himself; it was not the way of that

family.

If such were the views of life on which the Dodsons and Tullivers had

been reared in the praiseworthy past of Pitt and high prices, you will

infer from what you already know concerning the state of society in

St. Ogg's, that there had been no highly modifying influence to act on

them in their maturer life. It was still possible, even in that later

time of anti-Catholic preaching, for people to hold many pagan ideas,

and believe themselves good church-people, notwithstanding; so we need

hardly feel any surprise at the fact that Mr. Tulliver, though a

regular church-goer, recorded his vindictiveness on the fly-leaf of

his Bible. It was not that any harm could be said concerning the vicar

of that charming rural parish to which Dorlcote Mill belonged; he was

a man of excellent family, an irreproachable bachelor, of elegant

pursuits,--had taken honors, and held a fellowship. Mr. Tulliver

regarded him with dutiful respect, as he did everything else belonging

to the church-service; but he considered that church was one thing and

common-sense another, and he wanted nobody to tell \_him\_ what

commonsense was. Certain seeds which are required to find a nidus for

themselves under unfavorable circumstances have been supplied by

nature with an apparatus of hooks, so that they will get a hold on

very unreceptive surfaces. The spiritual seed which had been scattered

over Mr. Tulliver had apparently been destitute of any corresponding

provision, and had slipped off to the winds again, from a total

absence of hooks.

Chapter II

The Torn Nest Is Pierced by the Thorns

There is something sustaining in the very agitation that accompanies

the first shocks of trouble, just as an acute pain is often a

stimulus, and produces an excitement which is transient strength. It

is in the slow, changed life that follows; in the time when sorrow has

become stale, and has no longer an emotive intensity that counteracts

its pain; in the time when day follows day in dull, unexpectant

sameness, and trial is a dreary routine,--it is then that despair

threatens; it is then that the peremptory hunger of the soul is felt,

and eye and ear are strained after some unlearned secret of our

existence, which shall give to endurance the nature of satisfaction.

This time of utmost need was come to Maggie, with her short span of

thirteen years. To the usual precocity of the girl, she added that

early experience of struggle, of conflict between the inward impulse

and outward fact, which is the lot of every imaginative and passionate

nature; and the years since she hammered the nails into her wooden

Fetish among the worm-eaten shelves of the attic had been filled with

so eager a life in the triple world of Reality, Books, and Waking

Dreams, that Maggie was strangely old for her years in everything

except in her entire want of that prudence and self-command which were

the qualities that made Tom manly in the midst of his intellectual

boyishness. And now her lot was beginning to have a still, sad

monotony, which threw her more than ever on her inward self. Her

father was able to attend to business again, his affairs were settled,

and he was acting as Wakem's manager on the old spot. Tom went to and

fro every morning and evening, and became more and more silent in the

short intervals at home; what was there to say? One day was like

another; and Tom's interest in life, driven back and crushed on every

other side, was concentrating itself into the one channel of ambitious

resistance to misfortune. The peculiarities of his father and mother

were very irksome to him, now they were laid bare of all the softening

accompaniments of an easy, prosperous home; for Tom had very clear,

prosaic eyes, not apt to be dimmed by mists of feeling or imagination.

Poor Mrs. Tulliver, it seemed, would never recover her old self, her

placid household activity; how could she? The objects among which her

mind had moved complacently were all gone,--all the little hopes and

schemes and speculations, all the pleasant little cares about her

treasures which had made the world quite comprehensible to her for a

quarter of a century, since she had made her first purchase of the

sugar-tongs, had been suddenly snatched away from her, and she

remained bewildered in this empty life. Why that should have happened

to her which had not happened to other women remained an insoluble

question by which she expressed her perpetual ruminating comparison of

the past with the present. It was piteous to see the comely woman

getting thinner and more worn under a bodily as well as mental

restlessness, which made her often wander about the empty house after

her work was done, until Maggie, becoming alarmed about her, would

seek her, and bring her down by telling her how it vexed Tom that she

was injuring her health by never sitting down and resting herself. Yet

amidst this helpless imbecility there was a touching trait of humble,

self-devoting maternity, which made Maggie feel tenderly toward her

poor mother amidst all the little wearing griefs caused by her mental

feebleness. She would let Maggie do none of the work that was heaviest

and most soiling to the hands, and was quite peevish when Maggie

attempted to relieve her from her grate-brushing and scouring: "Let it

alone, my dear; your hands 'ull get as hard as hard," she would say;

"it's your mother's place to do that. I can't do the sewing--my eyes

fail me." And she would still brush and carefully tend Maggie's hair,

which she had become reconciled to, in spite of its refusal to curl,

now it was so long and massy. Maggie was not her pet child, and, in

general, would have been much better if she had been quite different;

yet the womanly heart, so bruised in its small personal desires, found

a future to rest on in the life of this young thing, and the mother

pleased herself with wearing out her own hands to save the hands that

had so much more life in them.

But the constant presence of her mother's regretful bewilderment was

less painful to Maggie than that of her father's sullen,

incommunicative depression. As long as the paralysis was upon him, and

it seemed as if he might always be in a childlike condition of

dependence,--as long as he was still only half awakened to his

trouble,--Maggie had felt the strong tide of pitying love almost as an

inspiration, a new power, that would make the most difficult life easy

for his sake; but now, instead of childlike dependence, there had come

a taciturn, hard concentration of purpose, in strange contrast with

his old vehement communicativeness and high spirit; and this lasted

from day to day, and from week to week, the dull eye never brightening

with any eagerness or any joy. It is something cruelly incomprehensible

to youthful natures, this sombre sameness in middle-aged and elderly

people, whose life has resulted in disappointment and discontent, to

whose faces a smile becomes so strange that the sad lines all about

the lips and brow seem to take no notice of it, and it hurries away

again for want of a welcome. "Why will they not kindle up and be

glad sometimes?" thinks young elasticity. "It would be so easy if they

only liked to do it." And these leaden clouds that never part are apt

to create impatience even in the filial affection that streams forth in

nothing but tenderness and pity in the time of more obvious affliction.

Mr. Tulliver lingered nowhere away from home; he hurried away from

market, he refused all invitations to stay and chat, as in old times,

in the houses where he called on business. He could not be reconciled

with his lot. There was no attitude in which his pride did not feel

its bruises; and in all behavior toward him, whether kind or cold, he

detected an allusion to the change in his circumstances. Even the days

on which Wakem came to ride round the land and inquire into the

business were not so black to him as those market-days on which he had

met several creditors who had accepted a composition from him. To save

something toward the repayment of those creditors was the object

toward which he was now bending all his thoughts and efforts; and

under the influence of this all-compelling demand of his nature, the

somewhat profuse man, who hated to be stinted or to stint any one else

in his own house, was gradually metamorphosed into the keen-eyed

grudger of morsels. Mrs. Tulliver could not economize enough to

satisfy him, in their food and firing; and he would eat nothing

himself but what was of the coarsest quality. Tom, though depressed

and strongly repelled by his father's sullenness, and the dreariness

of home, entered thoroughly into his father's feelings about paying

the creditors; and the poor lad brought his first quarter's money,

with a delicious sense of achievement, and gave it to his father to

put into the tin box which held the savings. The little store of

sovereigns in the tin box seemed to be the only sight that brought a

faint beam of pleasure into the miller's eyes,--faint and transient,

for it was soon dispelled by the thought that the time would be

long--perhaps longer than his life,--before the narrow savings could

remove the hateful incubus of debt. A deficit of more than five

hundred pounds, with the accumulating interest, seemed a deep pit to

fill with the savings from thirty shillings a-week, even when Tom's

probable savings were to be added. On this one point there was entire

community of feeling in the four widely differing beings who sat round

the dying fire of sticks, which made a cheap warmth for them on the

verge of bedtime. Mrs. Tulliver carried the proud integrity of the

Dodsons in her blood, and had been brought up to think that to wrong

people of their money, which was another phrase for debt, was a sort

of moral pillory; it would have been wickedness, to her mind, to have

run counter to her husband's desire to "do the right thing," and

retrieve his name. She had a confused, dreamy notion that, if the

creditors were all paid, her plate and linen ought to come back to

her; but she had an inbred perception that while people owed money

they were unable to pay, they couldn't rightly call anything their

own. She murmured a little that Mr. Tulliver so peremptorily refused

to receive anything in repayment from Mr. and Mrs. Moss; but to all

his requirements of household economy she was submissive to the point

of denying herself the cheapest indulgences of mere flavor; her only

rebellion was to smuggle into the kitchen something that would make

rather a better supper than usual for Tom.

These narrow notions about debt, held by the old fashioned Tullivers,

may perhaps excite a smile on the faces of many readers in these days

of wide commercial views and wide philosophy, according to which

everything rights itself without any trouble of ours. The fact that my

tradesman is out of pocket by me is to be looked at through the serene

certainty that somebody else's tradesman is in pocket by somebody

else; and since there must be bad debts in the world, why, it is mere

egoism not to like that we in particular should make them instead of

our fellow-citizens. I am telling the history of very simple people,

who had never had any illuminating doubts as to personal integrity and

honor.

Under all this grim melancholy and narrowing concentration of desire,

Mr. Tulliver retained the feeling toward his "little wench" which made

her presence a need to him, though it would not suffice to cheer him.

She was still the desire of his eyes; but the sweet spring of fatherly

love was now mingled with bitterness, like everything else. When

Maggie laid down her work at night, it was her habit to get a low

stool and sit by her father's knee, leaning her cheek against it. How

she wished he would stroke her head, or give some sign that he was

soothed by the sense that he had a daughter who loved him! But now she

got no answer to her little caresses, either from her father or from

Tom,--the two idols of her life. Tom was weary and abstracted in the

short intervals when he was at home, and her father was bitterly

preoccupied with the thought that the girl was growing up, was

shooting up into a woman; and how was she to do well in life? She had

a poor chance for marrying, down in the world as they were. And he

hated the thought of her marrying poorly, as her aunt Gritty had done;

\_that\_ would be a thing to make him turn in his grave,--the little

wench so pulled down by children and toil, as her aunt Moss was. When

uncultured minds, confined to a narrow range of personal experience,

are under the pressure of continued misfortune, their inward life is

apt to become a perpetually repeated round of sad and bitter thoughts;

the same words, the same scenes, are revolved over and over again, the

same mood accompanies them; the end of the year finds them as much

what they were at the beginning as if they were machines set to a

recurrent series of movements.

The sameness of the days was broken by few visitors. Uncles and aunts

paid only short visits now; of course, they could not stay to meals,

and the constraint caused by Mr. Tulliver's savage silence, which

seemed to add to the hollow resonance of the bare, uncarpeted room

when the aunts were talking, heightened the unpleasantness of these

family visits on all sides, and tended to make them rare. As for other

acquaintances, there is a chill air surrounding those who are down in

the world, and people are glad to get away from them, as from a cold

room; human beings, mere men and women, without furniture, without

anything to offer you, who have ceased to count as anybody, present an

embarrassing negation of reasons for wishing to see them, or of

subjects on which to converse with them. At that distant day, there

was a dreary isolation in the civilized Christian society of these

realms for families that had dropped below their original level,

unless they belonged to a sectarian church, which gets some warmth of

brotherhood by walling in the sacred fire.

Chapter III

A Voice from the Past

One afternoon, when the chestnuts were coming into flower, Maggie had

brought her chair outside the front door, and was seated there with a

book on her knees. Her dark eyes had wandered from the book, but they

did not seem to be enjoying the sunshine which pierced the screen of

jasmine on the projecting porch at her right, and threw leafy shadows

on her pale round cheek; they seemed rather to be searching for

something that was not disclosed by the sunshine. It had been a more

miserable day than usual; her father, after a visit of Wakem's had had

a paroxysm of rage, in which for some trifling fault he had beaten the

boy who served in the mill. Once before, since his illness, he had had

a similar paroxysm, in which he had beaten his horse, and the scene

had left a lasting terror in Maggie's mind. The thought had risen,

that some time or other he might beat her mother if she happened to

speak in her feeble way at the wrong moment. The keenest of all dread

with her was lest her father should add to his present misfortune the

wretchedness of doing something irretrievably disgraceful. The

battered school-book of Tom's which she held on her knees could give

her no fortitude under the pressure of that dread; and again and again

her eyes had filled with tears, as they wandered vaguely, seeing

neither the chestnut-trees, nor the distant horizon, but only future

scenes of home-sorrow.

Suddenly she was roused by the sound of the opening gate and of

footsteps on the gravel. It was not Tom who was entering, but a man in

a sealskin cap and a blue plush waistcoat, carrying a pack on his

back, and followed closely by a bullterrier of brindled coat and

defiant aspect.

"Oh, Bob, it's you!" said Maggie, starting up with a smile of pleased

recognition, for there had been no abundance of kind acts to efface

the recollection of Bob's generosity; "I'm so glad to see you."

"Thank you, Miss," said Bob, lifting his cap and showing a delighted

face, but immediately relieving himself of some accompanying

embarrassment by looking down at his dog, and saying in a tone of

disgust, "Get out wi' you, you thunderin' sawney!"

"My brother is not at home yet, Bob," said Maggie; "he is always at

St. Ogg's in the daytime."

"Well, Miss," said Bob, "I should be glad to see Mr. Tom, but that

isn't just what I'm come for,--look here!"

Bob was in the act of depositing his pack on the door-step, and with

it a row of small books fastened together with string.

Apparently, however, they were not the object to which he wished to

call Maggie's attention, but rather something which he had carried

under his arm, wrapped in a red handkerchief.

"See here!" he said again, laying the red parcel on the others and

unfolding it; "you won't think I'm a-makin' too free, Miss, I hope,

but I lighted on these books, and I thought they might make up to you

a bit for them as you've lost; for I heared you speak o' picturs,--an'

as for picturs, \_look\_ here!"

The opening of the red handkerchief had disclosed a superannuated

"Keepsake" and six or seven numbers of a "Portrait Gallery," in royal

octavo; and the emphatic request to look referred to a portrait of

George the Fourth in all the majesty of his depressed cranium and

voluminous neckcloth.

"There's all sorts o' genelmen here," Bob went on, turning over the

leaves with some excitement, "wi' all sorts o' nones,--an' some bald

an' some wi' wigs,--Parlament genelmen, I reckon. An' here," he added,

opening the "Keepsake,"--"\_here's\_ ladies for you, some wi' curly hair

and some wi' smooth, an' some a-smiling wi' their heads o' one side,

an' some as if they were goin' to cry,--look here,--a-sittin' on the

ground out o' door, dressed like the ladies I'n seen get out o' the

carriages at the balls in th' Old Hall there. My eyes! I wonder what

the chaps wear as go a-courtin' 'em! I sot up till the clock was gone

twelve last night, a-lookin' at 'em,--I did,--till they stared at me

out o' the picturs as if they'd know when I spoke to 'em. But, lors! I

shouldn't know what to say to 'em. They'll be more fittin' company for

you, Miss; and the man at the book-stall, he said they banged

iverything for picturs; he said they was a fust-rate article."

"And you've bought them for me, Bob?" said Maggie, deeply touched by

this simple kindness. "How very, very good of you! But I'm afraid you

gave a great deal of money for them."

"Not me!" said Bob. "I'd ha' gev three times the money if they'll make

up to you a bit for them as was sold away from you, Miss. For I'n

niver forgot how you looked when you fretted about the books bein'

gone; it's stuck by me as if it was a pictur hingin' before me. An'

when I see'd the book open upo' the stall, wi' the lady lookin' out of

it wi' eyes a bit like your'n when you was frettin',--you'll excuse my

takin' the liberty, Miss,--I thought I'd make free to buy it for you,

an' then I bought the books full o' genelmen to match; an' then"--here

Bob took up the small stringed packet of books--"I thought you might

like a bit more print as well as the picturs, an' I got these for a

sayso,--they're cram-full o' print, an' I thought they'd do no harm

comin' along wi' these bettermost books. An' I hope you won't say me

nay, an' tell me as you won't have 'em, like Mr. Tom did wi' the

suvreigns."

"No, indeed, Bob," said Maggie, "I'm very thankful to you for thinking

of me, and being so good to me and Tom. I don't think any one ever did

such a kind thing for me before. I haven't many friends who care for

me."

"Hev a dog, Miss!--they're better friends nor any Christian," said

Bob, laying down his pack again, which he had taken up with the

intention of hurrying away; for he felt considerable shyness in

talking to a young lass like Maggie, though, as he usually said of

himself, "his tongue overrun him" when he began to speak. "I can't

give you Mumps, 'cause he'd break his heart to go away from me--eh,

Mumps, what do you say, you riff-raff?" (Mumps declined to express

himself more diffusely than by a single affirmative movement of his

tail.) "But I'd get you a pup, Miss, an' welcome."

"No, thank you, Bob. We have a yard dog, and I mayn't keep a dog of my

own."

"Eh, that's a pity; else there's a pup,--if you didn't mind about it

not being thoroughbred; its mother acts in the Punch show,--an

uncommon sensible bitch; she means more sense wi' her bark nor half

the chaps can put into their talk from breakfast to sundown. There's

one chap carries pots,--a poor, low trade as any on the road,--he

says, 'Why Toby's nought but a mongrel; there's nought to look at in

her.' But I says to him, 'Why, what are you yoursen but a mongrel?

There wasn't much pickin' o' \_your\_ feyther an' mother, to look at

you.' Not but I like a bit o' breed myself, but I can't abide to see

one cur grinnin' at another. I wish you good evenin', Miss," said Bob,

abruptly taking up his pack again, under the consciousness that his

tongue was acting in an undisciplined manner.

"Won't you come in the evening some time, and see my brother, Bob?"

said Maggie.

"Yes, Miss, thank you--another time. You'll give my duty to him, if

you please. Eh, he's a fine growed chap, Mr. Tom is; he took to

growin' i' the legs, an' \_I\_ didn't."

The pack was down again, now, the hook of the stick having somehow

gone wrong.

"You don't call Mumps a cur, I suppose?" said Maggie, divining that

any interest she showed in Mumps would be gratifying to his master.

"No, Miss, a fine way off that," said Bob, with pitying smile; "Mumps

is as fine a cross as you'll see anywhere along the Floss, an' I'n

been up it wi' the barge times enow. Why, the gentry stops to look at

him; but you won't catch Mumps a-looking at the gentry much,--he minds

his own business, he does."

The expression of Mump's face, which seemed to be tolerating the

superfluous existence of objects in general, was strongly confirmatory

of this high praise.

"He looks dreadfully surly," said Maggie. "Would he let me pat him?"

"Ay, that would he, and thank you. He knows his company, Mumps does.

He isn't a dog as 'ull be caught wi' gingerbread; he'd smell a thief a

good deal stronger nor the gingerbread, he would. Lors, I talk to him

by th' hour together, when I'm walking i' lone places, and if I'n done

a bit o' mischief, I allays tell him. I'n got no secrets but what

Mumps knows 'em. He knows about my big thumb, he does."

"Your big thumb--what's that, Bob?" said Maggie.

"That's what it is, Miss," said Bob, quickly, exhibiting a singularly

broad specimen of that difference between the man and the monkey. "It

tells i' measuring out the flannel, you see. I carry flannel, 'cause

it's light for my pack, an' it's dear stuff, you see, so a big thumb

tells. I clap my thumb at the end o' the yard and cut o' the hither

side of it, and the old women aren't up to't."

"But Bob," said Maggie, looking serious, "that's cheating; I don't

like to hear you say that."

"Don't you, Miss?" said Bob regretfully. "Then I'm sorry I said it.

But I'm so used to talking to Mumps, an' he doesn't mind a bit o'

cheating, when it's them skinflint women, as haggle an' haggle, an'

'ud like to get their flannel for nothing, an' 'ud niver ask

theirselves how I got my dinner out on't. I niver cheat anybody as

doesn't want to cheat me, Miss,--lors, I'm a honest chap, I am; only I

must hev a bit o' sport, an' now I don't go wi' th' ferrets, I'n got

no varmint to come over but them haggling women. I wish you good

evening, Miss."

"Good-by, Bob. Thank you very much for bringing me the books. And come

again to see Tom."

"Yes, Miss," said Bob, moving on a few steps; then turning half round

he said, "I'll leave off that trick wi' my big thumb, if you don't

think well on me for it, Miss; but it 'ud be a pity, it would. I

couldn't find another trick so good,--an' what 'ud be the use o'

havin' a big thumb? It might as well ha' been narrow."

Maggie, thus exalted into Bob's exalting Madonna, laughed in spite of

herself; at which her worshipper's blue eyes twinkled too, and under

these favoring auspices he touched his cap and walked away.

The days of chivalry are not gone, notwithstanding Burke's grand dirge

over them; they live still in that far-off worship paid by many a

youth and man to the woman of whom he never dreams that he shall touch

so much as her little finger or the hem of her robe. Bob, with the

pack on his back, had as respectful an adoration for this dark-eyed

maiden as if he had been a knight in armor calling aloud on her name

as he pricked on to the fight.

That gleam of merriment soon died away from Maggie's face, and perhaps

only made the returning gloom deeper by contrast. She was too

dispirited even to like answering questions about Bob's present of

books, and she carried them away to her bedroom, laying them down

there and seating herself on her one stool, without caring to look at

them just yet. She leaned her cheek against the window-frame, and

thought that the light-hearted Bob had a lot much happier than hers.

Maggie's sense of loneliness, and utter privation of joy, had deepened

with the brightness of advancing spring. All the favorite outdoor

nooks about home, which seemed to have done their part with her

parents in nurturing and cherishing her, were now mixed up with the

home-sadness, and gathered no smile from the sunshine. Every

affection, every delight the poor child had had, was like an aching

nerve to her. There was no music for her any more,--no piano, no

harmonized voices, no delicious stringed instruments, with their

passionate cries of imprisoned spirits sending a strange vibration

through her frame. And of all her school-life there was nothing left

her now but her little collection of school-books, which she turned

over with a sickening sense that she knew them all, and they were all

barren of comfort. Even at school she had often wished for books with

\_more\_ in them; everything she learned there seemed like the ends of

long threads that snapped immediately. And now--without the indirect

charm of school-emulation--TÃ©lÃ©maque was mere bran; so were the hard,

dry questions on Christian Doctrine; there was no flavor in them, no

strength. Sometimes Maggie thought she could have been contented with

absorbing fancies; if she could have had all Scott's novels and all

Byron's poems!--then, perhaps, she might have found happiness enough

to dull her sensibility to her actual daily life. And yet they were

hardly what she wanted. She could make dream-worlds of her own, but no

dream-world would satisfy her now. She wanted some explanation of this

hard, real life,--the unhappy-looking father, seated at the dull

breakfast-table; the childish, bewildered mother; the little sordid

tasks that filled the hours, or the more oppressive emptiness of

weary, joyless leisure; the need of some tender, demonstrative love;

the cruel sense that Tom didn't mind what she thought or felt, and

that they were no longer playfellows together; the privation of all

pleasant things that had come to \_her\_ more than to others,--she

wanted some key that would enable her to understand, and in

understanding, to endure, the heavy weight that had fallen on her

young heart. If she had been taught "real learning and wisdom, such as

great men knew," she thought she should have held the secrets of life;

if she had only books, that she might learn for herself what wise men

knew! Saints and martyrs had never interested Maggie so much as sages

and poets. She knew little of saints and martyrs, and had gathered, as

a general result of her teaching, that they were a temporary provision

against the spread of Catholicism, and had all died at Smithfield.

In one of these meditations it occurred to her that she had forgotten

Tom's school-books, which had been sent home in his trunk. But she

found the stock unaccountably shrunk down to the few old ones which

had been well thumbed,--the Latin Dictionary and Grammar, a Delectus,

a torn Eutropius, the well-worn Virgil, Aldrich's Logic, and the

exasperating Euclid. Still, Latin, Euclid, and Logic would surely be a

considerable step in masculine wisdom,--in that knowledge which made

men contented, and even glad to live. Not that the yearning for

effectual wisdom was quite unmixed; a certain mirage would now and

then rise on the desert of the future, in which she seemed to see

herself honored for her surprising attainments. And so the poor child,

with her soul's hunger and her illusions of self-flattery, began to

nibble at this thick-rinded fruit of the tree of knowledge, filling

her vacant hours with Latin, geometry, and the forms of the syllogism,

and feeling a gleam of triumph now and then that her understanding was

quite equal to these peculiarly masculine studies. For a week or two

she went on resolutely enough, though with an occasional sinking of

heart, as if she had set out toward the Promised Land alone, and found

it a thirsty, trackless, uncertain journey. In the severity of her

early resolution, she would take Aldrich out into the fields, and then

look off her book toward the sky, where the lark was twinkling, or to

the reeds and bushes by the river, from which the waterfowl rustled

forth on its anxious, awkward flight,--with a startled sense that the

relation between Aldrich and this living world was extremely remote

for her. The discouragement deepened as the days went on, and the

eager heart gained faster and faster on the patient mind. Somehow,

when she sat at the window with her book, her eyes \_would\_ fix

themselves blankly on the outdoor sunshine; then they would fill with

tears, and sometimes, if her mother was not in the room, the studies

would all end in sobbing. She rebelled against her lot, she fainted

under its loneliness, and fits even of anger and hatred toward her

father and mother, who were so unlike what she would have them to be;

toward Tom, who checked her, and met her thought or feeling always by

some thwarting difference,--would flow out over her affections and

conscience like a lava stream, and frighten her with a sense that it

was not difficult for her to become a demon. Then her brain would be

busy with wild romances of a flight from home in search of something

less sordid and dreary; she would go to some great man--Walter Scott,

perhaps--and tell him how wretched and how clever she was, and he

would surely do something for her. But, in the middle of her vision,

her father would perhaps enter the room for the evening, and,

surprised that she sat still without noticing him, would say

complainingly, "Come, am I to fetch my slippers myself?" The voice

pierced through Maggie like a sword; there was another sadness besides

her own, and she had been thinking of turning her back on it and

forsaking it.

This afternoon, the sight of Bob's cheerful freckled face had given

her discontent a new direction. She thought it was part of the

hardship of her life that there was laid upon her the burthen of

larger wants than others seemed to feel,--that she had to endure this

wide, hopeless yearning for that something, whatever it was, that was

greatest and best on this earth. She wished she could have been like

Bob, with his easily satisfied ignorance, or like Tom, who had

something to do on which he could fix his mind with a steady purpose,

and disregard everything else. Poor child! as she leaned her head

against the window-frame, with her hands clasped tighter and tighter,

and her foot beating the ground, she was as lonely in her trouble as

if she had been the only gril in the civilized world of that day who

had come out of her school-life with a soul untrained for inevitable

struggles, with no other part of her inherited share in the hard-won

treasures of thought which generations of painful toil have laid up

for the race of men, than shreds and patches of feeble literature and

false history, with much futile information about Saxon and other

kings of doubtful example, but unhappily quite without that knowledge

of the irreversible laws within and without her, which, governing the

habits, becomes morality, and developing the feelings of submission

and dependence, becomes religion,--as lonely in her trouble as if

every other girl besides herself had been cherished and watched over

by elder minds, not forgetful of their own early time, when need was

keen and impulse strong.

At last Maggie's eyes glanced down on the books that lay on the

window-shelf, and she half forsook her reverie to turn over listlessly

the leaves of the "Portrait Gallery," but she soon pushed this aside

to examine the little row of books tied together with string.

"Beauties of the Spectator," "Rasselas," "Economy of Human Life,"

"Gregory's Letters,"--she knew the sort of matter that was inside all

these; the "Christian Year,"--that seemed to be a hymnbook, and she

laid it down again; but \_Thomas Ã  Kempis?\_--the name had come across

her in her reading, and she felt the satisfaction, which every one

knows, of getting some ideas to attach to a name that strays solitary

in the memory. She took up the little, old, clumsy book with some

curiosity; it had the corners turned down in many places, and some

hand, now forever quiet, had made at certain passages strong

pen-and-ink marks, long since browned by time. Maggie turned from leaf

to leaf, and read where the quiet hand pointed: "Know that the love of

thyself doth hurt thee more than anything in the world.... If thou

seekest this or that, and wouldst be here or there to enjoy thy own

will and pleasure, thou shalt never be quiet nor free from care; for

in everything somewhat will be wanting, and in every place there will

be some that will cross thee.... Both above and below, which way

soever thou dost turn thee, everywhere thou shalt find the Cross; and

everywhere of necessity thou must have patience, if thou wilt have

inward peace, and enjoy an everlasting crown.... If thou desirest to

mount unto this height, thou must set out courageously, and lay the

axe to the root, that thou mayest pluck up and destroy that hidden

inordinate inclination to thyself, and unto all private and earthly

good. On this sin, that a man inordinately loveth himself, almost all

dependeth, whatsoever is thoroughly to be overcome; which evil being

once overcome and subdued, there will presently ensue great peace and

tranquillity.... It is but little thou sufferest in comparison of them

that have suffered so much, were so strongly tempted, so grievously

afflicted, so many ways tried and exercised. Thou oughtest therefore

to call to mind the more heavy sufferings of others, that thou mayest

the easier bear thy little adversities. And if they seem not little

unto thee, beware lest thy impatience be the cause thereof.... Blessed

are those ears that receive the whispers of the divine voice, and

listen not to the whisperings of the world. Blessed are those ears

which hearken not unto the voice which soundeth outwardly, but unto

the Truth, which teacheth inwardly."

A strange thrill of awe passed through Maggie while she read, as if

she had been wakened in the night by a strain of solemn music, telling

of beings whose souls had been astir while hers was in stupor. She

went on from one brown mark to another, where the quiet hand seemed to

point, hardly conscious that she was reading, seeming rather to listen

while a low voice said;

"Why dost thou here gaze about, since this is not the place of thy

rest? In heaven ought to be thy dwelling, and all earthly things are

to be looked on as they forward thy journey thither. All things pass

away, and thou together with them. Beware thou cleavest not unto them,

lest thou be entangled and perish.... If a man should give all his

substance, yet it is as nothing. And if he should do great penances,

yet are they but little. And if he should attain to all knowledge, he

is yet far off. And if he should be of great virtue, and very fervent

devotion, yet is there much wanting; to wit, one thing, which is most

necessary for him. What is that? That having left all, he leave

himself, and go wholly out of himself, and retain nothing of

self-love.... I have often said unto thee, and now again I say the

same, Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy much

inward peace.... Then shall all vain imaginations, evil perturbations,

and superfluous cares fly away; then shall immoderate fear leave thee,

and inordinate love shall die."

Maggie drew a long breath and pushed her heavy hair back, as if to see

a sudden vision more clearly. Here, then, was a secret of life that

would enable her to renounce all other secrets; here was a sublime

height to be reached without the help of outward things; here was

insight, and strength, and conquest, to be won by means entirely

within her own soul, where a supreme Teacher was waiting to be heard.

It flashed through her like the suddenly apprehended solution of a

problem, that all the miseries of her young life had come from fixing

her heart on her own pleasure, as if that were the central necessity

of the universe; and for the first time she saw the possibility of

shifting the position from which she looked at the gratification of

her own desires,--of taking her stand out of herself, and looking at

her own life as an insignificant part of a divinely guided whole. She

read on and on in the old book, devouring eagerly the dialogues with

the invisible Teacher, the pattern of sorrow, the source of all

strength; returning to it after she had been called away, and reading

till the sun went down behind the willows. With all the hurry of an

imagination that could never rest in the present, she sat in the

deepening twilight forming plans of self-humiliation and entire

devotedness; and in the ardor of first discovery, renunciation seemed

to her the entrance into that satisfaction which she had so long been

craving in vain. She had not perceived--how could she until she had

lived longer?--the inmost truth of the old monk's out-pourings, that

renunciation remains sorrow, though a sorrow borne willingly. Maggie

was still panting for happiness, and was in ecstasy because she had

found the key to it. She knew nothing of doctrines and systems, of

mysticism or quietism; but this voice out of the far-off middle ages

was the direct communication of a human soul's belief and experience,

and came to Maggie as an unquestioned message.

I suppose that is the reason why the small old-fashioned book, for

which you need only pay sixpence at a book-stall, works miracles to

this day, turning bitter waters into sweetness; while expensive

sermons and treatises, newly issued, leave all things as they were

before. It was written down by a hand that waited for the heart's

prompting; it is the chronicle of a solitary, hidden anguish,

struggle, trust, and triumph, not written on velvet cushions to teach

endurance to those who are treading with bleeding feet on the stones.

And so it remains to all time a lasting record of human needs and

human consolations; the voice of a brother who, ages ago, felt and

suffered and renounced,--in the cloister, perhaps, with serge gown and

tonsured head, with much chanting and long fasts, and with a fashion

of speech different from ours,--but under the same silent far-off

heavens, and with the same passionate desires, the same strivings, the

same failures, the same weariness.

In writing the history of unfashionable families, one is apt to fall

into a tone of emphasis which is very far from being the tone of good

society, where principles and beliefs are not only of an extremely

moderate kind, but are always presupposed, no subjects being eligible

but such as can be touched with a light and graceful irony. But then

good society has its claret and its velvet carpets, its

dinner-engagements six weeks deep, its opera and its faÃ«ry ball-rooms;

rides off its \_ennui\_ on thoroughbred horses; lounges at the club; has

to keep clear of crinoline vortices; gets its science done by Faraday,

and its religion by the superior clergy who are to be met in the best

houses,--how should it have time or need for belief and emphasis? But

good society, floated on gossamer wings of light irony, is of very

expensive production; requiring nothing less than a wide and arduous

national life condensed in unfragrant deafening factories, cramping

itself in mines, sweating at furnaces, grinding, hammering, weaving

under more or less oppression of carbonic acid, or else, spread over

sheepwalks, and scattered in lonely houses and huts on the clayey or

chalky corn-lands, where the rainy days look dreary. This wide

national life is based entirely on emphasis,--the emphasis of want,

which urges it into all the activities necessary for the maintenance

of good society and light irony; it spends its heavy years often in a

chill, uncarpeted fashion, amidst family discord unsoftened by long

corridors. Under such circumstances, there are many among its myriads

of souls who have absolutely needed an emphatic belief, life in this

unpleasurable shape demanding some solution even to unspeculative

minds,--just as you inquire into the stuffing of your couch when

anything galls you there, whereas eider-down and perfect French

springs excite no question. Some have an emphatic belief in alcohol,

and seek their \_ekstasis\_ or outside standing-ground in gin; but the

rest require something that good society calls "enthusiasm," something

that will present motives in an entire absence of high prizes;

something that will give patience and feed human love when the limbs

ache with weariness, and human looks are hard upon us; something,

clearly, that lies outside personal desires, that includes resignation

for ourselves and active love for what is not ourselves. Now and then

that sort of enthusiasm finds a far-echoing voice that comes from an

experience springing out of the deepest need; and it was by being

brought within the long lingering vibrations of such a voice that

Maggie, with her girl's face and unnoted sorrows, found an effort and

a hope that helped her through years of loneliness, making out a faith

for herself without the aid of established authorities and appointed

guides; for they were not at hand, and her need was pressing. From

what you know of her, you will not be surprised that she threw some

exaggeration and wilfulness, some pride and impetuosity, even into her

self-renunciation; her own life was still a drama for her, in which

she demanded of herself that her part should be played with intensity.

And so it came to pass that she often lost the spirit of humility by

being excessive in the outward act; she often strove after too high a

flight, and came down with her poor little half-fledged wings dabbled

in the mud. For example, she not only determined to work at plain

sewing, that she might contribute something toward the fund in the tin

box, but she went, in the first instance, in her zeal of

self-mortification, to ask for it at a linen shop in St. Ogg's,

instead of getting it in a more quiet and indirect way; and could see

nothing but what was entirely wrong and unkind, nay, persecuting, in

Tom's reproof of her for this unnecessary act. "I don't like \_my\_

sister to do such things," said Tom, "\_I'll\_ take care that the debts

are paid, without your lowering yourself in that way." Surely there

was some tenderness and bravery mingled with the worldliness and

self-assertion of that little speech; but Maggie held it as dross,

overlooking the grains of gold, and took Tom's rebuke as one of her

outward crosses. Tom was very hard to her, she used to think, in her

long night-watchings,--to her who had always loved him so; and then

she strove to be contented with that hardness, and to require nothing.

That is the path we all like when we set out on our abandonment of

egoism,--the path of martyrdom and endurance, where the palm-branches

grow, rather than the steep highway of tolerance, just allowance, and

self-blame, where there are no leafy honors to be gathered and worn.

The old books, Virgil, Euclid, and Aldrich--that wrinkled fruit of the

tree of knowledge--had been all laid by; for Maggie had turned her

back on the vain ambition to share the thoughts of the wise. In her

first ardor she flung away the books with a sort of triumph that she

had risen above the need of them; and if they had been her own, she

would have burned them, believing that she would never repent. She

read so eagerly and constantly in her three books, the Bible, Thomas Ã

Kempis, and the "Christian Year" (no longer rejected as a

"hymn-book"), that they filled her mind with a continual stream of

rhythmic memories; and she was too ardently learning to see all nature

and life in the light of her new faith, to need any other material for

her mind to work on, as she sat with her well-plied needle, making

shirts and other complicated stitchings, falsely called "plain,"--by

no means plain to Maggie, since wristband and sleeve and the like had

a capability of being sewed in wrong side outward in moments of mental

wandering.

Hanging diligently over her sewing, Maggie was a sight any one might

have been pleased to look at. That new inward life of hers,

notwithstanding some volcanic upheavings of imprisoned passions, yet

shone out in her face with a tender soft light that mingled itself as

added loveliness with the gradually enriched color and outline of her

blossoming youth. Her mother felt the change in her with a sort of

puzzled wonder that Maggie should be "growing up so good"; it was

amazing that this once "contrairy" child was become so submissive, so

backward to assert her own will. Maggie used to look up from her work

and find her mother's eyes fixed upon her; they were watching and

waiting for the large young glance, as if her elder frame got some

needful warmth from it. The mother was getting fond of her tall, brown

girl,--the only bit of furniture now on which she could bestow her

anxiety and pride; and Maggie, in spite of her own ascetic wish to

have no personal adornment, was obliged to give way to her mother

about her hair, and submit to have the abundant black locks plaited

into a coronet on the summit of her head, after the pitiable fashion

of those antiquated times.

"Let your mother have that bit o' pleasure, my dear," said Mrs.

Tulliver; "I'd trouble enough with your hair once."

So Maggie, glad of anything that would soothe her mother, and cheer

their long day together, consented to the vain decoration, and showed

a queenly head above her old frocks, steadily refusing, however, to

look at herself in the glass. Mrs. Tulliver liked to call the father's

attention to Maggie's hair and other unexpected virtues, but he had a

brusk reply to give.

"I knew well enough what she'd be, before now,--it's nothing new to

me. But it's a pity she isn't made o' commoner stuff; she'll be thrown

away, I doubt,--there'll be nobody to marry her as is fit for her."

And Maggie's graces of mind and body fed his gloom. He sat patiently

enough while she read him a chapter, or said something timidly when

they were alone together about trouble being turned into a blessing.

He took it all as part of his daughter's goodness, which made his

misfortunes the sadder to him because they damaged her chance in life.

In a mind charged with an eager purpose and an unsatisfied

vindictiveness, there is no room for new feelings; Mr. Tulliver did

not want spiritual consolation--he wanted to shake off the degradation

of debt, and to have his revenge.

Book V

\_Wheat and Tares\_

Chapter I

In the Red Deeps

The family sitting-room was a long room with a window at each end; one

looking toward the croft and along the Ripple to the banks of the

Floss, the other into the mill-yard. Maggie was sitting with her work

against the latter window when she saw Mr. Wakem entering the yard, as

usual, on his fine black horse; but not alone, as usual. Some one was

with him,--a figure in a cloak, on a handsome pony. Maggie had hardly

time to feel that it was Philip come back, before they were in front

of the window, and he was raising his hat to her; while his father,

catching the movement by a side-glance, looked sharply round at them

both.

Maggie hurried away from the window and carried her work upstairs; for

Mr. Wakem sometimes came in and inspected the books, and Maggie felt

that the meeting with Philip would be robbed of all pleasure in the

presence of the two fathers. Some day, perhaps, she could see him when

they could just shake hands, and she could tell him that she

remembered his goodness to Tom, and the things he had said to her in

the old days, though they could never be friends any more. It was not

at all agitating to Maggie to see Philip again; she retained her

childish gratitude and pity toward him, and remembered his cleverness;

and in the early weeks of her loneliness she had continually recalled

the image of him among the people who had been kind to her in life,

often wishing she had him for a brother and a teacher, as they had

fancied it might have been, in their talk together. But that sort of

wishing had been banished along with other dreams that savored of

seeking her own will; and she thought, besides, that Philip might be

altered by his life abroad,--he might have become worldly, and really

not care about her saying anything to him now. And yet his face was

wonderfully little altered,--it was only a larger, more manly copy of

the pale, small-featured boy's face, with the gray eyes, and the

boyish waving brown hair; there was the old deformity to awaken the

old pity; and after all her meditations, Maggie felt that she really

\_should\_ like to say a few words to him. He might still be melancholy,

as he always used to be, and like her to look at him kindly. She

wondered if he remembered how he used to like her eyes; with that

thought Maggie glanced toward the square looking-glass which was

condemned to hang with its face toward the wall, and she half started

from her seat to reach it down; but she checked herself and snatched

up her work, trying to repress the rising wishes by forcing her memory

to recall snatches of hymns, until she saw Philip and his father

returning along the road, and she could go down again.

It was far on in June now, and Maggie was inclined to lengthen the

daily walk which was her one indulgence; but this day and the

following she was so busy with work which must be finished that she

never went beyond the gate, and satisfied her need of the open air by

sitting out of doors. One of her frequent walks, when she was not

obliged to go to St. Ogg's, was to a spot that lay beyond what was

called the "Hill,"--an insignificant rise of ground crowned by trees,

lying along the side of the road which ran by the gates of Dorlcote

Mill. Insignificant I call it, because in height it was hardly more

than a bank; but there may come moments when Nature makes a mere bank

a means toward a fateful result; and that is why I ask you to imagine

this high bank crowned with trees, making an uneven wall for some

quarter of a mile along the left side of Dorlcote Mill and the

pleasant fields behind it, bounded by the murmuring Ripple. Just where

this line of bank sloped down again to the level, a by-road turned off

and led to the other side of the rise, where it was broken into very

capricious hollows and mounds by the working of an exhausted

stone-quarry, so long exhausted that both mounds and hollows were now

clothed with brambles and trees, and here and there by a stretch of

grass which a few sheep kept close-nibbled. In her childish days

Maggie held this place, called the Red Deeps, in very great awe, and

needed all her confidence in Tom's bravery to reconcile her to an

excursion thither,--visions of robbers and fierce animals haunting

every hollow. But now it had the charm for her which any broken

ground, any mimic rock and ravine, have for the eyes that rest

habitually on the level; especially in summer, when she could sit on a

grassy hollow under the shadow of a branching ash, stooping aslant

from the steep above her, and listen to the hum of insects, like

tiniest bells on the garment of Silence, or see the sunlight piercing

the distant boughs, as if to chase and drive home the truant heavenly

blue of the wild hyacinths. In this June time, too, the dog-roses were

in their glory, and that was an additional reason why Maggie should

direct her walk to the Red Deeps, rather than to any other spot, on

the first day she was free to wander at her will,--a pleasure she

loved so well, that sometimes, in her ardors of renunciation, she

thought she ought to deny herself the frequent indulgence in it.

You may see her now, as she walks down the favorite turning and enters

the Deeps by a narrow path through a group of Scotch firs, her tall

figure and old lavender gown visible through an hereditary black silk

shawl of some wide-meshed net-like material; and now she is sure of

being unseen she takes off her bonnet and ties it over her arm. One

would certainly suppose her to be farther on in life than her

seventeenth year--perhaps because of the slow resigned sadness of the

glance from which all search and unrest seem to have departed; perhaps

because her broad-chested figure has the mould of early womanhood.

Youth and health have withstood well the involuntary and voluntary

hardships of her lot, and the nights in which she has lain on the hard

floor for a penance have left no obvious trace; the eyes are liquid,

the brown cheek is firm and round, the full lips are red. With her

dark coloring and jet crown surmounting her tall figure, she seems to

have a sort of kinship with the grand Scotch firs, at which she is

looking up as if she loved them well. Yet one has a sense of

uneasiness in looking at her,--a sense of opposing elements, of which

a fierce collision is imminent; surely there is a hushed expression,

such as one often sees in older faces under borderless caps, out of

keeping with the resistant youth, which one expects to flash out in a

sudden, passionate glance, that will dissipate all the quietude, like

a damp fire leaping out again when all seemed safe.

But Maggie herself was not uneasy at this moment. She was clamly

enjoying the free air, while she looked up at the old fir-trees, and

thought that those broken ends of branches were the records of past

storms, which had only made the red stems soar higher. But while her

eyes were still turned upward, she became conscious of a moving shadow

cast by the evening sun on the grassy path before her, and looked down

with a startled gesture to see Philip Wakem, who first raised his hat,

and then, blushing deeply, came forward to her and put out his hand.

Maggie, too, colored with surprise, which soon gave way to pleasure.

She put out her hand and looked down at the deformed figure before her

with frank eyes, filled for the moment with nothing but the memory of

her child's feelings,--a memory that was always strong in her. She was

the first to speak.

"You startled me," she said, smiling faintly; "I never meet any one

here. How came you to be walking here? Did you come to meet \_me?\_"

It was impossible not to perceive that Maggie felt herself a child

again.

"Yes, I did," said Philip, still embarrassed; "I wished to see you

very much. I watched a long while yesterday on the bank near your

house to see if you would come out, but you never came. Then I watched

again to-day, and when I saw the way you took, I kept you in sight and

came down the bank, behind there. I hope you will not be displeased

with me."

"No," said Maggie, with simple seriousness, walking on as if she meant

Philip to accompany her, "I'm very glad you came, for I wished very

much to have an opportunity of speaking to you. I've never forgotten

how good you were long ago to Tom, and me too; but I was not sure that

you would remember us so well. Tom and I have had a great deal of

trouble since then, and I think \_that\_ makes one think more of what

happened before the trouble came."

"I can't believe that you have thought of me so much as I have thought

of you," said Philip, timidly. "Do you know, when I was away, I made a

picture of you as you looked that morning in the study when you said

you would not forget me."

Philip drew a large miniature-case from his pocket, and opened it.

Maggie saw her old self leaning on a table, with her black locks

hanging down behind her ears, looking into space, with strange, dreamy

eyes. It was a water-color sketch, of real merit as a portrait.

"Oh dear," said Maggie, smiling, and flushed with pleasure, "what a

queer little girl I was! I remember myself with my hair in that way,

in that pink frock. I really \_was\_ like a gypsy. I dare say I am now,"

she added, after a little pause; "am I like what you expected me to

be?"

The words might have been those of a coquette, but the full, bright

glance Maggie turned on Philip was not that of a coquette. She really

did hope he liked her face as it was now, but it was simply the rising

again of her innate delight in admiration and love. Philip met her

eyes and looked at her in silence for a long moment, before he said

quietly, "No, Maggie."

The light died out a little from Maggie's face, and there was a slight

trembling of the lip. Her eyelids fell lower, but she did not turn

away her head, and Philip continued to look at her. Then he said

slowly:

"You are very much more beautiful than I thought you would be."

"Am I?" said Maggie, the pleasure returning in a deeper flush. She

turned her face away from him and took some steps, looking straight

before her in silence, as if she were adjusting her consciousness to

this new idea. Girls are so accustomed to think of dress as the main

ground of vanity, that, in abstaining from the looking-glass, Maggie

had thought more of abandoning all care for adornment than of

renouncing the contemplation of her face. Comparing herself with

elegant, wealthy young ladies, it had not occurred to her that she

could produce any effect with her person. Philip seemed to like the

silence well. He walked by her side, watching her face, as if that

sight left no room for any other wish. They had passed from among the

fir-trees, and had now come to a green hollow almost surrounded by an

amphitheatre of the pale pink dog-roses. But as the light about them

had brightened, Maggie's face had lost its glow.

She stood still when they were in the hollows, and looking at Philip

again, she said in a serious, sad voice:

"I wish we could have been friends,--I mean, if it would have been

good and right for us. But that is the trial I have to bear in

everything; I may not keep anything I used to love when I was little.

The old books went; and Tom is different, and my father. It is like

death. I must part with everything I cared for when I was a child. And

I must part with you; we must never take any notice of each other

again. That was what I wanted to speak to you for. I wanted to let you

know that Tom and I can't do as we like about such things, and that if

I behave as if I had forgotten all about you, it is not out of envy or

pride--or--or any bad feeling."

Maggie spoke with more and more sorrowful gentleness as she went on,

and her eyes began to fill with tears. The deepening expression of

pain on Philip's face gave him a stronger resemblance to his boyish

self, and made the deformity appeal more strongly to her pity.

"I know; I see all that you mean," he said, in a voice that had become

feebler from discouragement; "I know what there is to keep us apart on

both sides. But it is not right, Maggie,--don't you be angry with me,

I am so used to call you Maggie in my thoughts,--it is not right to

sacrifice everything to other people's unreasonable feelings. I would

give up a great deal for \_my\_ father; but I would not give up a

friendship or--or an attachment of any sort, in obedience to any wish

of his that I didn't recognize as right."

"I don't know," said Maggie, musingly. "Often, when I have been angry

and discontented, it has seemed to me that I was not bound to give up

anything; and I have gone on thinking till it has seemed to me that I

could think away all my duty. But no good has ever come of that; it

was an evil state of mind. I'm quite sure that whatever I might do, I

should wish in the end that I had gone without anything for myself,

rather than have made my father's life harder to him."

"But would it make his life harder if we were to see each other

sometimes?" said Philip. He was going to say something else, but

checked himself.

"Oh, I'm sure he wouldn't like it. Don't ask me why, or anything about

it," said Maggie, in a distressed tone. "My father feels so strongly

about some things. He is not at all happy."

"No more am I," said Philip, impetuously; "I am not happy."

"Why?" said Maggie, gently. "At least--I ought not to ask--but I'm

very, very sorry."

Philip turned to walk on, as if he had not patience to stand still any

longer, and they went out of the hollow, winding amongst the trees and

bushes in silence. After that last word of Philip's, Maggie could not

bear to insist immediately on their parting.

"I've been a great deal happier," she said at last, timidly, "since I

have given up thinking about what is easy and pleasant, and being

discontented because I couldn't have my own will. Our life is

determined for us; and it makes the mind very free when we give up

wishing, and only think of bearing what is laid upon us, and doing

what is given us to do."

"But I can't give up wishing," said Philip, impatiently. "It seems to

me we can never give up longing and wishing while we are thoroughly

alive. There are certain things we feel to be beautiful and good, and

we \_must\_ hunger after them. How can we ever be satisfied without them

until our feelings are deadened? I delight in fine pictures; I long to

be able to paint such. I strive and strive, and can't produce what I

want. That is pain to me, and always \_will\_ be pain, until my

faculties lose their keenness, like aged eyes. Then there are many

other things I long for,"--here Philip hesitated a little, and then

said,--"things that other men have, and that will always be denied me.

My life will have nothing great or beautiful in it; I would rather not

have lived."

"Oh, Philip," said Maggie, "I wish you didn't feel so." But her heart

began to beat with something of Philip's discontent.

"Well, then," said he, turning quickly round and fixing his gray eyes

entreatingly on her face, "I should be contented to live, if you would

let me see you sometimes." Then, checked by a fear which her face

suggested, he looked away again and said more calmly, "I have no

friend to whom I can tell everything, no one who cares enough about

me; and if I could only see you now and then, and you would let me

talk to you a little, and show me that you cared for me, and that we

may always be friends in heart, and help each other, then I might come

to be glad of life."

"But how can I see you, Philip?" said Maggie, falteringly. (Could she

really do him good? It would be very hard to say "good-by" this day,

and not speak to him again. Here was a new interest to vary the days;

it was so much easier to renounce the interest before it came.)

"If you would let me see you here sometimes,--walk with you here,--I

would be contented if it were only once or twice in a month. \_That\_

could injure no one's happiness, and it would sweeten my life.

Besides," Philip went on, with all the inventive astuteness of love at

one-and-twenty, "if there is any enmity between those who belong to

us, we ought all the more to try and quench it by our friendship; I

mean, that by our influence on both sides we might bring about a

healing of the wounds that have been made in the past, if I could know

everything about them. And I don't believe there is any enmity in my

own father's mind; I think he has proved the contrary."

Maggie shook her head slowly, and was silent, under conflicting

thoughts. It seemed to her inclination, that to see Philip now and

then, and keep up the bond of friendship with him, was something not

only innocent, but good; perhaps she might really help him to find

contentment as she had found it. The voice that said this made sweet

music to Maggie; but athwart it there came an urgent, monotonous

warning from another voice which she had been learning to obey,--the

warning that such interviews implied secrecy; implied doing something

she would dread to be discovered in, something that, if discovered,

must cause anger and pain; and that the admission of anything so near

doubleness would act as a spiritual blight. Yet the music would swell

out again, like chimes borne onward by a recurrent breeze, persuading

her that the wrong lay all in the faults and weaknesses of others, and

that there was such a thing as futile sacrifice for one to the injury

of another. It was very cruel for Philip that he should be shrunk

from, because of an unjustifiable vindictiveness toward his

father,--poor Philip, whom some people would shrink from only because

he was deformed. The idea that he might become her lover or that her

meeting him could cause disapproval in that light, had not occurred to

her; and Philip saw the absence of this idea clearly enough, saw it

with a certain pang, although it made her consent to his request the

less unlikely. There was bitterness to him in the perception that

Maggie was almost as frank and unconstrained toward him as when she

was a child.

"I can't say either yes or no," she said at last, turning round and

walking toward the way she come; "I must wait, lest I should decide

wrongly. I must seek for guidance."

"May I come again, then, to-morrow, or the next day, or next week?"

"I think I had better write," said Maggie, faltering again. "I have to

go to St. Ogg's sometimes, and I can put the letter in the post."

"Oh no," said Philip eagerly; "that would not be so well. My father

might see the letter--and--he has not any enmity, I believe, but he

views things differently from me; he thinks a great deal about wealth

and position. Pray let me come here once more. \_Tell\_ me when it shall

be; or if you can't tell me, I will come as often as I can till I do

see you."

"I think it must be so, then," said Maggie, "for I can't be quite

certain of coming here any particular evening."

Maggie felt a great relief in adjourning the decision. She was free

now to enjoy the minutes of companionship; she almost thought she

might linger a little; the next time they met she should have to pain

Philip by telling him her determination.

"I can't help thinking," she said, looking smilingly at him, after a

few moments of silence, "how strange it is that we should have met and

talked to each other, just as if it had been only yesterday when we

parted at Lorton. And yet we must both be very much altered in those

five years,--I think it is five years. How was it you seemed to have a

sort of feeling that I was the same Maggie? I was not quite so sure

that you would be the same; I know you are so clever, and you must

have seen and learnt so much to fill your mind; I was not quite sure

you would care about me now."

"I have never had any doubt that you would be the same, whenever I

migh see you," said Philip,--"I mean, the same in everything that made

me like you better than any one else. I don't want to explain that; I

don't think any of the strongest effects our natures are susceptible

of can ever be explained. We can neither detect the process by which

they are arrived at, nor the mode in which they act on us. The

greatest of painters only once painted a mysteriously divine child; he

couldn't have told how he did it, and we can't tell why we feel it to

be divine. I think there are stores laid up in our human nature that

our understandings can make no complete inventory of. Certain strains

of music affect me so strangely; I can never hear them without their

changing my whole attitude of mind for a time, and if the effect would

last, I might be capable of heroisms."

"Ah! I know what you mean about music; \_I\_ feel so," said Maggie,

clasping her hands with her old impetuosity. "At least," she added, in

a saddened tone, "I used to feel so when I had any music; I never have

any now except the organ at church."

"And you long for it, Maggie?" said Philip, looking at her with

affectionate pity. "Ah, you can have very little that is beautiful in

your life. Have you many books? You were so fond of them when you were

a little girl."

They were come back to the hollow, round which the dog-roses grew, and

they both paused under the charm of the faÃ«ry evening light, reflected

from the pale pink clusters.

"No, I have given up books," said Maggie, quietly, "except a very,

very few."

Philip had already taken from his pocket a small volume, and was

looking at the back as he said:

"Ah, this is the second volume, I see, else you might have liked to

take it home with you. I put it in my pocket because I am studying a

scene for a picture."

Maggie had looked at the back too, and saw the title; it revived an

old impression with overmastering force.

"'The Pirate,'" she said, taking the book from Philip's hands. "Oh, I

began that once; I read to where Minna is walking with Cleveland, and

I could never get to read the rest. I went on with it in my own head,

and I made several endings; but they were all unhappy. I could never

make a happy ending out of that beginning. Poor Minna! I wonder what

is the real end. For a long while I couldn't get my mind away from the

Shetland Isles,--I used to feel the wind blowing on me from the rough

sea."

Maggie spoke rapidly, with glistening eyes.

"Take that volume home with you, Maggie," said Philip, watching her

with delight. "I don't want it now. I shall make a picture of you

instead,--you, among the Scotch firs and the slanting shadows."

Maggie had not heard a word he had said; she was absorbed in a page at

which she had opened. But suddenly she closed the book, and gave it

back to Philip, shaking her head with a backward movement, as if to

say "avaunt" to floating visions.

"Do keep it, Maggie," said Philip, entreatingly; "it will give you

pleasure."

"No, thank you," said Maggie, putting it aside with her hand and

walking on. "It would make me in love with this world again, as I used

to be; it would make me long to see and know many things; it would

make me long for a full life."

"But you will not always be shut up in your present lot; why should

you starve your mind in that way? It is narrow asceticism; I don't

like to see you persisting in it, Maggie. Poetry and art and knowledge

are sacred and pure."

"But not for me, not for me," said Maggie, walking more hurriedly;

"because I should want too much. I must wait; this life will not last

long."

"Don't hurry away from me without saying 'good-by,' Maggie," said

Philip, as they reached the group of Scotch firs, and she continued

still to walk along without speaking. "I must not go any farther, I

think, must I?"

"Oh no, I forgot; good-by," said Maggie, pausing, and putting out her

hand to him. The action brought her feeling back in a strong current

to Philip; and after they had stood looking at each other in silence

for a few moments, with their hands clasped, she said, withdrawing her

hand:

"I'm very grateful to you for thinking of me all those years. It is

very sweet to have people love us. What a wonderful, beautiful thing

it seems that God should have made your heart so that you could care

about a queer little girl whom you only knew for a few weeks! I

remember saying to you that I thought you cared for me more than Tom

did."

"Ah, Maggie," said Philip, almost fretfully, "you would never love me

so well as you love your brother."

"Perhaps not," said Maggie, simply; "but then, you know, the first

thing I ever remember in my life is standing with Tom by the side of

the Floss, while he held my hand; everything before that is dark to

me. But I shall never forget you, though we must keep apart."

"Don't say so, Maggie," said Philip. "If I kept that little girl in my

mind for five years, didn't I earn some part in her? She ought not to

take herself quite away from me."

"Not if I were free," said Maggie; "but I am not, I must submit." She

hesitated a moment, and then added, "And I wanted to say to you, that

you had better not take more notice of my brother than just bowing to

him. He once told me not to speak to you again, and he doesn't change

his mind--Oh dear, the sun is set. I am too long away. Good-by." She

gave him her hand once more.

"I shall come here as often as I can till I see you again, Maggie.

Have some feeling for \_me\_ as well as for others."

"Yes, yes, I have," said Maggie, hurrying away, and quickly

disappearing behind the last fir-tree; though Philip's gaze after her

remained immovable for minutes as if he saw her still.

Maggie went home, with an inward conflict already begun; Philip went

home to do nothing but remember and hope. You can hardly help blaming

him severely. He was four or five years older than Maggie, and had a

full consciousness of his feeling toward her to aid him in foreseeing

the character his contemplated interviews with her would bear in the

opinion of a third person. But you must not suppose that he was

capable of a gross selfishness, or that he could have been satisfied

without persuading himself that he was seeking to infuse some

happiness into Maggie's life,--seeking this even more than any direct

ends for himself. He could give her sympathy; he could give her help.

There was not the slightest promise of love toward him in her manner;

it was nothing more than the sweet girlish tenderness she had shown

him when she was twelve. Perhaps she would never love him; perhaps no

woman ever \_could\_ love him. Well, then, he would endure that; he

should at least have the happiness of seeing her, of feeling some

nearness to her. And he clutched passionately the possibility that she

\_might\_ love him; perhaps the feeling would grow, if she could come to

associate him with that watchful tenderness which her nature would be

so keenly alive to. If any woman could love him, surely Maggie was

that woman; there was such wealth of love in her, and there was no one

to claim it all. Then, the pity of it, that a mind like hers should be

withering in its very youth, like a young forest-tree, for want of the

light and space it was formed to flourish in! Could he not hinder

that, by persuading her out of her system of privation? He would be

her guardian angel; he would do anything, bear anything, for her

sake--except not seeing her.

Chapter II

Aunt Glegg Learns the Breadth of Bob's Thumb

While Maggie's life-struggles had lain almost entirely within her own

soul, one shadowy army fighting another, and the slain shadows forever

rising again, Tom was engaged in a dustier, noisier warfare, grappling

with more substantial obstacles, and gaining more definite conquests.

So it has been since the days of Hecuba, and of Hector, Tamer of

horses; inside the gates, the women with streaming hair and uplifted

hands offering prayers, watching the world's combat from afar, filling

their long, empty days with memories and fears; outside, the men, in

fierce struggle with things divine and human, quenching memory in the

stronger light of purpose, losing the sense of dread and even of

wounds in the hurrying ardor of action.

From what you have seen of Tom, I think he is not a youth of whom you

would prophesy failure in anything he had thoroughly wished; the

wagers are likely to be on his side, notwithstanding his small success

in the classics. For Tom had never desired success in this field of

enterprise; and for getting a fine flourishing growth of stupidity

there is nothing like pouring out on a mind a good amount of subjects

in which it feels no interest. But now Tom's strong will bound

together his integrity, his pride, his family regrets, and his

personal ambition, and made them one force, concentrating his efforts

and surmounting discouragements. His uncle Deane, who watched him

closely, soon began to conceive hopes of him, and to be rather proud

that he had brought into the employment of the firm a nephew who

appeared to be made of such good commercial stuff. The real kindness

of placing him in the warehouse first was soon evident to Tom, in the

hints his uncle began to throw out, that after a time he might perhaps

be trusted to travel at certain seasons, and buy in for the firm

various vulgar commodities with which I need not shock refined ears in

this place; and it was doubtless with a view to this result that Mr.

Deane, when he expected to take his wine alone, would tell Tom to step

in and sit with him an hour, and would pass that hour in much

lecturing and catechising concerning articles of export and import,

with an occasional excursus of more indirect utility on the relative

advantages to the merchants of St. Ogg's of having goods brought in

their own and in foreign bottoms,--a subject on which Mr. Deane, as a

ship-owner, naturally threw off a few sparks when he got warmed with

talk and wine.

Already, in the second year, Tom's salary was raised; but all, except

the price of his dinner and clothes, went home into the tin box; and

he shunned comradeship, lest it should lead him into expenses in spite

of himself. Not that Tom was moulded on the spoony type of the

Industrious Apprentice; he had a very strong appetite for

pleasure,--would have liked to be a Tamer of horses and to make a

distinguished figure in all neighboring eyes, dispensing treats and

benefits to others with well-judged liberality, and being pronounced

one of the finest young fellows of those parts; nay, he determined to

achieve these things sooner or later; but his practical shrewdness

told him that the means no such achievements could only lie for him in

present abstinence and self-denial; there were certain milestones to

be passed, and one of the first was the payment of his father's debts.

Having made up his mind on that point, he strode along without

swerving, contracting some rather saturnine sternness, as a young man

is likely to do who has a premature call upon him for self-reliance.

Tom felt intensely that common cause with his father which springs

from family pride, and was bent on being irreproachable as a son; but

his growing experience caused him to pass much silent criticism on the

rashness and imprudence of his father's past conduct; their

dispositions were not in sympathy, and Tom's face showed little

radiance during his few home hours. Maggie had an awe of him, against

which she struggled as something unfair to her consciousness of wider

thoughts and deeper motives; but it was of no use to struggle. A

character at unity with itself--that performs what it intends, subdues

every counteracting impulse, and has no visions beyond the distinctly

possible--is strong by its very negations.

You may imagine that Tom's more and more obvious unlikeness to his

father was well fitted to conciliate the maternal aunts and uncles;

and Mr. Deane's favorable reports and predictions to Mr. Glegg

concerning Tom's qualifications for business began to be discussed

amongst them with various acceptance. He was likely, it appeared, to

do the family credit without causing it any expense and trouble. Mrs.

Pullet had always thought it strange if Tom's excellent complexion, so

entirely that of the Dodsons, did not argue a certainty that he would

turn out well; his juvenile errors of running down the peacock, and

general disrespect to his aunts, only indicating a tinge of Tulliver

blood which he had doubtless outgrown. Mr. Glegg, who had contracted a

cautious liking for Tom ever since his spirited and sensible behavior

when the execution was in the house, was now warming into a resolution

to further his prospects actively,--some time, when an opportunity

offered of doing so in a prudent manner, without ultimate loss; but

Mrs. Glegg observed that she was not given to speak without book, as

some people were; that those who said least were most likely to find

their words made good; and that when the right moment came, it would

be seen who could do something better than talk. Uncle Pullet, after

silent meditation for a period of several lozenges, came distinctly to

the conclusion, that when a young man was likely to do well, it was

better not to meddle with him.

Tom, meanwhile, had shown no disposition to rely on any one but

himself, though, with a natural sensitiveness toward all indications

of favorable opinion, he was glad to see his uncle Glegg look in on

him sometimes in a friendly way during business hours, and glad to be

invited to dine at his house, though he usually preferred declining on

the ground that he was not sure of being punctual. But about a year

ago, something had occurred which induced Tom to test his uncle

Glegg's friendly disposition.

Bob Jakin, who rarely returned from one of his rounds without seeing

Tom and Maggie, awaited him on the bridge as he was coming home from

St. Ogg's one evening, that they might have a little private talk. He

took the liberty of asking if Mr. Tom had ever thought of making money

by trading a bit on his own account. Trading, how? Tom wished to know.

Why, by sending out a bit of a cargo to foreign ports; because Bob had

a particular friend who had offered to do a little business for him in

that way in Laceham goods, and would be glad to serve Mr. Tom on the

same footing. Tom was interested at once, and begged for full

explanation, wondering he had not thought of this plan before.

He was so well pleased with the prospect of a speculation that might

change the slow process of addition into multiplication, that he at

once determined to mention the matter to his father, and get his

consent to appropriate some of the savings in the tin box to the

purchase of a small cargo. He would rather not have consulted his

father, but he had just paid his last quarter's money into the tin

box, and there was no other resource. All the savings were there; for

Mr. Tulliver would not consent to put the money out at interest lest

he should lose it. Since he had speculated in the purchase of some

corn, and had lost by it, he could not be easy without keeping the

money under his eye.

Tom approached the subject carefully, as he was seated on the hearth

with his father that evening, and Mr. Tulliver listened, leaning

forward in his arm-chair and looking up in Tom's face with a sceptical

glance. His first impulse was to give a positive refusal, but he was

in some awe of Tom's wishes, and since he had the sense of being an

"unlucky" father, he had lost some of his old peremptoriness and

determination to be master. He took the key of the bureau from his

pocket, got out the key of the large chest, and fetched down the tin

box,--slowly, as if he were trying to defer the moment of a painful

parting. Then he seated himself against the table, and opened the box

with that little padlock-key which he fingered in his waistcoat pocket

in all vacant moments. There they were, the dingy bank-notes and the

bright sovereigns, and he counted them out on the table--only a

hundred and sixteen pounds in two years, after all the pinching.

"How much do you want, then?" he said, speaking as if the words burnt

his lips.

"Suppose I begin with the thirty-six pounds, father?" said Tom.

Mr. Tulliver separated this sum from the rest, and keeping his hand

over it, said:

"It's as much as I can save out o' my pay in a year."

"Yes, father; it is such slow work, saving out of the little money we

get. And in this way we might double our savings."

"Ay, my lad," said the father, keeping his hand on the money, "but you

might lose it,--you might lose a year o' my life,--and I haven't got

many."

Tom was silent.

"And you know I wouldn't pay a dividend with the first hundred,

because I wanted to see it all in a lump,--and when I see it, I'm sure

on't. If you trust to luck, it's sure to be against me. It's Old

Harry's got the luck in his hands; and if I lose one year, I shall

never pick it up again; death 'ull o'ertake me."

Mr. Tulliver's voice trembled, and Tom was silent for a few minutes

before he said:

"I'll give it up, father, since you object to it so strongly."

But, unwilling to abandon the scheme altogether, he determined to ask

his uncle Glegg to venture twenty pounds, on condition of receiving

five per cent. of the profits. That was really a very small thing to

ask. So when Bob called the next day at the wharf to know the

decision, Tom proposed that they should go together to his uncle

Glegg's to open the business; for his diffident pride clung to him,

and made him feel that Bobs' tongue would relieve him from some

embarrassment.

Mr. Glegg, at the pleasant hour of four in the afternoon of a hot

August day, was naturally counting his wall-fruit to assure himself

that the sum total had not varied since yesterday. To him entered Tom,

in what appeared to Mr. Glegg very questionable companionship,--that

of a man with a pack on his back,--for Bob was equipped for a new

journey,--and of a huge brindled bull-terrier, who walked with a slow,

swaying movement from side to side, and glanced from under his

eye-lids with a surly indifference which might after all be a cover to

the most offensive designs.

Mr. Glegg's spectacles, which had been assisting him in counting the

fruit, made these suspicious details alarmingly evident to him.

"Heigh! heigh! keep that dog back, will you?" he shouted, snatching up

a stake and holding it before him as a shield when the visitors were

within three yards of him.

"Get out wi' you, Mumps," said Bob, with a kick. "He's as quiet as a

lamb, sir,"--an observation which Mumps corroborated by a low growl as

he retreated behind his master's legs.

"Why, what ever does this mean, Tom?" said Mr. Glegg. "Have you

brought information about the scoundrels as cut my trees?" If Bob came

in the character of "information," Mr. Glegg saw reasons for

tolerating some irregularity.

"No, sir," said Tom; "I came to speak to you about a little matter of

business of my own."

"Ay--well; but what has this dog got to do with it?" said the old

gentleman, getting mild again.

"It's my dog, sir," said the ready Bob. "An' it's me as put Mr. Tom up

to the bit o' business; for Mr. Tom's been a friend o' mine iver since

I was a little chap; fust thing iver I did was frightenin' the birds

for th' old master. An' if a bit o' luck turns up, I'm allays thinkin'

if I can let Mr. Tom have a pull at it. An' it's a downright roarin'

shame, as when he's got the chance o' making a bit o' money wi'

sending goods out,--ten or twelve per zent clear, when freight an'

commission's paid,--as he shouldn't lay hold o' the chance for want o'

money. An' when there's the Laceham goods,--lors! they're made o'

purpose for folks as want to send out a little carguy; light, an' take

up no room,--you may pack twenty pound so as you can't see the

passill; an' they're manifacturs as please fools, so I reckon they

aren't like to want a market. An' I'd go to Laceham an' buy in the

goods for Mr. Tom along wi' my own. An' there's the shupercargo o' the

bit of a vessel as is goin' to take 'em out. I know him partic'lar;

he's a solid man, an' got a family i' the town here. Salt, his name

is,--an' a briny chap he is too,--an' if you don't believe me, I can

take you to him."

Uncle Glegg stood open-mouthed with astonishment at this unembarrassed

loquacity, with which his understanding could hardly keep pace. He

looked at Bob, first over his spectacles, then through them, then over

them again; while Tom, doubtful of his uncle's impression, began to

wish he had not brought this singular Aaron, or mouthpiece. Bob's talk

appeared less seemly, now some one besides himself was listening to

it.

"You seem to be a knowing fellow," said Mr. Glegg, at last.

"Ay, sir, you say true," returned Bob, nodding his head aside; "I

think my head's all alive inside like an old cheese, for I'm so full

o' plans, one knocks another over. If I hadn't Mumps to talk to, I

should get top-heavy an' tumble in a fit. I suppose it's because I

niver went to school much. That's what I jaw my old mother for. I

says, 'You should ha' sent me to school a bit more,' I says, 'an' then

I could ha' read i' the books like fun, an' kep' my head cool an'

empty.' Lors, she's fine an' comfor'ble now, my old mother is; she

ates her baked meat an' taters as often as she likes. For I'm gettin'

so full o' money, I must hev a wife to spend it for me. But it's

botherin,' a wife is,--and Mumps mightn't like her."

Uncle Glegg, who regarded himself as a jocose man since he had retired

from business, was beginning to find Bob amusing, but he had still a

disapproving observation to make, which kept his face serious.

"Ah," he said, "I should think you're at a loss for ways o' spending

your money, else you wouldn't keep that big dog, to eat as much as two

Christians. It's shameful--shameful!" But he spoke more in sorrow than

in anger, and quickly added:

"But, come now, let's hear more about this business, Tom. I suppose

you want a little sum to make a venture with. But where's all your own

money? You don't spend it all--eh?"

"No, sir," said Tom, coloring; "but my father is unwilling to risk it,

and I don't like to press him. If I could get twenty or thirty pounds

to begin with, I could pay five per cent for it, and then I could

gradually make a little capital of my own, and do without a loan."

"Ay--ay," said Mr. Glegg, in an approving tone; "that's not a bad

notion, and I won't say as I wouldn't be your man. But it 'ull be as

well for me to see this Salt, as you talk on. And then--here's this

friend o' yours offers to buy the goods for you. Perhaps you've got

somebody to stand surety for you if the money's put into your hands?"

added the cautious old gentleman, looking over his spectacles at Bob.

"I don't think that's necessary, uncle," said Tom. "At least, I mean

it would not be necessary for me, because I know Bob well; but perhaps

it would be right for you to have some security."

"You get your percentage out o' the purchase, I suppose?" said Mr.

Glegg, looking at Bob.

"No, sir," said Bob, rather indignantly; "I didn't offer to get a

apple for Mr. Tom, o' purpose to hev a bite out of it myself. When I

play folks tricks, there'll be more fun in 'em nor that."

"Well, but it's nothing but right you should have a small percentage,"

said Mr. Glegg. "I've no opinion o' transactions where folks do things

for nothing. It allays looks bad."

"Well, then," said Bob, whose keenness saw at once what was implied,

"I'll tell you what I get by't, an' it's money in my pocket in the

end,--I make myself look big, wi' makin' a bigger purchase. That's

what I'm thinking on. Lors! I'm a 'cute chap,--I am."

"Mr. Glegg, Mr. Glegg!" said a severe voice from the open parlor

window, "pray are you coming in to tea, or are you going to stand

talking with packmen till you get murdered in the open daylight?"

"Murdered?" said Mr. Glegg; "what's the woman talking of? Here's your

nephey Tom come about a bit o' business."

"Murdered,--yes,--it isn't many 'sizes ago since a packman murdered a

young woman in a lone place, and stole her thimble, and threw her body

into a ditch."

"Nay, nay," said Mr. Glegg, soothingly, "you're thinking o' the man

wi' no legs, as drove a dog-cart."

"Well, it's the same thing, Mr. Glegg, only you're fond o'

contradicting what I say; and if my nephey's come about business, it

'ud be more fitting if you'd bring him into the house, and let his

aunt know about it, instead o' whispering in corners, in that

plotting, underminding way."

"Well, well," said Mr. Glegg, "we'll come in now."

"You needn't stay here," said the lady to Bob, in a loud voice,

adapted to the moral, not the physical, distance between them. "We

don't want anything. I don't deal wi' packmen. Mind you shut the gate

after you."

"Stop a bit; not so fast," said Mr. Glegg; "I haven't done with this

young man yet. Come in, Tom; come in," he added, stepping in at the

French window.

"Mr. Glegg," said Mrs. G., in a fatal tone, "if you're going to let

that man and his dog in on my carpet, before my very face, be so good

as to let me know. A wife's got a right to ask that, I hope."

"Don't you be uneasy, mum," said Bob, touching his cap. He saw at once

that Mrs. Glegg was a bit of game worth running down, and longed to be

at the sport; "we'll stay out upo' the gravel here,--Mumps and me

will. Mumps knows his company,--he does. I might hish at him by th'

hour together, before he'd fly at a real gentlewoman like you. It's

wonderful how he knows which is the good-looking ladies; and's

partic'lar fond of 'em when they've good shapes. Lors!" added Bob,

laying down his pack on the gravel, "it's a thousand pities such a

lady as you shouldn't deal with a packman, i' stead o' goin' into

these newfangled shops, where there's half-a-dozen fine gents wi'

their chins propped up wi' a stiff stock, a-looking like bottles wi'

ornamental stoppers, an' all got to get their dinner out of a bit o'

calico; it stan's to reason you must pay three times the price you pay

a packman, as is the nat'ral way o' gettin' goods,--an' pays no rent,

an' isn't forced to throttle himself till the lies are squeezed out on

him, whether he will or no. But lors! mum, you know what it is better

nor I do,--\_you\_ can see through them shopmen, I'll be bound."

"Yes, I reckon I can, and through the packmen too," observed Mrs.

Glegg, intending to imply that Bob's flattery had produced no effect

on \_her;\_ while her husband, standing behind her with his hands in his

pockets and legs apart, winked and smiled with conjugal delight at the

probability of his wife's being circumvented.

"Ay, to be sure, mum," said Bob. "Why, you must ha' dealt wi' no end

o' packmen when you war a young lass--before the master here had the

luck to set eyes on you. I know where you lived, I do,--seen th' house

many a time,--close upon Squire Darleigh's,--a stone house wi'

steps----"

"Ah, that it had," said Mrs. Glegg, pouring out the tea. "You know

something o' my family, then? Are you akin to that packman with a

squint in his eye, as used to bring th' Irish linen?"

"Look you there now!" said Bob, evasively. "Didn't I know as you'd

remember the best bargains you've made in your life was made wi'

packmen? Why, you see even a squintin' packman's better nor a shopman

as can see straight. Lors! if I'd had the luck to call at the stone

house wi' my pack, as lies here,"--stooping and thumping the bundle

emphatically with his fist,--"an' th' handsome young lasses all

stannin' out on the stone steps, it ud' ha' been summat like openin' a

pack, that would. It's on'y the poor houses now as a packman calls on,

if it isn't for the sake o' the sarvant-maids. They're paltry times,

these are. Why, mum, look at the printed cottons now, an' what they

was when you wore 'em,--why, you wouldn't put such a thing on now, I

can see. It must be first-rate quality, the manifactur as you'd

buy,--summat as 'ud wear as well as your own faitures."

"Yes, better quality nor any you're like to carry; you've got nothing

first-rate but brazenness, I'll be bound," said Mrs. Glegg, with a

triumphant sense of her insurmountable sagacity. "Mr. Glegg, are you

going ever to sit down to your tea? Tom, there's a cup for you."

"You speak true there, mum," said Bob. "My pack isn't for ladies like

you. The time's gone by for that. Bargains picked up dirt cheap! A bit

o' damage here an' there, as can be cut out, or else niver seen i' the

wearin', but not fit to offer to rich folks as can pay for the look o'

things as nobody sees. I'm not the man as 'ud offer t' open my pack to

\_you\_, mum; no, no; I'm a imperent chap, as you say,--these times

makes folks imperent,--but I'm not up to the mark o' that."

"Why, what goods do you carry in your pack?" said Mrs. Glegg.

"Fine-colored things, I suppose,--shawls an' that?"

"All sorts, mum, all sorts," said Bob,--thumping his bundle; "but let

us say no more about that, if \_you\_ please. I'm here upo' Mr. Tom's

business, an' I'm not the man to take up the time wi' my own."

"And pray, what \_is\_ this business as is to be kept from me?" said

Mrs. Glegg, who, solicited by a double curiosity, was obliged to let

the one-half wait.

"A little plan o' nephey Tom's here," said good-natured Mr. Glegg;

"and not altogether a bad 'un, I think. A little plan for making

money; that's the right sort o' plan for young folks as have got their

fortin to make, eh, Jane?"

"But I hope it isn't a plan where he expects iverything to be done for

him by his friends; that's what the young folks think of mostly

nowadays. And pray, what has this packman got to do wi' what goes on

in our family? Can't you speak for yourself, Tom, and let your aunt

know things, as a nephey should?"

"This is Bob Jakin, aunt," said Tom, bridling the irritation that aunt

Glegg's voice always produced. "I've known him ever since we were

little boys. He's a very good fellow, and always ready to do me a

kindness. And he has had some experience in sending goods out,--a

small part of a cargo as a private speculation; and he thinks if I

could begin to do a little in the same way, I might make some money. A

large interest is got in that way."

"Large int'rest?" said aunt Glegg, with eagerness; "and what do you

call large int'rest?"

"Ten or twelve per cent, Bob says, after expenses are paid."

"Then why wasn't I let to know o' such things before, Mr. Glegg?" said

Mrs. Glegg, turning to her husband, with a deep grating tone of

reproach. "Haven't you allays told me as there was no getting more nor

five per cent?"

"Pooh, pooh, nonsense, my good woman," said Mr. Glegg. "You couldn't

go into trade, could you? You can't get more than five per cent with

security."

"But I can turn a bit o' money for you, an' welcome, mum," said Bob,

"if you'd like to risk it,--not as there's any risk to speak on. But

if you'd a mind to lend a bit o' money to Mr. Tom, he'd pay you six or

seven per zent, an' get a trifle for himself as well; an' a

good-natur'd lady like you 'ud like the feel o' the money better if

your nephey took part on it."

"What do you say, Mrs. G.?" said Mr. Glegg. "I've a notion, when I've

made a bit more inquiry, as I shall perhaps start Tom here with a bit

of a nest-egg,--he'll pay me int'rest, you know,--an' if you've got

some little sums lyin' idle twisted up in a stockin' toe, or that----"

"Mr. Glegg, it's beyond iverything! You'll go and give information to

the tramps next, as they may come and rob me."

"Well, well, as I was sayin', if you like to join me wi' twenty

pounds, you can--I'll make it fifty. That'll be a pretty good

nest-egg, eh, Tom?"

"You're not counting on me, Mr. Glegg, I hope," said his wife. "You

could do fine things wi' my money, I don't doubt."

"Very well," said Mr. Glegg, rather snappishly, "then we'll do without

you. I shall go with you to see this Salt," he added, turning to Bob.

"And now, I suppose, you'll go all the other way, Mr. Glegg," said

Mrs. G., "and want to shut me out o' my own nephey's business. I never

said I wouldn't put money into it,--I don't say as it shall be twenty

pounds, though you're so ready to say it for me,--but he'll see some

day as his aunt's in the right not to risk the money she's saved for

him till it's proved as it won't be lost."

"Ay, that's a pleasant sort o'risk, that is," said Mr. Glegg,

indiscreetly winking at Tom, who couldn't avoid smiling. But Bob

stemmed the injured lady's outburst.

"Ay, mum," he said admiringly, "you know what's what--you do. An' it's

nothing but fair. \_You\_ see how the first bit of a job answers, an'

then you'll come down handsome. Lors, it's a fine thing to hev good

kin. I got my bit of a nest-egg, as the master calls it, all by my own

sharpness,--ten suvreigns it was,--wi' dousing the fire at Torry's

mill, an' it's growed an' growed by a bit an' a bit, till I'n got a

matter o' thirty pound to lay out, besides makin' my mother

comfor'ble. I should get more, on'y I'm such a soft wi' the women,--I

can't help lettin' 'em hev such good bargains. There's this bundle,

now," thumping it lustily, "any other chap 'ud make a pretty penny out

on it. But me!--lors, I shall sell 'em for pretty near what I paid for

'em."

"Have you got a bit of good net, now?" said Mrs. Glegg, in a

patronizing tone, moving from the tea-table, and folding her napkin.

"Eh, mum, not what you'd think it worth your while to look at. I'd

scorn to show it you. It 'ud be an insult to you."

"But let me see," said Mrs. Glegg, still patronizing. "If they're

damaged goods, they're like enough to be a bit the better quality."

"No, mum, I know my place," said Bob, lifting up his pack and

shouldering it. "I'm not going t' expose the lowness o' my trade to a

lady like you. Packs is come down i' the world; it 'ud cut you to th'

heart to see the difference. I'm at your sarvice, sir, when you've a

mind to go and see Salt."

"All in good time," said Mr. Glegg, really unwilling to cut short the

dialogue. "Are you wanted at the wharf, Tom?"

"No, sir; I left Stowe in my place."

"Come, put down your pack, and let me see," said Mrs. Glegg, drawing a

chair to the window and seating herself with much dignity.

"Don't you ask it, mum," said Bob, entreatingly.

"Make no more words," said Mrs. Glegg, severely, "but do as I tell

you."

"Eh mum, I'm loth, that I am," said Bob, slowly depositing his pack on

the step, and beginning to untie it with unwilling fingers. "But what

you order shall be done" (much fumbling in pauses between the

sentences). "It's not as you'll buy a single thing on me,--I'd be

sorry for you to do it,--for think o' them poor women up i' the

villages there, as niver stir a hundred yards from home,--it 'ud be a

pity for anybody to buy up their bargains. Lors, it's as good as a

junketing to 'em when they see me wi' my pack, an' I shall niver pick

up such bargains for 'em again. Least ways, I've no time now, for I'm

off to Laceham. See here now," Bob went on, becoming rapid again, and

holding up a scarlet woollen Kerchief with an embroidered wreath in

the corner; "here's a thing to make a lass's mouth water, an' on'y two

shillin'--an' why? Why, 'cause there's a bit of a moth-hole 'i this

plain end. Lors, I think the moths an' the mildew was sent by

Providence o' purpose to cheapen the goods a bit for the good-lookin'

women as han't got much money. If it hadn't been for the moths, now,

every hankicher on 'em 'ud ha' gone to the rich, handsome ladies, like

you, mum, at five shillin' apiece,--not a farthin' less; but what does

the moth do? Why, it nibbles off three shillin' o' the price i' no

time; an' then a packman like me can carry 't to the poor lasses as

live under the dark thack, to make a bit of a blaze for 'em. Lors,

it's as good as a fire, to look at such a hankicher!"

Bob held it at a distance for admiration, but Mrs. Glegg said sharply:

"Yes, but nobody wants a fire this time o' year. Put these colored

things by; let me look at your nets, if you've got 'em."

"Eh, mum, I told you how it 'ud be," said Bob, flinging aside the

colored things with an air of desperation. "I knowed it ud' turn

again' you to look at such paltry articles as I carry. Here's a piece

o' figured muslin now, what's the use o' you lookin' at it? You might

as well look at poor folks's victual, mum; it 'ud on'y take away your

appetite. There's a yard i' the middle on't as the pattern's all

missed,--lors, why, it's a muslin as the Princess Victoree might ha'

wore; but," added Bob, flinging it behind him on to the turf, as if to

save Mrs. Glegg's eyes, "it'll be bought up by the huckster's wife at

Fibb's End,--that's where \_it'll\_ go--ten shillin' for the whole

lot--ten yards, countin' the damaged un--five-an'-twenty shillin' 'ud

ha' been the price, not a penny less. But I'll say no more, mum; it's

nothing to you, a piece o' muslin like that; you can afford to pay

three times the money for a thing as isn't half so good. It's nets

\_you\_ talked on; well, I've got a piece as 'ull serve you to make fun

on----"

"Bring me that muslin," said Mrs. Glegg. "It's a buff; I'm partial to

buff."

"Eh, but a \_damaged\_ thing," said Bob, in a tone of deprecating

disgust. "You'd do nothing with it, mum, you'd give it to the cook, I

know you would, an' it 'ud be a pity,--she'd look too much like a lady

in it; it's unbecoming for servants."

"Fetch it, and let me see you measure it," said Mrs. Glegg,

authoritatively.

Bob obeyed with ostentatious reluctance.

"See what there is over measure!" he said, holding forth the extra

half-yard, while Mrs. Glegg was busy examining the damaged yard, and

throwing her head back to see how far the fault would be lost on a

distant view.

"I'll give you six shilling for it," she said, throwing it down with

the air of a person who mentions an ultimatum.

"Didn't I tell you now, mum, as it 'ud hurt your feelings to look at

my pack? That damaged bit's turned your stomach now; I see it has,"

said Bob, wrapping the muslin up with the utmost quickness, and

apparently about to fasten up his pack. "You're used to seein' a

different sort o' article carried by packmen, when you lived at the

stone house. Packs is come down i' the world; I told you that; \_my\_

goods are for common folks. Mrs. Pepper 'ull give me ten shillin' for

that muslin, an' be sorry as I didn't ask her more. Such articles

answer i' the wearin',--they keep their color till the threads melt

away i' the wash-tub, an' that won't be while \_I'm\_ a young un."

"Well, seven shilling," said Mrs. Glegg.

"Put it out o' your mind, mum, now do," said Bob. "Here's a bit o'

net, then, for you to look at before I tie up my pack, just for you to

see what my trade's come to,--spotted and sprigged, you see, beautiful

but yallow,--'s been lyin' by an' got the wrong color. I could niver

ha' bought such net, if it hadn't been yallow. Lors, it's took me a

deal o' study to know the vally o' such articles; when I begun to

carry a pack, I was as ignirant as a pig; net or calico was all the

same to me. I thought them things the most vally as was the thickest.

I was took in dreadful, for I'm a straightforrard chap,--up to no

tricks, mum. I can only say my nose is my own, for if I went beyond, I

should lose myself pretty quick. An' I gev five-an'-eightpence for

that piece o' net,--if I was to tell y' anything else I should be

tellin' you fibs,--an' five-an'-eightpence I shall ask of it, not a

penny more, for it's a woman's article, an' I like to 'commodate the

women. Five-an'-eightpence for six yards,--as cheap as if it was only

the dirt on it as was paid for.'"

"I don't mind having three yards of it,'" said Mrs. Glegg.

"Why, there's but six altogether," said Bob. "No, mum, it isn't worth

your while; you can go to the shop to-morrow an' get the same pattern

ready whitened. It's on'y three times the money; what's that to a lady

like you?" He gave an emphatic tie to his bundle.

"Come, lay me out that muslin," said Mrs. Glegg. "Here's eight

shilling for it."

"You \_will\_ be jokin'," said Bob, looking up with a laughing face; "I

see'd you was a pleasant lady when I fust come to the winder."

"Well, put it me out," said Mrs. Glegg, peremptorily.

"But if I let you have it for ten shillin', mum, you'll be so good as

not tell nobody. I should be a laughin'-stock; the trade 'ud hoot me,

if they knowed it. I'm obliged to make believe as I ask more nor I do

for my goods, else they'd find out I was a flat. I'm glad you don't

insist upo' buyin' the net, for then I should ha' lost my two best

bargains for Mrs. Pepper o' Fibb's End, an' she's a rare customer."

"Let me look at the net again," said Mrs. Glegg, yearning after the

cheap spots and sprigs, now they were vanishing.

"Well, I can't deny \_you\_, mum," said Bob handing it out.

"Eh!, see what a pattern now! Real Laceham goods. Now, this is the

sort o' article I'm recommendin' Mr. Tom to send out. Lors, it's a

fine thing for anybody as has got a bit o' money; these Laceham goods

'ud make it breed like maggits. If I was a lady wi' a bit o'

money!--why, I know one as put thirty pounds into them goods,--a lady

wi' a cork leg, but as sharp,--you wouldn't catch \_her\_ runnin' her

head into a sack; \_she'd\_ see her way clear out o' anything afore

she'd be in a hurry to start. Well, she let out thirty pound to a

young man in the drapering line, and he laid it out i' Laceham goods,

an' a shupercargo o' my acquinetance (not Salt) took 'em out, an' she

got her eight per zent fust go off; an' now you can't hold her but she

must be sendin' out carguies wi' every ship, till she's gettin' as

rich as a Jew. Bucks her name is, she doesn't live i' this town. Now

then, mum, if you'll please to give me the net----"

"Here's fifteen shilling, then, for the two," said Mrs. Glegg. "But

it's a shameful price."

"Nay, mum, you'll niver say that when you're upo' your knees i' church

i' five years' time. I'm makin' you a present o' th' articles; I am,

indeed. That eightpence shaves off my profits as clean as a razor. Now

then, sir," continued Bob, shouldering his pack, "if you please, I'll

be glad to go and see about makin' Mr. Tom's fortin. Eh, I wish I'd

got another twenty pound to lay out \_my\_sen; I shouldn't stay to say

my Catechism afore I knowed what to do wi't."

"Stop a bit, Mr. Glegg," said the lady, as her husband took his hat,

"you never \_will\_ give me the chance o' speaking. You'll go away now,

and finish everything about this business, and come back and tell me

it's too late for me to speak. As if I wasn't my nephey's own aunt,

and the head o' the family on his mother's side! and laid by guineas,

all full weight, for him, as he'll know who to respect when I'm laid

in my coffin."

"Well, Mrs. G., say what you mean," said Mr. G., hastily.

"Well, then, I desire as nothing may be done without my knowing. I

don't say as I sha'n't venture twenty pounds, if you make out as

everything's right and safe. And if I do, Tom," concluded Mrs. Glegg,

turning impressively to her nephew, "I hope you'll allays bear it in

mind and be grateful for such an aunt. I mean you to pay me interest,

you know; I don't approve o' giving; we niver looked for that in \_my\_

family."

"Thank you, aunt," said Tom, rather proudly. "I prefer having the

money only lent to me."

"Very well; that's the Dodson sperrit," said Mrs. Glegg, rising to get

her knitting with the sense that any further remark after this would

be bathos.

Salt--that eminently "briny chap"--having been discovered in a cloud

of tobacco-smoke at the Anchor Tavern, Mr. Glegg commenced inquiries

which turned out satisfactorily enough to warrant the advance of the

"nest-egg," to which aunt Glegg contributed twenty pounds; and in this

modest beginning you see the ground of a fact which might otherwise

surprise you; namely, Tom's accumulation of a fund, unknown to his

father, that promised in no very long time to meet the more tardy

process of saving, and quite cover the deficit. When once his

attention had been turned to this source of gain, Tom determined to

make the most of it, and lost on opportunity of obtaining information

and extending his small enterprises. In not telling his father, he was

influenced by that strange mixture of opposite feelings which often

gives equal truth to those who blame an action and those who admire

it,--partly, it was that disinclination to confidence which is seen

between near kindred, that family repulsion which spoils the most

sacred relations of our lives; partly, it was the desire to surprise

his father with a great joy. He did not see that it would have been

better to soothe the interval with a new hope, and prevent the

delirium of a too sudden elation.

At the time of Maggie's first meeting with Philip, Tom had already

nearly a hundred and fifty pounds of his own capital; and while they

were walking by the evening light in the Red Deeps, he, by the same

evening light, was riding into Laceham, proud of being on his first

journey on behalf of Guest & Co., and revolving in his mind all the

chances that by the end of another year he should have doubled his

gains, lifted off the obloquy of debt from his father's name, and

perhaps--for he should be twenty-one--have got a new start for

himself, on a higher platform of employment. Did he not desire it? He

was quite sure that he did.

Chapter III

The Wavering Balance

I said that Maggie went home that evening from the Red Deeps with a

mental conflict already begun. You have seen clearly enough, in her

interview with Philip, what that conflict was. Here suddenly was an

opening in the rocky wall which shut in the narrow valley of

humiliation, where all her prospect was the remote, unfathomed sky;

and some of the memory-haunting earthly delights were no longer out of

her reach. She might have books, converse, affection; she might hear

tidings of the world from which her mind had not yet lost its sense of

exile; and it would be a kindness to Philip too, who was

pitiable,--clearly not happy. And perhaps here was an opportunity

indicated for making her mind more worthy of its highest service;

perhaps the noblest, completest devoutness could hardly exist without

some width of knowledge; \_must\_ she always live in this resigned

imprisonment? It was so blameless, so good a thing that there should

be friendship between her and Philip; the motives that forbade it were

so unreasonable, so unchristian! But the severe monotonous warning

came again and again,--that she was losing the simplicity and

clearness of her life by admitting a ground of concealment; and that,

by forsaking the simple rule of renunciation, she was throwing herself

under the seductive guidance of illimitable wants. She thought she had

won strength to obey the warning before she allowed herself the next

week to turn her steps in the evening to the Red Deeps. But while she

was resolved to say an affectionate farewell to Philip, how she looked

forward to that evening walk in the still, fleckered shade of the

hollows, away from all that was harsh and unlovely; to the

affectionate, admiring looks that would meet her; to the sense of

comradeship that childish memories would give to wiser, older talk; to

the certainty that Philip would care to hear everything she said,

which no one else cared for! It was a half-hour that it would be very

hard to turn her back upon, with the sense that there would be no

other like it. Yet she said what she meant to say; she looked firm as

well as sad.

"Philip, I have made up my mind; it is right that we should give each

other up, in everything but memory. I could not see you without

concealment--stay, I know what you are going to say,--it is other

people's wrong feelings that make concealment necessary; but

concealment is bad, however it may be caused. I feel that it would be

bad for me, for us both. And then, if our secret were discovered,

there would be nothing but misery,--dreadful anger; and then we must

part after all, and it would be harder, when we were used to seeing

each other."

Philip's face had flushed, and there was a momentary eagerness of

expression, as if he had been about to resist this decision with all

his might.

But he controlled himself, and said, with assumed calmness: "Well,

Maggie, if we must part, let us try and forget it for one half hour;

let us talk together a little while, for the last time."

He took her hand, and Maggie felt no reason to withdraw it; his

quietness made her all the more sure she had given him great pain, and

she wanted to show him how unwillingly she had given it. They walked

together hand in hand in silence.

"Let us sit down in the hollow," said Philip, "where we stood the last

time. See how the dog-roses have strewed the ground, and spread their

opal petals over it."

They sat down at the roots of the slanting ash.

"I've begun my picture of you among the Scotch firs, Maggie," said

Philip, "so you must let me study your face a little, while you

stay,--since I am not to see it again. Please turn your head this

way."

This was said in an entreating voice, and it would have been very hard

of Maggie to refuse. The full, lustrous face, with the bright black

coronet, looked down like that of a divinity well pleased to be

worshipped, on the pale-hued, small-featured face that was turned up

to it.

"I shall be sitting for my second portrait then," she said, smiling.

"Will it be larger than the other?"

"Oh yes, much larger. It is an oil-painting. You will look like a tall

Hamadryad, dark and strong and noble, just issued from one of the

fir-trees, when the stems are casting their afternoon shadows on the

grass."

"You seem to think more of painting than of anything now, Philip?"

"Perhaps I do," said Philip, rather sadly; "but I think of too many

things,--sow all sorts of seeds, and get no great harvest from any one

of them. I'm cursed with susceptibility in every direction, and

effective faculty in none. I care for painting and music; I care for

classic literature, and mediÃ¦val literature, and modern literature; I

flutter all ways, and fly in none."

"But surely that is a happiness to have so many tastes,--to enjoy so

many beautiful things, when they are within your reach," said Maggie,

musingly. "It always seemed to me a sort of clever stupidity only to

have one sort of talent,--almost like a carrier-pigeon."

"It might be a happiness to have many tastes if I were like other

men," said Philip, bitterly. "I might get some power and distinction

by mere mediocrity, as they do; at least I should get those middling

satisfactions which make men contented to do without great ones. I

might think society at St. Ogg's agreeable then. But nothing could

make life worth the purchase-money of pain to me, but some faculty

that would lift me above the dead level of provincial existence. Yes,

there is one thing,--a passion answers as well as a faculty."

Maggie did not hear the last words; she was struggling against the

consciousness that Philip's words had set her own discontent vibrating

again as it used to do.

"I understand what you mean," she said, "though I know so much less

than you do. I used to think I could never bear life if it kept on

being the same every day, and I must always be doing things of no

consequence, and never know anything greater. But, dear Philip, I

think we are only like children that some one who is wiser is taking

care of. Is it not right to resign ourselves entirely, whatever may be

denied us? I have found great peace in that for the last two or three

years, even joy in subduing my own will."

"Yes, Maggie," said Philip, vehemently; "and you are shutting yourself

up in a narrow, self-delusive fanaticism, which is only a way of

escaping pain by starving into dulness all the highest powers of your

nature. Joy and peace are not resignation; resignation is the willing

endurance of a pain that is not allayed, that you don't expect to be

allayed. Stupefaction is not resignation; and it is stupefaction to

remain in ignorance,--to shut up all the avenues by which the life of

your fellow-men might become known to you. I am not resigned; I am not

sure that life is long enough to learn that lesson. \_You\_ are not

resigned; you are only trying to stupefy yourself."

Maggie's lips trembled; she felt there was some truth in what Philip

said, and yet there was a deeper consciousness that, for any immediate

application it had to her conduct, it was no better than falsity. Her

double impression corresponded to the double impulse of the speaker.

Philip seriously believed what he said, but he said it with vehemence

because it made an argument against the resolution that opposed his

wishes. But Maggie's face, made more childlike by the gathering tears,

touched him with a tenderer, less egotistic feeling. He took her hand

and said gently:

"Don't let us think of such things in this short half-hour, Maggie. Let

us only care about being together. We shall be friends in spite of

separation. We shall always think of each other. I shall be glad to

live as long as you are alive, because I shall think there may always

come a time when I can--when you will let me help you in some way."

"What a dear, good brother you would have been, Philip," said Maggie,

smiling through the haze of tears. "I think you would have made as

much fuss about me, and been as pleased for me to love you, as would

have satisfied even me. You would have loved me well enough to bear

with me, and forgive me everything. That was what I always longed that

Tom should do. I was never satisfied with a \_little\_ of anything. That

is why it is better for me to do without earthly happiness altogether.

I never felt that I had enough music,--I wanted more instruments

playing together; I wanted voices to be fuller and deeper. Do you ever

sing now, Philip?" she added abruptly, as if she had forgotten what

went before.

"Yes," he said, "every day, almost. But my voice is only middling,

like everything else in me."

"Oh, sing me something,--just one song. I \_may\_ listen to that before

I go,--something you used to sing at Lorton on a Saturday afternoon,

when we had the drawing-room all to ourselves, and I put my apron over

my head to listen."

"\_I\_ know," said Philip; and Maggie buried her face in her hands while

he sang \_sotto voce\_, "Love in her eyes sits playing," and then said,

"That's it, isn't it?"

"Oh no, I won't stay," said Maggie, starting up. "It will only haunt

me. Let us walk, Philip. I must go home."

She moved away, so that he was obliged to rise and follow her.

"Maggie," he said, in a tone of remonstrance, "don't persist in this

wilful, senseless privation. It makes me wretched to see you benumbing

and cramping your nature in this way. You were so full of life when

you were a child; I thought you would be a brilliant woman,--all wit

and bright imagination. And it flashes out in your face still, until

you draw that veil of dull quiescence over it."

"Why do you speak so bitterly to me, Philip?" said Maggie.

"Because I foresee it will not end well; you can never carry on this

self-torture."

"I shall have strength given me," said Maggie, tremulously.

"No, you will not, Maggie; no one has strength given to do what is

unnatural. It is mere cowardice to seek safety in negations. No

character becomes strong in that way. You will be thrown into the

world some day, and then every rational satisfaction of your nature

that you deny now will assault you like a savage appetite."

Maggie started and paused, looking at Philip with alarm in her face.

"Philip, how dare you shake me in this way? You are a tempter."

"No, I am not; but love gives insight, Maggie, and insight often gives

foreboding. \_Listen\_ to me,--let \_me\_ supply you with books; do let me

see you sometimes,--be your brother and teacher, as you said at

Lorton. It is less wrong that you should see me than that you should

be committing this long suicide."

Maggie felt unable to speak. She shook her head and walked on in

silence, till they came to the end of the Scotch firs, and she put out

her hand in sign of parting.

"Do you banish me from this place forever, then, Maggie? Surely I may

come and walk in it sometimes? If I meet you by chance, there is no

concealment in that?"

It is the moment when our resolution seems about to become

irrevocable--when the fatal iron gates are about to close upon

us--that tests our strength. Then, after hours of clear reasoning and

firm conviction, we snatch at any sophistry that will nullify our long

struggles, and bring us the defeat that we love better than victory.

Maggie felt her heart leap at this subterfuge of Philip's, and there

passed over her face that almost imperceptible shock which accompanies

any relief. He saw it, and they parted in silence.

Philip's sense of the situation was too complete for him not to be

visited with glancing fears lest he had been intervening too

presumptuously in the action of Maggie's conscience, perhaps for a

selfish end. But no!--he persuaded himself his end was not selfish. He

had little hope that Maggie would ever return the strong feeling he

had for her; and it must be better for Maggie's future life, when

these petty family obstacles to her freedom had disappeared, that the

present should not be entirely sacrificed, and that she should have

some opportunity of culture,--some interchange with a mind above the

vulgar level of those she was now condemned to live with. If we only

look far enough off for the consequence of our actions, we can always

find some point in the combination of results by which those actions

can be justified; by adopting the point of view of a Providence who

arranges results, or of a philosopher who traces them, we shall find

it possible to obtain perfect complacency in choosing to do what is

most agreeable to us in the present moment. And it was in this way

that Philip justified his subtle efforts to overcome Maggie's true

prompting against a concealment that would introduce doubleness into

her own mind, and might cause new misery to those who had the primary

natural claim on her. But there was a surplus of passion in him that

made him half independent of justifying motives. His longing to see

Maggie, and make an element in her life, had in it some of that savage

impulse to snatch an offered joy which springs from a life in which

the mental and bodily constitution have made pain predominate. He had

not his full share in the common good of men; he could not even pass

muster with the insignificant, but must be singled out for pity, and

excepted from what was a matter of course with others. Even to Maggie

he was an exception; it was clear that the thought of his being her

lover had never entered her mind.

Do not think too hardly of Philip. Ugly and deformed people have great

need of unusual virtues, because they are likely to be extremely

uncomfortable without them; but the theory that unusual virtues spring

by a direct consequence out of personal disadvantages, as animals get

thicker wool in severe climates, is perhaps a little overstrained. The

temptations of beauty are much dwelt upon, but I fancy they only bear

the same relation to those of ugliness, as the temptation to excess at

a feast, where the delights are varied for eye and ear as well as

palate, bears to the temptations that assail the desperation of

hunger. Does not the Hunger Tower stand as the type of the utmost

trial to what is human in us?

Philip had never been soothed by that mother's love which flows out to

us in the greater abundance because our need is greater, which clings

to us the more tenderly because we are the less likely to be winners

in the game of life; and the sense of his father's affection and

indulgence toward him was marred by the keener perception of his

father's faults. Kept aloof from all practical life as Philip had

been, and by nature half feminine in sensitiveness, he had some of the

woman's intolerant repulsion toward worldliness and the deliberate

pursuit of sensual enjoyment; and this one strong natural tie in his

life,--his relation as a son,--was like an aching limb to him. Perhaps

there is inevitably something morbid in a human being who is in any

way unfavorably excepted from ordinary conditions, until the good

force has had time to triumph; and it has rarely had time for that at

two-and-twenty. That force was present in Philip in much strength, but

the sun himself looks feeble through the morning mists.

Chapter IV

Another Love-Scene

Early in the following April, nearly a year after that dubious parting

you have just witnessed, you may, if you like, again see Maggie

entering the Red Deeps through the group of Scotch firs. But it is

early afternoon and not evening, and the edge of sharpness in the

spring air makes her draw her large shawl close about her and trip

along rather quickly; though she looks round, as usual, that she may

take in the sight of her beloved trees. There is a more eager,

inquiring look in her eyes than there was last June, and a smile is

hovering about her lips, as if some playful speech were awaiting the

right hearer. The hearer was not long in appearing.

"Take back your \_Corinne\_," said Maggie, drawing a book from under her

shawl. "You were right in telling me she would do me no good; but you

were wrong in thinking I should wish to be like her."

"Wouldn't you really like to be a tenth Muse, then, Maggie?" said

Philip looking up in her face as we look at a first parting in the

clouds that promises us a bright heaven once more.

"Not at all," said Maggie, laughing. "The Muses were uncomfortable

goddesses, I think,--obliged always to carry rolls and musical

instruments about with them. If I carried a harp in this climate, you

know, I must have a green baize cover for it; and I should be sure to

leave it behind me by mistake."

"You agree with me in not liking Corinne, then?"

"I didn't finish the book," said Maggie. "As soon as I came to the

blond-haired young lady reading in the park, I shut it up, and

determined to read no further. I foresaw that that light-complexioned

girl would win away all the love from Corinne and make her miserable.

I'm determined to read no more books where the blond-haired women

carry away all the happiness. I should begin to have a prejudice

against them. If you could give me some story, now, where the dark

woman triumphs, it would restore the balance. I want to avenge Rebecca

and Flora MacIvor and Minna, and all the rest of the dark unhappy

ones. Since you are my tutor, you ought to preserve my mind from

prejudices; you are always arguing against prejudices."

"Well, perhaps you will avenge the dark women in your own person, and

carry away all the love from your cousin Lucy. She is sure to have

some handsome young man of St. Ogg's at her feet now; and you have

only to shine upon him--your fair little cousin will be quite quenched

in your beams."

"Philip, that is not pretty of you, to apply my nonsense to anything

real," said Maggie, looking hurt. "As if I, with my old gowns and want

of all accomplishments, could be a rival of dear little Lucy,--who

knows and does all sorts of charming things, and is ten times prettier

than I am,--even if I were odious and base enough to wish to be her

rival. Besides, I never go to aunt Deane's when any one is there; it

is only because dear Lucy is good, and loves me, that she comes to see

me, and will have me go to see her sometimes."

"Maggie," said Philip, with surprise, "it is not like you to take

playfulness literally. You must have been in St. Ogg's this morning,

and brought away a slight infection of dulness."

"Well," said Maggie, smiling, "if you meant that for a joke, it was a

poor one; but I thought it was a very good reproof. I thought you

wanted to remind me that I am vain, and wish every one to admire me

most. But it isn't for that that I'm jealous for the dark women,--not

because I'm dark myself; it's because I always care the most about the

unhappy people. If the blond girl were forsaken, I should like \_her\_

best. I always take the side of the rejected lover in the stories."

"Then you would never have the heart to reject one yourself, should

you, Maggie?" said Philip, flushing a little.

"I don't know," said Maggie, hesitatingly. Then with a bright smile,

"I think perhaps I could if he were very conceited; and yet, if he got

extremely humiliated afterward, I should relent."

"I've often wondered, Maggie," Philip said, with some effort, "whether

you wouldn't really be more likely to love a man that other women were

not likely to love."

"That would depend on what they didn't like him for," said Maggie,

laughing. "He might be very disagreeable. He might look at me through

an eye-glass stuck in his eye, making a hideous face, as young Torry

does. I should think other women are not fond of that; but I never

felt any pity for young Torry. I've never any pity for conceited

people, because I think they carry their comfort about with them."

"But suppose, Maggie,--suppose it was a man who was not conceited, who

felt he had nothing to be conceited about; who had been marked from

childhood for a peculiar kind of suffering, and to whom you were the

day-star of his life; who loved you, worshipped you, so entirely that

he felt it happiness enough for him if you would let him see you at

rare moments----"

Philip paused with a pang of dread lest his confession should cut

short this very happiness,--a pang of the same dread that had kept his

love mute through long months. A rush of self-consciousness told him

that he was besotted to have said all this. Maggie's manner this

morning had been as unconstrained and indifferent as ever.

But she was not looking indifferent now. Struck with the unusual

emotion in Philip's tone, she had turned quickly to look at him; and

as he went on speaking, a great change came over her face,--a flush

and slight spasm of the features, such as we see in people who hear

some news that will require them to readjust their conceptions of the

past. She was quite silent, and walking on toward the trunk of a

fallen tree, she sat down, as if she had no strength to spare for her

muscles. She was trembling.

"Maggie," said Philip, getting more and more alarmed in every fresh

moment of silence, "I was a fool to say it; forget that I've said it.

I shall be contented if things can be as they were."

The distress with which he spoke urged Maggie to say something. "I am

so surprised, Philip; I had not thought of it." And the effort to say

this brought the tears down too.

"Has it made you hate me, Maggie?" said Philip, impetuously. "Do you

think I'm a presumptuous fool?"

"Oh, Philip!" said Maggie, "how can you think I have such feelings? As

if I were not grateful for \_any\_ love. But--but I had never thought of

your being my lover. It seemed so far off--like a dream--only like one

of the stories one imagines--that I should ever have a lover."

"Then can you bear to think of me as your lover, Maggie?" said Philip,

seating himself by her, and taking her hand, in the elation of a

sudden hope. "\_Do\_ you love me?"

Maggie turned rather pale; this direct question seemed not easy to

answer. But her eyes met Philip's, which were in this moment liquid

and beautiful with beseeching love. She spoke with hesitation, yet

with sweet, simple, girlish tenderness.

"I think I could hardly love any one better; there is nothing but what

I love you for." She paused a little while, and then added: "But it

will be better for us not to say any more about it, won't it, dear

Philip? You know we couldn't even be friends, if our friendship were

discovered. I have never felt that I was right in giving way about

seeing you, though it has been so precious to me in some ways; and now

the fear comes upon me strongly again, that it will lead to evil."

"But no evil has come, Maggie; and if you had been guided by that fear

before, you would only have lived through another dreary, benumbing

year, instead of reviving into your real self."

Maggie shook her head. "It has been very sweet, I know,--all the

talking together, and the books, and the feeling that I had the walk

to look forward to, when I could tell you the thoughts that had come

into my head while I was away from you. But it has made me restless;

it has made me think a great deal about the world; and I have

impatient thoughts again,--I get weary of my home; and then it cuts me

to the heart afterward, that I should ever have felt weary of my

father and mother. I think what you call being benumbed was

better--better for me--for then my selfish desires were benumbed."

Philip had risen again, and was walking backward and forward

impatiently.

"No, Maggie, you have wrong ideas of self-conquest, as I've often told

you. What you call self-conquest--binding and deafening yourself to

all but one train of impressions--is only the culture of monomania in

a nature like yours."

He had spoken with some irritation, but now he sat down by her again

and took her hand.

"Don't think of the past now, Maggie; think only of our love. If you

can really cling to me with all your heart, every obstacle will be

overcome in time; we need only wait. I can live on hope. Look at me,

Maggie; tell me again it is possible for you to love me. Don't look

away from me to that cloven tree; it is a bad omen."

She turned her large dark glance upon him with a sad smile.

"Come, Maggie, say one kind word, or else you were better to me at

Lorton. You asked me if I should like you to kiss me,--don't you

remember?--and you promised to kiss me when you met me again. You

never kept the promise."

The recollection of that childish time came as a sweet relief to

Maggie. It made the present moment less strange to her. She kissed him

almost as simply and quietly as she had done when she was twelve years

old. Philip's eyes flashed with delight, but his next words were words

of discontent.

"You don't seem happy enough, Maggie; you are forcing yourself to say

you love me, out of pity."

"No, Philip," said Maggie, shaking her head, in her old childish way;

"I'm telling you the truth. It is all new and strange to me; but I

don't think I could love any one better than I love you. I should like

always to live with you--to make you happy. I have always been happy

when I have been with you. There is only one thing I will not do for

your sake; I will never do anything to wound my father. You must never

ask that from me."

"No, Maggie, I will ask nothing; I will bear everything; I'll wait

another year only for a kiss, if you will only give me the first place

in your heart."

"No," said Maggie, smiling, "I won't make you wait so long as that."

But then, looking serious again, she added, as she rose from her

seat,--

"But what would your own father say, Philip? Oh, it is quite

impossible we can ever be more than friends,--brother and sister in

secret, as we have been. Let us give up thinking of everything else."

"No, Maggie, I can't give you up,--unless you are deceiving me; unless

you really only care for me as if I were your brother. Tell me the

truth."

"Indeed I do, Philip. What happiness have I ever had so great as being

with you,--since I was a little girl,--the days Tom was good to me?

And your mind is a sort of world to me; you can tell me all I want to

know. I think I should never be tired of being with you."

They were walking hand in hand, looking at each other; Maggie, indeed,

was hurrying along, for she felt it time to be gone. But the sense

that their parting was near made her more anxious lest she should have

unintentionally left some painful impression on Philip's mind. It was

one of those dangerous moments when speech is at once sincere and

deceptive; when feeling, rising high above its average depth, leaves

floodmarks which are never reached again.

They stopped to part among the Scotch firs.

"Then my life will be filled with hope, Maggie, and I shall be happier

than other men, in spite of all? We \_do\_ belong to each other--for

always--whether we are apart or together?"

"Yes, Philip; I should like never to part; I should like to make your

life very happy."

"I am waiting for something else. I wonder whether it will come."

Maggie smiled, with glistening tears, and then stooped her tall head

to kiss the pale face that was full of pleading, timid love,--like a

woman's.

She had a moment of real happiness then,--a moment of belief that, if

there were sacrifice in this love, it was all the richer and more

satisfying.

She turned away and hurried home, feeling that in the hour since she

had trodden this road before, a new era had begun for her. The tissue

of vague dreams must now get narrower and narrower, and all the

threads of thought and emotion be gradually absorbed in the woof of

her actual daily life.

Chapter V

The Cloven Tree

Secrets are rarely betrayed or discovered according to any programme

our fear has sketched out. Fear is almost always haunted by terrible

dramatic scenes, which recur in spite of the best-argued probabilities

against them; and during a year that Maggie had had the burthen of

concealment on her mind, the possibility of discovery had continually

presented itself under the form of a sudden meeting with her father or

Tom when she was walking with Philip in the Red Deeps. She was aware

that this was not one of the most likely events; but it was the scene

that most completely symbolized her inward dread. Those slight

indirect suggestions which are dependent on apparently trivial

coincidences and incalculable states of mind, are the favorite

machinery of Fact, but are not the stuff in which Imagination is apt

to work.

Certainly one of the persons about whom Maggie's fears were furthest

from troubling themselves was her aunt Pullet, on whom, seeing that

she did not live in St. Ogg's, and was neither sharp-eyed nor

sharp-tempered, it would surely have been quite whimsical of them to

fix rather than on aunt Glegg. And yet the channel of fatality--the

pathway of the lightning--was no other than aunt Pullet. She did not

live at St. Ogg's, but the road from Garum Firs lay by the Red Deeps,

at the end opposite that by which Maggie entered.

The day after Maggie's last meeting with Philip, being a Sunday on

which Mr. Pullet was bound to appear in funeral hatband and scarf at

St. Ogg's church, Mrs. Pullet made this the occasion of dining with

sister Glegg, and taking tea with poor sister Tulliver. Sunday was the

one day in the week on which Tom was at home in the afternoon; and

today the brighter spirits he had been in of late had flowed over in

unusually cheerful open chat with his father, and in the invitation,

"Come, Magsie, you come too!" when he strolled out with his mother in

the garden to see the advancing cherry-blossoms. He had been better

pleased with Maggie since she had been less odd and ascetic; he was

even getting rather proud of her; several persons had remarked in his

hearing that his sister was a very fine girl. To-day there was a

peculiar brightness in her face, due in reality to an undercurrent of

excitement, which had as much doubt and pain as pleasure in it; but it

might pass for a sign of happiness.

"You look very well, my dear," said aunt Pullet, shaking her head

sadly, as they sat round the tea-table. "I niver thought your girl 'ud

be so good-looking, Bessy. But you must wear pink, my dear; that blue

thing as your aunt Glegg gave you turns you into a crowflower. Jane

never \_was\_ tasty. Why don't you wear that gown o' mine?"

"It is so pretty and so smart, aunt. I think it's too showy for

me,--at least for my other clothes, that I must wear with it.

"To be sure, it 'ud be unbecoming if it wasn't well known you've got

them belonging to you as can afford to give you such things when

they've done with 'em themselves. It stands to reason I must give my

own niece clothes now and then,--such things as \_I\_ buy every year,

and never wear anything out. And as for Lucy, there's no giving to

her, for she's got everything o' the choicest; sister Deane may well

hold her head up,--though she looks dreadful yallow, poor thing--I

doubt this liver complaint 'ull carry her off. That's what this new

vicar, this Dr. Kenn, said in the funeral sermon to-day."

"Ah, he's a wonderful preacher, by all account,--isn't he, Sophy?"

said Mrs. Tulliver.

"Why, Lucy had got a collar on this blessed day," continued Mrs.

Pullet, with her eyes fixed in a ruminating manner, "as I don't say I

haven't got as good, but I must look out my best to match it."

"Miss Lucy's called the bell o' St. Ogg's, they say; that's a cur'ous

word," observed Mr. Pullet, on whom the mysteries of etymology

sometimes fell with an oppressive weight.

"Pooh!" said Mr. Tulliver, jealous for Maggie, "she's a small thing,

not much of a figure. But fine feathers make fine birds. I see nothing

to admire so much in those diminutive women; they look silly by the

side o' the men,--out o' proportion. When I chose my wife, I chose her

the right size,--neither too little nor too big."

The poor wife, with her withered beauty, smiled complacently.

"But the men aren't \_all\_ big," said uncle Pullet, not without some

self-reference; "a young fellow may be good-looking and yet not be a

six-foot, like Master Tom here.

"Ah, it's poor talking about littleness and bigness,--anybody may

think it's a mercy they're straight," said aunt Pullet. "There's that

mismade son o' Lawyer Wakem's, I saw him at church to-day. Dear, dear!

to think o' the property he's like to have; and they say he's very

queer and lonely, doesn't like much company. I shouldn't wonder if he

goes out of his mind; for we never come along the road but he's

a-scrambling out o' the trees and brambles at the Red Deeps."

This wide statement, by which Mrs. Pullet represented the fact that

she had twice seen Philip at the spot indicated, produced an effect on

Maggie which was all the stronger because Tom sate opposite her, and

she was intensely anxious to look indifferent. At Philip's name she

had blushed, and the blush deepened every instant from consciousness,

until the mention of the Red Deeps made her feel as if the whole

secret were betrayed, and she dared not even hold her tea-spoon lest

she should show how she trembled. She sat with her hands clasped under

the table, not daring to look round. Happily, her father was seated on

the same side with herself, beyond her uncle Pullet, and could not see

her face without stooping forward. Her mother's voice brought the

first relief, turning the conversation; for Mrs. Tulliver was always

alarmed when the name of Wakem was mentioned in her husband's

presence. Gradually Maggie recovered composure enough to look up; her

eyes met Tom's, but he turned away his head immediately; and she went

to bed that night wondering if he had gathered any suspicion from her

confusion. Perhaps not; perhaps he would think it was only her alarm

at her aunt's mention of Wakem before her father; that was the

interpretation her mother had put in it. To her father, Wakem was like

a disfiguring disease, of which he was obliged to endure the

consciousness, but was exasperated to have the existence recognized by

others; and no amount of sensitiveness in her about her father could

be surprising, Maggie thought.

But Tom was too keen-sighted to rest satisfied with such an

interpretation; he had seen clearly enough that there was something

distinct from anxiety about her father in Maggie's excessive

confusion. In trying to recall all the details that could give shape

to his suspicions, he remembered only lately hearing his mother scold

Maggie for walking in the Red Deeps when the ground was wet, and

bringing home shoes clogged with red soil; still Tom, retaining all

his old repulsion for Philip's deformity, shrank from attributing to

his sister the probability of feeling more than a friendly interest in

such an unfortunate exception to the common run of men. Tom's was a

nature which had a sort of superstitious repugnance to everything

exceptional. A love for a deformed man would be odious in any woman,

in a sister intolerable. But if she had been carrying on any kind of

intercourse whatever with Philip, a stop must be put to it at once;

she was disobeying her father's strongest feelings and her brother's

express commands, besides compromising herself by secret meetings. He

left home the next morning in that watchful state of mind which turns

the most ordinary course of things into pregnant coincidences.

That afternoon, about half-past three o'clock, Tom was standing on the

wharf, talking with Bob Jakin about the probability of the good ship

Adelaide coming in, in a day or two, with results highly important to

both of them.

"Eh," said Bob, parenthetically, as he looked over the fields on the

other side of the river, "there goes that crooked young Wakem. I know

him or his shadder as far off as I can see 'em; I'm allays lighting on

him o' that side the river."

A sudden thought seemed to have darted through Tom's mind. "I must go,

Bob," he said; "I've something to attend to," hurrying off to the

warehouse, where he left notice for some one to take his place; he was

called away home on peremptory business.

The swiftest pace and the shortest road took him to the gate, and he

was pausing to open it deliberately, that he might walk into the house

with an appearance of perfect composure, when Maggie came out at the

front door in bonnet and shawl. His conjecture was fulfilled, and he

waited for her at the gate. She started violently when she saw him.

"Tom, how is it you are come home? Is there anything the matter?"

Maggie spoke in a low, tremulous voice.

"I'm come to walk with you to the Red Deeps, and meet Philip Wakem,"

said Tom, the central fold in his brow, which had become habitual with

him, deepening as he spoke.

Maggie stood helpless, pale and cold. By some means, then, Tom knew

everything. At last she said, "I'm not going," and turned round.

"Yes, you are; but I want to speak to you first. Where is my father?"

"Out on horseback."

"And my mother?"

"In the yard, I think, with the poultry."

"I can go in, then, without her seeing me?"

They walked in together, and Tom, entering the parlor, said to Maggie,

"Come in here."

She obeyed, and he closed the door behind her.

"Now, Maggie, tell me this instant everything that has passed between

you and Philip Wakem."

"Does my father know anything?" said Maggie, still trembling.

"No," said Tom indignantly. "But he \_shall\_ know, if you attempt to

use deceit toward me any further."

"I don't wish to use deceit," said Maggie, flushing into resentment at

hearing this word applied to her conduct.

"Tell me the whole truth, then."

"Perhaps you know it."

"Never mind whether I know it or not. Tell me exactly what has

happened, or my father shall know everything."

"I tell it for my father's sake, then."

"Yes, it becomes you to profess affection for your father, when you

have despised his strongest feelings."

"You never do wrong, Tom," said Maggie, tauntingly.

"Not if I know it," answered Tom, with proud sincerity.

"But I have nothing to say to you beyond this: tell me what has passed

between you and Philip Wakem. When did you first meet him in the Red

Deeps?"

"A year ago," said Maggie, quietly. Tom's severity gave her a certain

fund of defiance, and kept her sense of error in abeyance. "You need

ask me no more questions. We have been friendly a year. We have met

and walked together often. He has lent me books."

"Is that all?" said Tom, looking straight at her with his frown.

Maggie paused a moment; then, determined to make an end of Tom's right

to accuse her of deceit, she said haughtily:

"No, not quite all. On Saturday he told me that he loved me. I didn't

think of it before then; I had only thought of him as an old friend."

"And you \_encouraged\_ him?" said Tom, with an expression of disgust.

"I told him that I loved him too."

Tom was silent a few moments, looking on the ground and frowning, with

his hands in his pockets. At last he looked up and said coldly,--

"Now, then, Maggie, there are but two courses for you to take,--either

you vow solemnly to me, with your hand on my father's Bible, that you

will never have another meeting or speak another word in private with

Philip Wakem, or you refuse, and I tell my father everything; and this

month, when by my exertions he might be made happy once more, you will

cause him the blow of knowing that you are a disobedient, deceitful

daughter, who throws away her own respectability by clandestine

meetings with the son of a man that has helped to ruin her father.

Choose!" Tom ended with cold decision, going up to the large Bible,

drawing it forward, and opening it at the fly-leaf, where the writing

was.

It was a crushing alternative to Maggie.

"Tom," she said, urged out of pride into pleading, "don't ask me that.

I will promise you to give up all intercourse with Philip, if you will

let me see him once, or even only write to him and explain

everything,--to give it up as long as it would ever cause any pain to

my father. I feel something for Philip too. \_He\_ is not happy."

"I don't wish to hear anything of your feelings; I have said exactly

what I mean. Choose, and quickly, lest my mother should come in."

"If I give you my word, that will be as strong a bond to me as if I

laid my hand on the Bible. I don't require that to bind me."

"Do what \_I\_ require," said Tom. "I can't trust you, Maggie. There is

no consistency in you. Put your hand on this Bible, and say, 'I

renounce all private speech and intercourse with Philip Wakem from

this time forth.' Else you will bring shame on us all, and grief on my

father; and what is the use of my exerting myself and giving up

everything else for the sake of paying my father's debts, if you are

to bring madness and vexation on him, just when he might be easy and

hold up his head once more?"

"Oh, Tom, \_will\_ the debts be paid soon?" said Maggie, clasping her

hands, with a sudden flash of joy across her wretchedness.

"If things turn out as I expect," said Tom. "But," he added, his voice

trembling with indignation, "while I have been contriving and working

that my father may have some peace of mind before he dies,--working

for the respectability of our family,--you have done all you can to

destroy both."

Maggie felt a deep movement of compunction; for the moment, her mind

ceased to contend against what she felt to be cruel and unreasonable,

and in her self-blame she justified her brother.

"Tom," she said in a low voice, "it was wrong of me; but I was so

lonely, and I was sorry for Philip. And I think enmity and hatred are

wicked."

"Nonsense!" said Tom. "Your duty was clear enough. Say no more; but

promise, in the words I told you."

"I \_must\_ speak to Philip once more."

"You will go with me now and speak to him."

"I give you my word not to meet him or write to him again without your

knowledge. That is the only thing I will say. I will put my hand on

the Bible if you like."

"Say it, then."

Maggie laid her hand on the page of manuscript and repeated the

promise. Tom closed the book, and said, "Now let us go."

Not a word was spoken as they walked along. Maggie was suffering in

anticipation of what Philip was about to suffer, and dreading the

galling words that would fall on him from Tom's lips; but she felt it

was in vain to attempt anything but submission. Tom had his terrible

clutch on her conscience and her deepest dread; she writhed under the

demonstrable truth of the character he had given to her conduct, and

yet her whole soul rebelled against it as unfair from its

incompleteness. He, meanwhile, felt the impetus of his indignation

diverted toward Philip. He did not know how much of an old boyish

repulsion and of mere personal pride and animosity was concerned in

the bitter severity of the words by which he meant to do the duty of a

son and a brother. Tom was not given to inquire subtly into his own

motives any more than into other matters of an intangible kind; he was

quite sure that his own motives as well as actions were good, else he

would have had nothing to do with them.

Maggie's only hope was that something might, for the first time, have

prevented Philip from coming. Then there would be delay,--then she

might get Tom's permission to write to him. Her heart beat with double

violence when they got under the Scotch firs. It was the last moment

of suspense, she thought; Philip always met her soon after she got

beyond them. But they passed across the more open green space, and

entered the narrow bushy path by the mound. Another turning, and they

came so close upon him that both Tom and Philip stopped suddenly

within a yard of each other. There was a moment's silence, in which

Philip darted a look of inquiry at Maggie's face. He saw an answer

there, in the pale, parted lips, and the terrified tension of the

large eyes. Her imagination, always rushing extravagantly beyond an

immediate impression, saw her tall, strong brother grasping the feeble

Philip bodily, crushing him and trampling on him.

"Do you call this acting the part of a man and a gentleman, sir?" Tom

said, in a voice of harsh scorn, as soon as Philip's eyes were turned

on him again.

"What do you mean?" answered Philip, haughtily.

"Mean? Stand farther from me, lest I should lay hands on you, and I'll

tell you what I mean. I mean, taking advantage of a young girl's

foolishness and ignorance to get her to have secret meetings with you.

I mean, daring to trifle with the respectability of a family that has

a good and honest name to support."

"I deny that," interrupted Philip, impetuously. "I could never trifle

with anything that affected your sister's happiness. She is dearer to

me than she is to you; I honor her more than you can ever honor her; I

would give up my life to her."

"Don't talk high-flown nonsense to me, sir! Do you mean to pretend

that you didn't know it would be injurious to her to meet you here

week after week? Do you pretend you had any right to make professions

of love to her, even if you had been a fit husband for her, when

neither her father nor your father would ever consent to a marriage

between you? And \_you\_,--\_you\_ to try and worm yourself into the

affections of a handsome girl who is not eighteen, and has been shut

out from the world by her father's misfortunes! That's your crooked

notion of honor, is it? I call it base treachery; I call it taking

advantage of circumstances to win what's too good for you,--what you'd

never get by fair means."

"It is manly of you to talk in this way to \_me\_," said Philip,

bitterly, his whole frame shaken by violent emotions. "Giants have an

immemorial right to stupidity and insolent abuse. You are incapable

even of understanding what I feel for your sister. I feel so much for

her that I could even desire to be at friendship with \_you\_."

"I should be very sorry to understand your feelings," said Tom, with

scorching contempt. "What I wish is that you should understand

\_me\_,--that I shall take care of \_my\_ sister, and that if you dare to

make the least attempt to come near her, or to write to her, or to

keep the slightest hold on her mind, your puny, miserable body, that

ought to have put some modesty into your mind, shall not protect you.

I'll thrash you; I'll hold you up to public scorn. Who wouldn't laugh

at the idea of \_your\_ turning lover to a fine girl?"

Tom and Maggie walked on in silence for some yards. He burst out, in a

convulsed voice.

"Stay, Maggie!" said Philip, making a strong effort to speak. Then

looking at Tom, "You have dragged your sister here, I suppose, that

she may stand by while you threaten and insult me. These naturally

seemed to you the right means to influence me. But you are mistaken.

Let your sister speak. If she says she is bound to give me up, I shall

abide by her wishes to the slightest word."

"It was for my father's sake, Philip," said Maggie, imploringly. "Tom

threatens to tell my father, and he couldn't bear it; I have promised,

I have vowed solemnly, that we will not have any intercourse without

my brother's knowledge."

"It is enough, Maggie. \_I\_ shall not change; but I wish you to hold

yourself entirely free. But trust me; remember that I can never seek

for anything but good to what belongs to you."

"Yes," said Tom, exasperated by this attitude of Philip's, "you can

talk of seeking good for her and what belongs to her now; did you seek

her good before?"

"I did,--at some risk, perhaps. But I wished her to have a friend for

life,--who would cherish her, who would do her more justice than a

coarse and narrow-minded brother, that she has always lavished her

affections on."

"Yes, my way of befriending her is different from yours; and I'll tell

you what is my way. I'll save her from disobeying and disgracing her

father; I'll save her from throwing herself away on you,--from making

herself a laughing-stock,--from being flouted by a man like \_your\_

father, because she's not good enough for his son. You know well

enough what sort of justice and cherishing you were preparing for her.

I'm not to be imposed upon by fine words; I can see what actions mean.

Come away, Maggie."

He seized Maggie's right wrist as he spoke, and she put out her left

hand. Philip clasped it an instant, with one eager look, and then

hurried away.

Tom and Maggie walked on in silence for some yards. He was still

holding her wrist tightly, as if he were compelling a culprit from the

scene of action. At last Maggie, with a violent snatch, drew her hand

away, and her pent-up, long-gathered irritation burst into utterance.

"Don't suppose that I think you are right, Tom, or that I bow to your

will. I despise the feelings you have shown in speaking to Philip; I

detest your insulting, unmanly allusions to his deformity. You have

been reproaching other people all your life; you have been always sure

you yourself are right. It is because you have not a mind large enough

to see that there is anything better than your own conduct and your

own petty aims."

"Certainly," said Tom, coolly. "I don't see that your conduct is

better, or your aims either. If your conduct, and Philip Wakem's

conduct, has been right, why are you ashamed of its being known?

Answer me that. I know what I have aimed at in my conduct, and I've

succeeded; pray, what good has your conduct brought to you or any one

else?"

"I don't want to defend myself," said Maggie, still with vehemence: "I

know I've been wrong,--often, continually. But yet, sometimes when I

have done wrong, it has been because I have feelings that you would be

the better for, if you had them. If \_you\_ were in fault ever, if you

had done anything very wrong, I should be sorry for the pain it

brought you; I should not want punishment to be heaped on you. But you

have always enjoyed punishing me; you have always been hard and cruel

to me; even when I was a little girl, and always loved you better than

any one else in the world, you would let me go crying to bed without

forgiving me. You have no pity; you have no sense of your own

imperfection and your own sins. It is a sin to be hard; it is not

fitting for a mortal, for a Christian. You are nothing but a Pharisee.

You thank God for nothing but your own virtues; you think they are

great enough to win you everything else. You have not even a vision of

feelings by the side of which your shining virtues are mere darkness!"

"Well," said Tom, with cold scorn, "if your feelings are so much

better than mine, let me see you show them in some other way than by

conduct that's likely to disgrace us all,--than by ridiculous flights

first into one extreme and then into another. Pray, how have you shown

your love, that you talk of, either to me or my father? By disobeying

and deceiving us. I have a different way of showing my affection."

"Because you are a man, Tom, and have power, and can do something in

the world."

"Then, if you can do nothing, submit to those that can."

"So I \_will\_ submit to what I acknowledge and feel to be right. I will

submit even to what is unreasonable from my father, but I will not

submit to it from you. You boast of your virtues as if they purchased

you a right to be cruel and unmanly, as you've been to-day. Don't

suppose I would give up Philip Wakem in obedience to you. The

deformity you insult would make me cling to him and care for him the

more."

"Very well; that is your view of things." said Tom, more coldly than

ever; "you need say no more to show me what a wide distance there is

between us. Let us remember that in future, and be silent."

Tom went back to St. Ogg's, to fulfill an appointment with his uncle

Deane, and receive directions about a journey on which he was to set

out the next morning.

Maggie went up to her own room to pour out all that indignant

remonstrance, against which Tom's mind was close barred, in bitter

tears. Then, when the first burst of unsatisfied anger was gone by,

came the recollection of that quiet time before the pleasure which had

ended in to-day's misery had perturbed the clearness and simplicity of

her life. She used to think in that time that she had made great

conquests, and won a lasting stand on serene heights above worldly

temptations and conflict. And here she was down again in the thick of

a hot strife with her own and others' passions. Life was not so short,

then, and perfect rest was not so near as she had dreamed when she was

two years younger. There was more struggle for her, and perhaps more

falling. If she had felt that she was entirely wrong, and that Tom had

been entirely right, she could sooner have recovered more inward

harmony; but now her penitence and submission were constantly

obstructed by resentment that would present itself to her no otherwise

than as a just indignation. Her heart bled for Philip; she went on

recalling the insults that had been flung at him with so vivid a

conception of what he had felt under them, that it was almost like a

sharp bodily pain to her, making her beat the floor with her foot and

tighten her fingers on her palm.

And yet, how was it that she was now and then conscious of a certain

dim background of relief in the forced separation from Philip? Surely

it was only because the sense of a deliverance from concealment was

welcome at any cost.

Chapter VI

The Hard-Won Triumph

Three weeks later, when Dorlcote Mill was at its prettiest moment in

all the year,--the great chestnuts in blossom, and the grass all deep

and daisied,--Tom Tulliver came home to it earlier than usual in the

evening, and as he passed over the bridge, he looked with the old

deep-rooted affection at the respectable red brick house, which always

seemed cheerful and inviting outside, let the rooms be as bare and the

hearts as sad as they might inside. There is a very pleasant light in

Tom's blue-gray eyes as he glances at the house-windows; that fold in

his brow never disappears, but it is not unbecoming; it seems to imply

a strength of will that may possibly be without harshness, when the

eyes and mouth have their gentlest expression. His firm step becomes

quicker, and the corners of his mouth rebel against the compression

which is meant to forbid a smile.

The eyes in the parlor were not turned toward the bridge just then,

and the group there was sitting in unexpectant silence,--Mr. Tulliver

in his arm-chair, tired with a long ride, and ruminating with a worn

look, fixed chiefly on Maggie, who was bending over her sewing while

her mother was making the tea.

They all looked up with surprise when they heard the well-known foot.

"Why, what's up now, Tom?" said his father. "You're a bit earlier than

usual."

"Oh, there was nothing more for me to do, so I came away. Well,

mother!"

Tom went up to his mother and kissed her, a sign of unusual good-humor

with him. Hardly a word or look had passed between him and Maggie in

all the three weeks; but his usual incommunicativeness at home

prevented this from being noticeable to their parents.

"Father," said Tom, when they had finished tea, "do you know exactly

how much money there is in the tin box?"

"Only a hundred and ninety-three pound," said Mr. Tulliver. "You've

brought less o' late; but young fellows like to have their own way

with their money. Though I didn't do as I liked before \_I\_ was of

age." He spoke with rather timid discontent.

"Are you quite sure that's the sum, father?" said Tom. "I wish you

would take the trouble to fetch the tin box down. I think you have

perhaps made a mistake."

"How should I make a mistake?" said his father, sharply. "I've counted

it often enough; but I can fetch it, if you won't believe me."

It was always an incident Mr. Tulliver liked, in his gloomy life, to

fetch the tin box and count the money.

"Don't go out of the room, mother," said Tom, as he saw her moving

when his father was gone upstairs.

"And isn't Maggie to go?" said Mrs. Tulliver; "because somebody must

take away the things."

"Just as she likes," said Tom indifferently.

That was a cutting word to Maggie. Her heart had leaped with the

sudden conviction that Tom was going to tell their father the debts

could be paid; and Tom would have let her be absent when that news was

told! But she carried away the tray and came back immediately. The

feeling of injury on her own behalf could not predominate at that

moment.

Tom drew to the corner of the table near his father when the tin box

was set down and opened, and the red evening light falling on them

made conspicuous the worn, sour gloom of the dark-eyed father and the

suppressed joy in the face of the fair-complexioned son. The mother

and Maggie sat at the other end of the table, the one in blank

patience, the other in palpitating expectation.

Mr. Tulliver counted out the money, setting it in order on the table,

and then said, glancing sharply at Tom:

"There now! you see I was right enough."

He paused, looking at the money with bitter despondency.

"There's more nor three hundred wanting; it'll be a fine while before

\_I\_ can save that. Losing that forty-two pound wi' the corn was a sore

job. This world's been too many for me. It's took four year to lay

\_this\_ by; it's much if I'm above ground for another four year. I must

trusten to you to pay 'em," he went on, with a trembling voice, "if

you keep i' the same mind now you're coming o' age. But you're like

enough to bury me first."

He looked up in Tom's face with a querulous desire for some assurance.

"No, father," said Tom, speaking with energetic decision, though there

was tremor discernible in his voice too, "you will live to see the

debts all paid. You shall pay them with your own hand."

His tone implied something more than mere hopefulness or resolution. A

slight electric shock seemed to pass through Mr. Tulliver, and he kept

his eyes fixed on Tom with a look of eager inquiry, while Maggie,

unable to restrain herself, rushed to her father's side and knelt down

by him. Tom was silent a little while before he went on.

"A good while ago, my uncle Glegg lent me a little money to trade

with, and that has answered. I have three hundred and twenty pounds in

the bank."

His mother's arms were round his neck as soon as the last words were

uttered, and she said, half crying:

"Oh, my boy, I knew you'd make iverything right again, when you got a

man."

But his father was silent; the flood of emotion hemmed in all power of

speech. Both Tom and Maggie were struck with fear lest the shock of

joy might even be fatal. But the blessed relief of tears came. The

broad chest heaved, the muscles of the face gave way, and the

gray-haired man burst into loud sobs. The fit of weeping gradually

subsided, and he sat quiet, recovering the regularity of his

breathing. At last he looked up at his wife and said, in a gentle

tone:

"Bessy, you must come and kiss me now--the lad has made you amends.

You'll see a bit o' comfort again, belike."

When she had kissed him, and he had held her hand a minute, his

thoughts went back to the money.

"I wish you'd brought me the money to look at, Tom," he said,

fingering the sovereigns on the table; "I should ha' felt surer."

"You shall see it to-morrow, father," said Tom. "My uncle Deane has

appointed the creditors to meet to-morrow at the Golden Lion, and he

has ordered a dinner for them at two o'clock. My uncle Glegg and he

will both be there. It was advertised in the 'Messenger' on Saturday."

"Then Wakem knows on't!" said Mr. Tulliver, his eye kindling with

triumphant fire. "Ah!" he went on, with a long-drawn guttural

enunciation, taking out his snuff-box, the only luxury he had left

himself, and tapping it with something of his old air of defiance.

"I'll get from under \_his\_ thumb now, though I \_must\_ leave the old

mill. I thought I could ha' held out to die here--but I can't----we've

got a glass o' nothing in the house, have we, Bessy?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Tulliver, drawing out her much-reduced bunch of keys,

"there's some brandy sister Deane brought me when I was ill."

"Get it me, then; get it me. I feel a bit weak."

"Tom, my lad," he said, in a stronger voice, when he had taken some

brandy-and-water, "you shall make a speech to 'em. I'll tell 'em it's

you as got the best part o' the money. They'll see I'm honest at last,

and ha' got an honest son. Ah! Wakem 'ud be fine and glad to have a

son like mine,--a fine straight fellow,--i'stead o' that poor crooked

creatur! You'll prosper i' the world, my lad; you'll maybe see the day

when Wakem and his son 'ull be a round or two below you. You'll like

enough be ta'en into partnership, as your uncle Deane was before

you,--you're in the right way for't; and then there's nothing to

hinder your getting rich. And if ever you're rich enough--mind

this--try and get th' old mill again."

Mr. Tulliver threw himself back in his chair; his mind, which had so

long been the home of nothing but bitter discontent and foreboding,

suddenly filled, by the magic of joy, with visions of good fortune.

But some subtle influence prevented him from foreseeing the good

fortune as happening to himself.

"Shake hands wi' me, my lad," he said, suddenly putting out his hand.

"It's a great thing when a man can be proud as he's got a good son.

I've had \_that\_ luck."

Tom never lived to taste another moment so delicious as that; and

Maggie couldn't help forgetting her own grievances. Tom \_was\_ good;

and in the sweet humility that springs in us all in moments of true

admiration and gratitude, she felt that the faults he had to pardon in

her had never been redeemed, as his faults were. She felt no jealousy

this evening that, for the first time, she seemed to be thrown into

the background in her father's mind.

There was much more talk before bedtime. Mr. Tulliver naturally wanted

to hear all the particulars of Tom's trading adventures, and he

listened with growing excitement and delight. He was curious to know

what had been said on every occasion; if possible, what had been

thought; and Bob Jakin's part in the business threw him into peculiar

outbursts of sympathy with the triumphant knowingness of that

remarkable packman. Bob's juvenile history, so far as it had come

under Mr. Tulliver's knowledge, was recalled with that sense of

astonishing promise it displayed, which is observable in all

reminiscences of the childhood of great men.

It was well that there was this interest of narrative to keep under

the vague but fierce sense of triumph over Wakem, which would

otherwise have been the channel his joy would have rushed into with

dangerous force. Even as it was, that feeling from time to time gave

threats of its ultimate mastery, in sudden bursts of irrelevant

exclamation.

It was long before Mr. Tulliver got to sleep that night; and the

sleep, when it came, was filled with vivid dreams. At half-past five

o'clock in the morning, when Mrs. Tulliver was already rising, he

alarmed her by starting up with a sort of smothered shout, and looking

round in a bewildered way at the walls of the bedroom.

"What's the matter, Mr. Tulliver?" said his wife. He looked at her,

still with a puzzled expression, and said at last:

"Ah!--I was dreaming--did I make a noise?--I thought I'd got hold of

him."

Chapter VII

A Day of Reckoning

Mr. Tulliver was an essentially sober man,--able to take his glass and

not averse to it, but never exceeding the bounds of moderation. He had

naturally an active Hotspur temperament, which did not crave liquid

fire to set it aglow; his impetuosity was usually equal to an exciting

occasion without any such reinforcements; and his desire for the

brandy-and-water implied that the too sudden joy had fallen with a

dangerous shock on a frame depressed by four years of gloom and

unaccustomed hard fare. But that first doubtful tottering moment

passed, he seemed to gather strength with his gathering excitement;

and the next day, when he was seated at table with his creditors, his

eye kindling and his cheek flushed with the consciousness that he was

about to make an honorable figure once more, he looked more like the

proud, confident, warm-hearted, and warm-tempered Tulliver of old

times than might have seemed possible to any one who had met him a

week before, riding along as had been his wont for the last four years

since the sense of failure and debt had been upon him,--with his head

hanging down, casting brief, unwilling looks on those who forced

themselves on his notice. He made his speech, asserting his honest

principles with his old confident eagerness, alluding to the rascals

and the luck that had been against him, but that he had triumphed

over, to some extent, by hard efforts and the aid of a good son; and

winding up with the story of how Tom had got the best part of the

needful money. But the streak of irritation and hostile triumph seemed

to melt for a little while into purer fatherly pride and pleasure,

when, Tom's health having been proposed, and uncle Deane having taken

occasion to say a few words of eulogy on his general character and

conduct, Tom himself got up and made the single speech of his life. It

could hardly have been briefer. He thanked the gentlemen for the honor

they had done him. He was glad that he had been able to help his

father in proving his integrity and regaining his honest name; and,

for his own part, he hoped he should never undo that work and disgrace

that name. But the applause that followed was so great, and Tom looked

so gentlemanly as well as tall and straight, that Mr. Tulliver

remarked, in an explanatory manner, to his friends on his right and

left, that he had spent a deal of money on his son's education.

The party broke up in very sober fashion at five o'clock. Tom remained

in St. Ogg's to attend to some business, and Mr. Tulliver mounted his

horse to go home, and describe the memorable things that had been said

and done, to "poor Bessy and the little wench." The air of excitement

that hung about him was but faintly due to good cheer or any stimulus

but the potent wine of triumphant joy. He did not choose any back

street to-day, but rode slowly, with uplifted head and free glances,

along the principal street all the way to the bridge.

Why did he not happen to meet Wakem? The want of that coincidence

vexed him, and set his mind at work in an irritating way. Perhaps

Wakem was gone out of town to-day on purpose to avoid seeing or

hearing anything of an honorable action which might well cause him

some unpleasant twinges. If Wakem were to meet him then, Mr. Tulliver

would look straight at him, and the rascal would perhaps be forsaken a

little by his cool, domineering impudence. He would know by and by

that an honest man was not going to serve \_him\_ any longer, and lend

his honesty to fill a pocket already over-full of dishonest gains.

Perhaps the luck was beginning to turn; perhaps the Devil didn't

always hold the best cards in this world.

Simmering in this way, Mr. Tulliver approached the yardgates of

Dorlcote Mill, near enough to see a well-known figure coming out of

them on a fine black horse. They met about fifty yards from the gates,

between the great chestnuts and elms and the high bank.

"Tulliver," said Wakem, abruptly, in a haughtier tone than usual,

"what a fool's trick you did,--spreading those hard lumps on that Far

Close! I told you how it would be; but you men never learn to farm

with any method."

"Oh!" said Tulliver, suddenly boiling up; "get somebody else to farm

for you, then, as'll ask \_you\_ to teach him."

"You have been drinking, I suppose," said Wakem, really believing that

this was the meaning of Tulliver's flushed face and sparkling eyes.

"No, I've not been drinking," said Tulliver; "I want no drinking to

help me make up my mind as I'll serve no longer under a scoundrel."

"Very well! you may leave my premises to-morrow, then; hold your

insolent tongue and let me pass." (Tulliver was backing his horse

across the road to hem Wakem in.)

"No, I \_sha'n't\_ let you pass," said Tulliver, getting fiercer. "I

shall tell you what I think of you first. You're too big a raskill to

get hanged--you're----"

"Let me pass, you ignorant brute, or I'll ride over you."

Mr. Tulliver, spurring his horse and raising his whip, made a rush

forward; and Wakem's horse, rearing and staggering backward, threw his

rider from the saddle and sent him sideways on the ground. Wakem had

had the presence of mind to loose the bridle at once, and as the horse

only staggered a few paces and then stood still, he might have risen

and remounted without more inconvenience than a bruise and a shake.

But before he could rise, Tulliver was off his horse too. The sight of

the long-hated predominant man down, and in his power, threw him into

a frenzy of triumphant vengeance, which seemed to give him

preternatural agility and strength. He rushed on Wakem, who was in the

act of trying to recover his feet, grasped him by the left arm so as

to press Wakem's whole weight on the right arm, which rested on the

ground, and flogged him fiercely across the back with his riding-whip.

Wakem shouted for help, but no help came, until a woman's scream was

heard, and the cry of "Father, father!"

Suddenly, Wakem felt, something had arrested Mr. Tulliver's arm; for

the flogging ceased, and the grasp on his own arm was relaxed.

"Get away with you--go!" said Tulliver, angrily. But it was not to

Wakem that he spoke. Slowly the lawyer rose, and, as he turned his

head, saw that Tulliver's arms were being held by a girl, rather by

the fear of hurting the girl that clung to him with all her young

might.

"Oh, Luke--mother--come and help Mr. Wakem!" Maggie cried, as she

heard the longed-for footsteps.

"Help me on to that low horse," said Wakem to Luke, "then I shall

perhaps manage; though--confound it--I think this arm is sprained."

With some difficulty, Wakem was heaved on to Tulliver's horse. Then he

turned toward the miller and said, with white rage, "You'll suffer for

this, sir. Your daughter is a witness that you've assaulted me."

"I don't care," said Mr. Tulliver, in a thick, fierce voice; "go and

show your back, and tell 'em I thrashed you. Tell 'em I've made things

a bit more even i' the world."

"Ride my horse home with me," said Wakem to Luke. "By the Tofton

Ferry, not through the town."

"Father, come in!" said Maggie, imploringly. Then, seeing that Wakem

had ridden off, and that no further violence was possible, she

slackened her hold and burst into hysteric sobs, while poor Mrs.

Tulliver stood by in silence, quivering with fear. But Maggie became

conscious that as she was slackening her hold her father was beginning

to grasp her and lean on her. The surprise checked her sobs.

"I feel ill--faintish," he said. "Help me in, Bessy--I'm giddy--I've a

pain i' the head."

He walked in slowly, propped by his wife and daughter and tottered

into his arm-chair. The almost purple flush had given way to paleness,

and his hand was cold.

"Hadn't we better send for the doctor?" said Mrs. Tulliver.

He seemed to be too faint and suffering to hear her; but presently,

when she said to Maggie, "Go and seek for somebody to fetch the

doctor," he looked up at her with full comprehension, and said,

"Doctor? No--no doctor. It's my head, that's all. Help me to bed."

Sad ending to the day that had risen on them all like a beginning of

better times! But mingled seed must bear a mingled crop.

In half an hour after his father had lain down Tom came home. Bob

Jakin was with him, come to congratulate "the old master," not without

some excusable pride that he had had his share in bringing about Mr.

Tom's good luck; and Tom had thought his father would like nothing

better, as a finish to the day, than a talk with Bob. But now Tom

could only spend the evening in gloomy expectation of the unpleasant

consequences that must follow on this mad outbreak of his father's

long-smothered hate. After the painful news had been told, he sat in

silence; he had not spirit or inclination to tell his mother and

sister anything about the dinner; they hardly cared to ask it.

Apparently the mingled thread in the web of their life was so

curiously twisted together that there could be no joy without a sorrow

coming close upon it. Tom was dejected by the thought that his

exemplary effort must always be baffled by the wrong-doing of others;

Maggie was living through, over and over again, the agony of the

moment in which she had rushed to throw herself on her father's arm,

with a vague, shuddering foreboding of wretched scenes to come. Not

one of the three felt any particular alarm about Mr. Tulliver's

health; the symptoms did not recall his former dangerous attack, and

it seemed only a necessary consequence that his violent passion and

effort of strength, after many hours of unusual excitement, should

have made him feel ill. Rest would probably cure him.

Tom, tired out by his active day, fell asleep soon, and slept soundly;

it seemed to him as if he had only just come to bed, when he waked to

see his mother standing by him in the gray light of early morning.

"My boy, you must get up this minute; I've sent for the doctor, and

your father wants you and Maggie to come to him."

"Is he worse, mother?"

"He's been very ill all night with his head, but he doesn't say it's

worse; he only said suddenly, 'Bessy, fetch the boy and girl. Tell 'em

to make haste.'"

Maggie and Tom threw on their clothes hastily in the chill gray light,

and reached their father's room almost at the same moment. He was

watching for them with an expression of pain on his brow, but with

sharpened, anxious consciousness in his eyes. Mrs. Tulliver stood at

the foot of the bed, frightened and trembling, looking worn and aged

from disturbed rest. Maggie was at the bedside first, but her father's

glance was toward Tom, who came and stood next to her.

"Tom, my lad, it's come upon me as I sha'n't get up again. This

world's been too many for me, my lad, but you've done what you could

to make things a bit even. Shake hands wi' me again, my lad, before I

go away from you."

The father and son clasped hands and looked at each other an instant.

Then Tom said, trying to speak firmly,--

"Have you any wish, father--that I can fulfil, when----"

"Ay, my lad--you'll try and get the old mill back."

"Yes, father."

"And there's your mother--you'll try and make her amends, all you can,

for my bad luck--and there's the little wench----"

The father turned his eyes on Maggie with a still more eager look,

while she, with a bursting heart, sank on her knees, to be closer to

the dear, time-worn face which had been present with her through long

years, as the sign of her deepest love and hardest trial.

"You must take care of her, Tom--don't you fret, my wench--there'll

come somebody as'll love you and take your part--and you must be good

to her, my lad. I was good to \_my\_ sister. Kiss me, Maggie.--Come,

Bessy.--You'll manage to pay for a brick grave, Tom, so as your mother

and me can lie together."

He looked away from them all when he had said this, and lay silent for

some minutes, while they stood watching him, not daring to move. The

morning light was growing clearer for them, and they could see the

heaviness gathering in his face, and the dulness in his eyes. But at

last he looked toward Tom and said,--

"I had my turn--I beat him. That was nothing but fair. I never wanted

anything but what was fair."

"But, father, dear father," said Maggie, an unspeakable anxiety

predominating over her grief, "you forgive him--you forgive every one

now?"

He did not move his eyes to look at her, but he said,--

"No, my wench. I don't forgive him. What's forgiving to do? I can't

love a raskill----"

His voice had become thicker; but he wanted to say more, and moved his

lips again and again, struggling in vain to speak. At length the words

forced their way.

"Does God forgive raskills?--but if He does, He won't be hard wi' me."

His hands moved uneasily, as if he wanted them to remove some

obstruction that weighed upon him. Two or three times there fell from

him some broken words,--

"This world's--too many--honest man--puzzling----"

Soon they merged into mere mutterings; the eyes had ceased to discern;

and then came the final silence.

But not of death. For an hour or more the chest heaved, the loud, hard

breathing continued, getting gradually slower, as the cold dews

gathered on the brow.

At last there was total stillness, and poor Tulliver's dimly lighted

soul had forever ceased to be vexed with the painful riddle of this

world.

Help was come now; Luke and his wife were there, and Mr. Turnbull had

arrived, too late for everything but to say, "This is death."

Tom and Maggie went downstairs together into the room where their

father's place was empty. Their eyes turned to the same spot, and

Maggie spoke,--

"Tom, forgive me--let us always love each other"; and they clung and

wept together.

Book VI

\_The Great Temptation\_

Chapter I

A Duet in Paradise

The well-furnished drawing-room, with the open grand piano, and the

pleasant outlook down a sloping garden to a boat-house by the side of

the Floss, is Mr. Deane's. The neat little lady in mourning, whose

light-brown ringlets are falling over the colored embroidery with

which her fingers are busy, is of course Lucy Deane; and the fine

young man who is leaning down from his chair to snap the scissors in

the extremely abbreviated face of the "King Charles" lying on the

young lady's feet is no other than Mr. Stephen Guest, whose diamond

ring, attar of roses, and air of \_nonchalant\_ leisure, at twelve

o'clock in the day, are the graceful and odoriferous result of the

largest oil-mill and the most extensive wharf in St. Ogg's. There is

an apparent triviality in the action with the scissors, but your

discernment perceives at once that there is a design in it which makes

it eminently worthy of a large-headed, long-limbed young man; for you

see that Lucy wants the scissors, and is compelled, reluctant as she

may be, to shake her ringlets back, raise her soft hazel eyes, smile

playfully down on the face that is so very nearly on a level with her

knee, and holding out her little shell-pink palm, to say,--

"My scissors, please, if you can renounce the great pleasure of

persecuting my poor Minny."

The foolish scissors have slipped too far over the knuckles, it seems,

and Hercules holds out his entrapped fingers hopelessly.

"Confound the scissors! The oval lies the wrong way. Please draw them

off for me."

"Draw them off with your other hand," says Miss Lucy, roguishly.

"Oh, but that's my left hand; I'm not left-handed."

Lucy laughs, and the scissors are drawn off with gentle touches from

tiny tips, which naturally dispose Mr. Stephen for a repetition \_da

capo\_. Accordingly, he watches for the release of the scissors, that

he may get them into his possession again.

"No, no," said Lucy, sticking them in her band, "you shall not have my

scissors again,--you have strained them already. Now don't set Minny

growling again. Sit up and behave properly, and then I will tell you

some news."

"What is that?" said Stephen, throwing himself back and hanging his

right arm over the corner of his chair. He might have been sitting for

his portrait, which would have represented a rather striking young man

of five-and-twenty, with a square forehead, short dark-brown hair,

standing erect, with a slight wave at the end, like a thick crop of

corn, and a half-ardent, half-sarcastic glance from under his

well-marked horizontal eyebrows. "Is it very important news?"

"Yes, very. Guess."

"You are going to change Minny's diet, and give him three ratafias

soaked in a dessert-spoonful of cream daily?"

"Quite wrong."

"Well, then, Dr. Kenn has been preaching against buckram, and you

ladies have all been sending him a roundrobin, saying, 'This is a hard

doctrine; who can bear it?'"

"For shame!" said Lucy, adjusting her little mouth gravely. "It is

rather dull of you not to guess my news, because it is about something

I mentioned to you not very long ago."

"But you have mentioned many things to me not long ago. Does your

feminine tyranny require that when you say the thing you mean is one

of several things, I should know it immediately by that mark?"

"Yes, I know you think I am silly."

"I think you are perfectly charming."

"And my silliness is part of my charm?"

"I didn't say \_that\_."

"But I know you like women to be rather insipid. Philip Wakem betrayed

you; he said so one day when you were not here."

"Oh, I know Phil is fierce on that point; he makes it quite a personal

matter. I think he must be love-sick for some unknown lady,--some

exalted Beatrice whom he met abroad."

"By the by," said Lucy, pausing in her work, "it has just occurred to

me that I never found out whether my cousin Maggie will object to see

Philip, as her brother does. Tom will not enter a room where Philip

is, if he knows it; perhaps Maggie may be the same, and then we

sha'n't be able to sing our glees, shall we?"

"What! is your cousin coming to stay with you?" said Stephen, with a

look of slight annoyance.

"Yes; that was my news, which you have forgotten. She's going to leave

her situation, where she has been nearly two years, poor thing,--ever

since her father's death; and she will stay with me a month or

two,--many months, I hope."

"And am I bound to be pleased at that news?"

"Oh no, not at all," said Lucy, with a little air of pique. "\_I\_ am

pleased, but that, of course, is no reason why \_you\_ should be

pleased. There is no girl in the world I love so well as my cousin

Maggie."

"And you will be inseparable I suppose, when she comes. There will be

no possibility of a \_tÃªte-Ã -tÃªte\_ with you any more, unless you can

find an admirer for her, who will pair off with her occasionally. What

is the ground of dislike to Philip? He might have been a resource."

"It is a family quarrel with Philip's father. There were very painful

circumstances, I believe. I never quite understood them, or knew them

all. My uncle Tulliver was unfortunate and lost all his property, and

I think he considered Mr. Wakem was somehow the cause of it. Mr. Wakem

bought Dorlcote Mill, my uncle's old place, where he always lived. You

must remember my uncle Tulliver, don't you?"

"No," said Stephen, with rather supercilious indifference. "I've

always known the name, and I dare say I knew the man by sight, apart

from his name. I know half the names and faces in the neighborhood in

that detached, disjointed way."

"He was a very hot-tempered man. I remember, when I was a little girl

and used to go to see my cousins, he often frightened me by talking as

if he were angry. Papa told me there was a dreadful quarrel, the very

day before my uncle's death, between him and Mr. Wakem, but it was

hushed up. That was when you were in London. Papa says my uncle was

quite mistaken in many ways; his mind had become embittered. But Tom

and Maggie must naturally feel it very painful to be reminded of these

things. They have had so much, so very much trouble. Maggie was at

school with me six years ago, when she was fetched away because of her

father's misfortunes, and she has hardly had any pleasure since, I

think. She has been in a dreary situation in a school since uncle's

death, because she is determined to be independent, and not live with

aunt Pullet; and I could hardly wish her to come to me then, because

dear mamma was ill, and everything was so sad. That is why I want her

to come to me now, and have a long, long holiday."

"Very sweet and angelic of you," said Stephen, looking at her with an

admiring smile; "and all the more so if she has the conversational

qualities of her mother."

"Poor aunty! You are cruel to ridicule her. She is very valuable to

\_me\_, I know. She manages the house beautifully,--much better than any

stranger would,--and she was a great comfort to me in mamma's

illness."

"Yes, but in point of companionship one would prefer that she should

be represented by her brandy-cherries and cream-cakes. I think with a

shudder that her daughter will always be present in person, and have

no agreeable proxies of that kind,--a fat, blond girl, with round blue

eyes, who will stare at us silently."

"Oh yes!" exclaimed Lucy, laughing wickedly, and clapping her hands,

"that is just my cousin Maggie. You must have seen her!"

"No, indeed; I'm only guessing what Mrs. Tulliver's daughter must be;

and then if she is to banish Philip, our only apology for a tenor,

that will be an additional bore."

"But I hope that may not be. I think I will ask you to call on Philip

and tell him Maggie is coming to-morrow. He is quite aware of Tom's

feeling, and always keeps out of his way; so he will understand, if

you tell him, that I asked you to warn him not to come until I write

to ask him."

"I think you had better write a pretty note for me to take; Phil is so

sensitive, you know, the least thing might frighten him off coming at

all, and we had hard work to get him. I can never induce him to come

to the park; he doesn't like my sisters, I think. It is only your

faÃ«ry touch that can lay his ruffled feathers."

Stephen mastered the little hand that was straying toward the table,

and touched it lightly with his lips. Little Lucy felt very proud and

happy. She and Stephen were in that stage of courtship which makes the

most exquisite moment of youth, the freshest blossom-time of

passion,--when each is sure of the other's love, but no formal

declaration has been made, and all is mutual divination, exalting the

most trivial word, the lightest gesture, into thrills delicate and

delicious as wafted jasmine scent. The explicitness of an engagement

wears off this finest edge of susceptibility; it is jasmine gathered

and presented in a large bouquet.

"But it is really odd that you should have hit so exactly on Maggie's

appearance and manners," said the cunning Lucy, moving to reach her

desk, "because she might have been like her brother, you know; and Tom

has not round eyes; and he is as far as possible from staring at

people."

"Oh, I suppose he is like the father; he seems to be as proud as

Lucifer. Not a brilliant companion, though, I should think."

"I like Tom. He gave me my Minny when I lost Lolo; and papa is very

fond of him: he says Tom has excellent principles. It was through him

that his father was able to pay all his debts before he died."

"Oh, ah; I've heard about that. I heard your father and mine talking

about it a little while ago, after dinner, in one of their

interminable discussions about business. They think of doing something

for young Tulliver; he saved them from a considerable loss by riding

home in some marvellous way, like Turpin, to bring them news about the

stoppage of a bank, or something of that sort. But I was rather drowsy

at the time."

Stephen rose from his seat, and sauntered to the piano, humming in

falsetto, "Graceful Consort," as he turned over the volume of "The

Creation," which stood open on the desk.

"Come and sing this," he said, when he saw Lucy rising.

"What, 'Graceful Consort'? I don't think it suits your voice."

"Never mind; it exactly suits my feeling, which, Philip will have it,

is the grand element of good singing. I notice men with indifferent

voices are usually of that opinion."

"Philip burst into one of his invectives against 'The Creation' the

other day," said Lucy, seating herself at the piano. "He says it has a

sort of sugared complacency and flattering make-believe in it, as if

it were written for the birthday \_fÃªte\_ of a German Grand-Duke."

"Oh, pooh! He is the fallen Adam with a soured temper. We are Adam and

Eve unfallen, in Paradise. Now, then,--the recitative, for the sake of

the moral. You will sing the whole duty of woman,--'And from obedience

grows my pride and happiness.'"

"Oh no, I shall not respect an Adam who drags the \_tempo\_, as you

will," said Lucy, beginning to play the duet.

Surely the only courtship unshaken by doubts and fears must be that in

which the lovers can sing together. The sense of mutual fitness that

springs from the two deep notes fulfilling expectation just at the

right moment between the notes of the silvery soprano, from the

perfect accord of descending thirds and fifths, from the preconcerted

loving chase of a fugue, is likely enough to supersede any immediate

demand for less impassioned forms of agreement. The contralto will not

care to catechise the bass; the tenor will foresee no embarrassing

dearth of remark in evenings spent with the lovely soprano. In the

provinces, too, where music was so scarce in that remote time, how

could the musical people avoid falling in love with each other? Even

political principle must have been in danger of relaxation under such

circumstances; and the violin, faithful to rotten boroughs, must have

been tempted to fraternize in a demoralizing way with a reforming

violoncello. In that case, the linnet-throated soprano and the

full-toned bass singing,--

"With thee delight is ever new,

With thee is life incessant bliss,"

believed what they sang all the more \_because\_ they sang it.

"Now for Raphael's great song," said Lucy, when they had finished the

duet. "You do the 'heavy beasts' to perfection."

"That sounds complimentary," said Stephen, looking at his watch. "By

Jove, it's nearly half-past one! Well, I can just sing this."

Stephen delivered with admirable ease the deep notes representing the

tread of the heavy beasts; but when a singer has an audience of two,

there is room for divided sentiments. Minny's mistress was charmed;

but Minny, who had intrenched himself, trembling, in his basket as

soon as the music began, found this thunder so little to his taste

that he leaped out and scampered under the remotest \_chiffonnier\_, as

the most eligible place in which a small dog could await the crack of

doom.

"Adieu, 'graceful consort,'" said Stephen, buttoning his coat across

when he had done singing, and smiling down from his tall height, with

the air of rather a patronizing lover, at the little lady on the

music-stool. "My bliss is not incessant, for I must gallop home. I

promised to be there at lunch."

"You will not be able to call on Philip, then? It is of no

consequence; I have said everything in my note."

"You will be engaged with your cousin to-morrow, I suppose?"

"Yes, we are going to have a little family-party. My cousin Tom will

dine with us; and poor aunty will have her two children together for

the first time. It will be very pretty; I think a great deal about

it."

"But I may come the next day?"

"Oh yes! Come and be introduced to my cousin Maggie; though you can

hardly be said not to have seen her, you have described her so well."

"Good-bye, then." And there was that slight pressure of the hands, and

momentary meeting of the eyes, which will often leave a little lady

with a slight flush and smile on her face that do not subside

immediately when the door is closed, and with an inclination to walk

up and down the room rather than to seat herself quietly at her

embroidery, or other rational and improving occupation. At least this

was the effect on Lucy; and you will not, I hope, consider it an

indication of vanity predominating over more tender impulses, that she

just glanced in the chimney-glass as her walk brought her near it. The

desire to know that one has not looked an absolute fright during a few

hours of conversation may be construed as lying within the bounds of a

laudable benevolent consideration for others. And Lucy had so much of

this benevolence in her nature that I am inclined to think her small

egoisms were impregnated with it, just as there are people not

altogether unknown to you whose small benevolences have a predominant

and somewhat rank odor of egoism. Even now, that she is walking up and

down with a little triumphant flutter of her girlish heart at the

sense that she is loved by the person of chief consequence in her

small world, you may see in her hazel eyes an ever-present sunny

benignity, in which the momentary harmless flashes of personal vanity

are quite lost; and if she is happy in thinking of her lover, it is

because the thought of him mingles readily with all the gentle

affections and good-natured offices with which she fills her peaceful

days. Even now, her mind, with that instantaneous alternation which

makes two currents of feeling or imagination seem simultaneous, is

glancing continually from Stephen to the preparations she has only

half finished in Maggie's room. Cousin Maggie should be treated as

well as the grandest lady-visitor,--nay, better, for she should have

Lucy's best prints and drawings in her bedroom, and the very finest

bouquet of spring flowers on her table. Maggie would enjoy all that,

she was so found of pretty things! And there was poor aunt Tulliver,

that no one made any account of, she was to be surprised with the

present of a cap of superlative quality, and to have her health drunk

in a gratifying manner, for which Lucy was going to lay a plot with

her father this evening. Clearly, she had not time to indulge in long

reveries about her own happy love-affairs. With this thought she

walked toward the door, but paused there.

"What's the matter, then, Minny?" she said, stooping in answer to some

whimpering of that small quadruped, and lifting his glossy head

against her pink cheek. "Did you think I was going without you? Come,

then, let us go and see Sinbad."

Sinbad was Lucy's chestnut horse, that she always fed with her own

hand when he was turned out in the paddock. She was fond of feeding

dependent creatures, and knew the private tastes of all the animals

about the house, delighting in the little rippling sounds of her

canaries when their beaks were busy with fresh seed, and in the small

nibbling pleasures of certain animals which, lest she should appear

too trivial, I will here call "the more familiar rodents."

Was not Stephen Guest right in his decided opinion that this slim

maiden of eighteen was quite the sort of wife a man would not be

likely to repent of marrying,--a woman who was loving and thoughtful

for other women, not giving them Judas-kisses with eyes askance on

their welcome defects, but with real care and vision for their

half-hidden pains and mortifications, with long ruminating enjoyment

of little pleasures prepared for them? Perhaps the emphasis of his

admiration did not fall precisely on this rarest quality in her;

perhaps he approved his own choice of her chiefly because she did not

strike him as a remarkable rarity. A man likes his wife to be pretty;

well, Lucy was pretty, but not to a maddening extent. A man likes his

wife to be accomplished, gentle, affectionate, and not stupid; and

Lucy had all these qualifications. Stephen was not surprised to find

himself in love with her, and was conscious of excellent judgment in

preferring her to Miss Leyburn, the daughter of the county member,

although Lucy was only the daughter of his father's subordinate

partner; besides, he had had to defy and overcome a slight

unwillingness and disappointment in his father and sisters,--a

circumstance which gives a young man an agreeable consciousness of his

own dignity. Stephen was aware that he had sense and independence

enough to choose the wife who was likely to make him happy, unbiassed

by any indirect considerations. He meant to choose Lucy; she was a

little darling, and exactly the sort of woman he had always admired.

Chapter II

First Impressions

"He is very clever, Maggie," said Lucy. She was kneeling on a

footstool at Maggie's feet, after placing that dark lady in the large

crimson-velvet chair. "I feel sure you will like him. I hope you

will."

"I shall be very difficult to please," said Maggie, smiling, and

holding up one of Lucy's long curls, that the sunlight might shine

through it. "A gentleman who thinks he is good enough for Lucy must

expect to be sharply criticised."

"Indeed, he's a great deal too good for me. And sometimes, when he is

away, I almost think it can't really be that he loves me. But I can

never doubt it when he is with me, though I couldn't bear any one but

you to know that I feel in that way, Maggie."

"Oh, then, if I disapprove of him you can give him up, since you are

not engaged," said Maggie, with playful gravity.

"I would rather not be engaged. When people are engaged, they begin to

think of being married soon," said Lucy, too thoroughly preoccupied to

notice Maggie's joke; "and I should like everything to go on for a

long while just as it is. Sometimes I am quite frightened lest Stephen

should say that he has spoken to papa; and from something that fell

from papa the other day, I feel sure he and Mr. Guest are expecting

that. And Stephen's sisters are very civil to me now. At first, I

think they didn't like his paying me attention; and that was natural.

It \_does\_ seem out of keeping that I should ever live in a great place

like the Park House, such a little insignificant thing as I am."

"But people are not expected to be large in proportion to the houses

they live in, like snails," said Maggie, laughing. "Pray, are Mr.

Guest's sisters giantesses?"

"Oh no; and not handsome,--that is, not very," said Lucy,

half-penitent at this uncharitable remark. "But \_he\_ is--at least he

is generally considered very handsome."

"Though you are unable to share that opinion?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Lucy, blushing pink over brow and neck. "It

is a bad plan to raise expectation; you will perhaps be disappointed.

But I have prepared a charming surprise for \_him;\_ I shall have a

glorious laugh against him. I shall not tell you what it is, though."

Lucy rose from her knees and went to a little distance, holding her

pretty head on one side, as if she had been arranging Maggie for a

portrait, and wished to judge of the general effect.

"Stand up a moment, Maggie."

"What is your pleasure now?" said Maggie, smiling languidly as she

rose from her chair and looked down on her slight, aerial cousin,

whose figure was quite subordinate to her faultless drapery of silk

and crape.

Lucy kept her contemplative attitude a moment or two in silence, and

then said,--

"I can't think what witchery it is in you, Maggie, that makes you look

best in shabby clothes; though you really must have a new dress now.

But do you know, last night I was trying to fancy you in a handsome,

fashionable dress, and do what I would, that old limp merino would

come back as the only right thing for you. I wonder if Marie

Antoinette looked all the grander when her gown was darned at the

elbows. Now, if \_I\_ were to put anything shabby on, I should be quite

unnoticeable. I should be a mere rag."

"Oh, quite," said Maggie, with mock gravity. "You would be liable to

be swept out of the room with the cobwebs and carpet-dust, and to find

yourself under the grate, like Cinderella. Mayn't I sit down now?"

"Yes, now you may," said Lucy, laughing. Then, with an air of serious

reflection, unfastening her large jet brooch, "But you must change

brooches, Maggie; that little butterfly looks silly on you."

"But won't that mar the charming effect of my consistent shabbiness?"

said Maggie, seating herself submissively, while Lucy knelt again and

unfastened the contemptible butterfly. "I wish my mother were of your

opinion, for she was fretting last night because this is my best

frock. I've been saving my money to pay for some lessons; I shall

never get a better situation without more accomplishments."

Maggie gave a little sigh.

"Now, don't put on that sad look again," said Lucy, pinning the large

brooch below Maggie's fine throat. "You're forgetting that you've left

that dreary schoolroom behind you, and have no little girls' clothes

to mend."

"Yes," said Maggie. "It is with me as I used to think it would be with

the poor uneasy white bear I saw at the show. I thought he must have

got so stupid with the habit of turning backward and forward in that

narrow space that he would keep doing it if they set him free. One

gets a bad habit of being unhappy."

"But I shall put you under a discipline of pleasure that will make you

lose that bad habit," said Lucy, sticking the black butterfly absently

in her own collar, while her eyes met Maggie's affectionately.

"You dear, tiny thing," said Maggie, in one of her bursts of loving

admiration, "you enjoy other people's happiness so much, I believe you

would do without any of your own. I wish I were like you."

"I've never been tried in that way," said Lucy. "I've always been so

happy. I don't know whether I could bear much trouble; I never had any

but poor mamma's death. You \_have\_ been tried, Maggie; and I'm sure

you feel for other people quite as much as I do."

"No, Lucy," said Maggie, shaking her head slowly, "I don't enjoy their

happiness as you do, else I should be more contented. I do feel for

them when they are in trouble; I don't think I could ever bear to make

any one \_un\_happy; and yet I often hate myself, because I get angry

sometimes at the sight of happy people. I think I get worse as I get

older, more selfish. That seems very dreadful."

"Now, Maggie!" said Lucy, in a tone of remonstrance, "I don't believe

a word of that. It is all a gloomy fancy, just because you are

depressed by a dull, wearisome life."

"Well, perhaps it is," said Maggie, resolutely clearing away the

clouds from her face with a bright smile, and throwing herself

backward in her chair. "Perhaps it comes from the school diet,--watery

rice-pudding spiced with Pinnock. Let us hope it will give way before

my mother's custards and this charming Geoffrey Crayon."

Maggie took up the "Sketch Book," which lay by her on the table.

"Do I look fit to be seen with this little brooch?" said Lucy, going

to survey the effect in the chimney-glass.

"Oh no, Mr. Guest will be obliged to go out of the room again if he

sees you in it. Pray make haste and put another on."

Lucy hurried out of the room, but Maggie did not take the opportunity

of opening her book; she let it fall on her knees, while her eyes

wandered to the window, where she could see the sunshine falling on

the rich clumps of spring flowers and on the long hedge of laurels,

and beyond, the silvery breadth of the dear old Floss, that at this

distance seemed to be sleeping in a morning holiday. The sweet fresh

garden-scent came through the open window, and the birds were busy

flitting and alighting, gurgling and singing. Yet Maggie's eyes began

to fill with tears. The sight of the old scenes had made the rush of

memories so painful that even yesterday she had only been able to

rejoice in her mother's restored comfort and Tom's brotherly

friendliness as we rejoice in good news of friends at a distance,

rather than in the presence of a happiness which we share. Memory and

imagination urged upon her a sense of privation too keen to let her

taste what was offered in the transient present. Her future, she

thought, was likely to be worse than her past, for after her years of

contented renunciation, she had slipped back into desire and longing;

she found joyless days of distasteful occupation harder and harder;

she found the image of the intense and varied life she yearned for,

and despaired of, becoming more and more importunate. The sound of the

opening door roused her, and hastily wiping away her tears, she began

to turn over the leaves of her book.

"There is one pleasure, I know, Maggie, that your deepest dismalness

will never resist," said Lucy, beginning to speak as soon as she

entered the room. "That is music, and I mean you to have quite a

riotous feast of it. I mean you to get up your playing again, which

used to be so much better than mine, when we were at Laceham."

"You would have laughed to see me playing the little girls' tunes over

and over to them, when I took them to practise," said Maggie, "just

for the sake of fingering the dear keys again. But I don't know

whether I could play anything more difficult now than 'Begone, dull

care!'"

"I know what a wild state of joy you used to be in when the glee-men

came round," said Lucy, taking up her embroidery; "and we might have

all those old glees that you used to love so, if I were certain that

you don't feel exactly as Tom does about some things."

"I should have thought there was nothing you might be more certain

of," said Maggie, smiling.

"I ought rather to have said, one particular thing. Because if you

feel just as he does about that, we shall want our third voice. St.

Ogg's is so miserably provided with musical gentlemen. There are

really only Stephen and Philip Wakem who have any knowledge of music,

so as to be able to sing a part."

Lucy had looked up from her work as she uttered the last sentence, and

saw that there was a change in Maggie's face.

"Does it hurt you to hear the name mentioned, Maggie? If it does, I

will not speak of him again. I know Tom will not see him if he can

avoid it."

"I don't feel at all as Tom does on that subject," said Maggie, rising

and going to the window as if she wanted to see more of the landscape.

"I've always liked Philip Wakem ever since I was a little girl, and

saw him at Lorton. He was so good when Tom hurt his foot."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Lucy. "Then you won't mind his coming

sometimes, and we can have much more music than we could without him.

I'm very fond of poor Philip, only I wish he were not so morbid about

his deformity. I suppose it \_is\_ his deformity that makes him so sad,

and sometimes bitter. It is certainly very piteous to see his poor

little crooked body and pale face among great, strong people."

"But, Lucy----" said Maggie, trying to arrest the prattling stream.

"Ah, there is the door-bell. That must be Stephen," Lucy went on, not

noticing Maggie's faint effort to speak. "One of the things I most

admire in Stephen is that he makes a greater friend of Philip than any

one."

It was too late for Maggie to speak now; the drawingroom door was

opening, and Minny was already growling in a small way at the entrance

of a tall gentleman, who went up to Lucy and took her hand with a

half-polite, half-tender glance and tone of inquiry, which seemed to

indicate that he was unconscious of any other presence.

"Let me introduce you to my cousin, Miss Tulliver," said Lucy, turning

with wicked enjoyment toward Maggie, who now approached from the

farther window. "This is Mr. Stephen Guest."

For one instant Stephen could not conceal his astonishment at the

sight of this tall, dark-eyed nymph with her jet-black coronet of

hair; the next, Maggie felt herself, for the first time in her life,

receiving the tribute of a very deep blush and a very deep bow from a

person toward whom she herself was conscious of timidity.

This new experience was very agreeable to her, so agreeable that it

almost effaced her previous emotion about Philip. There was a new

brightness in her eyes, and a very becoming flush on her cheek, as she

seated herself.

"I hope you perceive what a striking likeness you drew the day before

yesterday," said Lucy, with a pretty laugh of triumph. She enjoyed her

lover's confusion; the advantage was usually on his side.

"This designing cousin of yours quite deceived me, Miss Tulliver,"

said Stephen, seating himself by Lucy, and stooping to play with

Minny, only looking at Maggie furtively. "She said you had light hair

and blue eyes."

"Nay, it was you who said so," remonstrated Lucy. "I only refrained

from destroying your confidence in your own second-sight."

"I wish I could always err in the same way," said Stephen, "and find

reality so much more beautiful than my preconceptions."

"Now you have proved yourself equal to the occasion," said Maggie,

"and said what it was incumbent on you to say under the

circumstances."

She flashed a slightly defiant look at him; it was clear to her that

he had been drawing a satirical portrait of her beforehand. Lucy had

said he was inclined to be satirical, and Maggie had mentally supplied

the addition, "and rather conceited."

"An alarming amount of devil there," was Stephen's first thought. The

second, when she had bent over her work, was, "I wish she would look

at me again." The next was to answer,--

"I suppose all phrases of mere compliment have their turn to be true.

A man is occasionally grateful when he says 'Thank you.' It's rather

hard upon him that he must use the same words with which all the world

declines a disagreeable invitation, don't you think so, Miss

Tulliver?"

"No," said Maggie, looking at him with her direct glance; "if we use

common words on a great occasion, they are the more striking, because

they are felt at once to have a particular meaning, like old banners,

or every-day clothes, hung up in a sacred place."

"Then my compliment ought to be eloquent," said Stephen, really not

quite knowing what he said while Maggie looked at him, "seeing that

the words were so far beneath the occasion."

"No compliment can be eloquent, except as an expression of

indifference," said Maggie, flushing a little.

Lucy was rather alarmed; she thought Stephen and Maggie were not going

to like each other. She had always feared lest Maggie should appear

too old and clever to please that critical gentleman. "Why, dear

Maggie," she interposed, "you have always pretended that you are too

fond of being admired; and now, I think, you are angry because some

one ventures to admire you."

"Not at all," said Maggie; "I like too well to feel that I am admired,

but compliments never make me feel that."

"I will never pay you a compliment again, Miss Tulliver," said

Stephen.

"Thank you; that will be a proof of respect."

Poor Maggie! She was so unused to society that she could take nothing

as a matter of course, and had never in her life spoken from the lips

merely, so that she must necessarily appear absurd to more experienced

ladies, from the excessive feeling she was apt to throw into very

trivial incidents. But she was even conscious herself of a little

absurdity in this instance. It was true she had a theoretic objection

to compliments, and had once said impatiently to Philip that she

didn't see why women were to be told with a simper that they were

beautiful, any more than old men were to be told that they were

venerable; still, to be so irritated by a common practice in the case

of a stranger like Mr. Stephen Guest, and to care about his having

spoken slightingly of her before he had seen her, was certainly

unreasonable, and as soon as she was silent she began to be ashamed of

herself. It did not occur to her that her irritation was due to the

pleasanter emotion which preceded it, just as when we are satisfied

with a sense of glowing warmth an innocent drop of cold water may fall

upon us as a sudden smart.

Stephen was too well bred not to seem unaware that the previous

conversation could have been felt embarrassing, and at once began to

talk of impersonal matters, asking Lucy if she knew when the bazaar

was at length to take place, so that there might be some hope of

seeing her rain the influence of her eyes on objects more grateful

than those worsted flowers that were growing under her fingers.

"Some day next month, I believe," said Lucy. "But your sisters are

doing more for it than I am; they are to have the largest stall."

"Ah yes; but they carry on their manufactures in their own

sitting-room, where I don't intrude on them. I see you are not

addicted to the fashionable vice of fancy-work, Miss Tulliver," said

Stephen, looking at Maggie's plain hemming.

"No," said Maggie, "I can do nothing more difficult or more elegant

than shirt-making."

"And your plain sewing is so beautiful, Maggie," said Lucy, "that I

think I shall beg a few specimens of you to show as fancy-work. Your

exquisite sewing is quite a mystery to me, you used to dislike that

sort of work so much in old days."

"It is a mystery easily explained, dear," said Maggie, looking up

quietly. "Plain sewing was the only thing I could get money by, so I

was obliged to try and do it well."

Lucy, good and simple as she was, could not help blushing a little.

She did not quite like that Stephen should know that; Maggie need not

have mentioned it. Perhaps there was some pride in the confession,--

the pride of poverty that will not be ashamed of itself. But if Maggie

had been the queen of coquettes she could hardly have invented a means

of giving greater piquancy to her beauty in Stephen's eyes; I am not

sure that the quiet admission of plain sewing and poverty would have

done alone, but assisted by the beauty, they made Maggie more unlike

other women even than she had seemed at first.

"But I can knit, Lucy," Maggie went on, "if that will be of any use

for your bazaar."

"Oh yes, of infinite use. I shall set you to work with scarlet wool

to-morrow. But your sister is the most enviable person," continued

Lucy, turning to Stephen, "to have the talent of modelling. She is

doing a wonderful bust of Dr. Kenn entirely from memory."

"Why, if she can remember to put the eyes very near together, and the

corners of the mouth very far apart, the likeness can hardly fail to

be striking in St. Ogg's."

"Now that is very wicked of you," said Lucy, looking rather hurt. "I

didn't think you would speak disrespectfully of Dr. Kenn."

"I say anything disrespectful of Dr. Kenn? Heaven forbid! But I am not

bound to respect a libellous bust of him. I think Kenn one of the

finest fellows in the world. I don't care much about the tall

candlesticks he has put on the communion-table, and I shouldn't like

to spoil my temper by getting up to early prayers every morning. But

he's the only man I ever knew personally who seems to me to have

anything of the real apostle in him,--a man who has eight hundred

a-year and is contented with deal furniture and boiled beef because he

gives away two-thirds of his income. That was a very fine thing of

him,--taking into his house that poor lad Grattan, who shot his mother

by accident. He sacrifices more time than a less busy man could spare,

to save the poor fellow from getting into a morbid state of mind about

it. He takes the lad out with him constantly, I see."

"That is beautiful," said Maggie, who had let her work fall, and was

listening with keen interest. "I never knew any one who did such things."

"And one admires that sort of action in Kenn all the more," said

Stephen, "because his manners in general are rather cold and severe.

There's nothing sugary and maudlin about him."

"Oh, I think he's a perfect character!" said Lucy, with pretty

enthusiasm.

"No; there I can't agree with you," said Stephen, shaking his head

with sarcastic gravity.

"Now, what fault can you point out in him?"

"He's an Anglican."

"Well, those are the right views, I think," said Lucy, gravely.

"That settles the question in the abstract," said Stephen, "but not

from a parliamentary point of view. He has set the Dissenters and the

Church people by the ears; and a rising senator like myself, of whose

services the country is very much in need, will find it inconvenient

when he puts up for the honor of representing St. Ogg's in

Parliament."

"Do you really think of that?" said Lucy, her eyes brightening with a

proud pleasure that made her neglect the argumentative interests of

Anglicanism.

"Decidedly, whenever old Mr. Leyburn's public spirit and gout induce

him to give way. My father's heart is set on it; and gifts like mine,

you know"--here Stephen drew himself up, and rubbed his large white

hands over his hair with playful self-admiration--"gifts like mine

involve great responsibilities. Don't you think so, Miss Tulliver?"

"Yes," said Maggie, smiling, but not looking up; "so much fluency and

self-possession should not be wasted entirely on private occasions."

"Ah, I see how much penetration you have," said Stephen. "You have

discovered already that I am talkative and impudent. Now superficial

people never discern that, owing to my manner, I suppose."

"She doesn't look at me when I talk of myself," he thought, while his

listeners were laughing. "I must try other subjects."

Did Lucy intend to be present at the meeting of the Book Club next

week? was the next question. Then followed the recommendation to

choose Southey's "Life of Cowper," unless she were inclined to be

philosophical, and startle the ladies of St. Ogg's by voting for one

of the Bridgewater Treatises. Of course Lucy wished to know what these

alarmingly learned books were; and as it is always pleasant to improve

the minds of ladies by talking to them at ease on subjects of which

they know nothing, Stephen became quite brilliant in an account of

Buckland's Treatise, which he had just been reading. He was rewarded

by seeing Maggie let her work fall, and gradually get so absorbed in

his wonderful geological story that she sat looking at him, leaning

forward with crossed arms, and with an entire absence of

self-consciousness, as if he had been the snuffiest of old professors,

and she a downy-lipped alumna. He was so fascinated by the clear,

large gaze that at last he forgot to look away from it occasionally

toward Lucy; but she, sweet child, was only rejoicing that Stephen was

proving to Maggie how clever he was, and that they would certainly be

good friends after all.

"I will bring you the book, shall I, Miss Tulliver?" said Stephen,

when he found the stream of his recollections running rather shallow.

"There are many illustrations in it that you will like to see."

"Oh, thank you," said Maggie, blushing with returning

self-consciousness at this direct address, and taking up her work

again.

"No, no," Lucy interposed. "I must forbid your plunging Maggie in

books. I shall never get her away from them; and I want her to have

delicious do-nothing days, filled with boating and chatting and riding

and driving; that is the holiday she needs."

"Apropos!" said Stephen, looking at his watch. "Shall we go out for a

row on the river now? The tide will suit for us to the Tofton way, and

we can walk back."

That was a delightful proposition to Maggie, for it was years since

she had been on the river. When she was gone to put on her bonnet,

Lucy lingered to give an order to the servant, and took the

opportunity of telling Stephen that Maggie had no objection to seeing

Philip, so that it was a pity she had sent that note the day before

yesterday. But she would write another to-morrow and invite him.

"I'll call and beat him up to-morrow," said Stephen, "and bring him

with me in the evening, shall I? My sisters will want to call on you

when I tell them your cousin is with you. I must leave the field clear

for them in the morning."

"Oh yes, pray bring him," said Lucy. "And you \_will\_ like Maggie,

sha'n't you?" she added, in a beseeching tone. "Isn't she a dear,

noble-looking creature?"

"Too tall," said Stephen, smiling down upon her, "and a little too

fiery. She is not my type of woman, you know."

Gentlemen, you are aware, are apt to impart these imprudent

confidences to ladies concerning their unfavorable opinion of sister

fair ones. That is why so many women have the advantage of knowing

that they are secretly repulsive to men who have self-denyingly made

ardent love to them. And hardly anything could be more distinctively

characteristic of Lucy than that she both implicitly believed what

Stephen said, and was determined that Maggie should not know it. But

you, who have a higher logic than the verbal to guide you, have

already foreseen, as the direct sequence to that unfavorable opinion

of Stephen's, that he walked down to the boathouse calculating, by the

aid of a vivid imagination, that Maggie must give him her hand at

least twice in consequence of this pleasant boating plan, and that a

gentleman who wishes ladies to look at him is advantageously situated

when he is rowing them in a boat. What then? Had he fallen in love

with this surprising daughter of Mrs. Tulliver at first sight?

Certainly not. Such passions are never heard of in real life. Besides,

he was in love already, and half-engaged to the dearest little

creature in the world; and he was not a man to make a fool of himself

in any way. But when one is five-and-twenty, one has not chalk-stones

at one's finger-ends that the touch of a handsome girl should be

entirely indifferent. It was perfectly natural and safe to admire

beauty and enjoy looking at it,--at least under such circumstances as

the present. And there was really something very interesting about

this girl, with her poverty and troubles; it was gratifying to see the

friendship between the two cousins. Generally, Stephen admitted, he

was not fond of women who had any peculiarity of character, but here

the peculiarity seemed really of a superior kind, and provided one is

not obliged to marry such women, why, they certainly make a variety in

social intercourse.

Maggie did not fulfil Stephen's hope by looking at him during the

first quarter of an hour; her eyes were too full of the old banks that

she knew so well. She felt lonely, cut off from Philip,--the only

person who had ever seemed to love her devotedly, as she had always

longed to be loved. But presently the rhythmic movement of the oars

attracted her, and she thought she should like to learn how to row.

This roused her from her reverie, and she asked if she might take an

oar. It appeared that she required much teaching, and she became

ambitious. The exercise brought the warm blood into her cheeks, and

made her inclined to take her lesson merrily.

"I shall not be satisfied until I can manage both oars, and row you

and Lucy," she said, looking very bright as she stepped out of the

boat. Maggie, we know, was apt to forget the thing she was doing, and

she had chosen an inopportune moment for her remark; her foot slipped,

but happily Mr. Stephen Guest held her hand, and kept her up with a

firm grasp.

"You have not hurt yourself at all, I hope?" he said, bending to look

in her face with anxiety. It was very charming to be taken care of in

that kind, graceful manner by some one taller and stronger than one's

self. Maggie had never felt just in the same way before.

When they reached home again, they found uncle and aunt Pullet seated

with Mrs. Tulliver in the drawing-room, and Stephen hurried away,

asking leave to come again in the evening.

"And pray bring with you the volume of Purcell that you took away,"

said Lucy. "I want Maggie to hear your best songs."

Aunt Pullet, under the certainty that Maggie would be invited to go

out with Lucy, probably to Park House, was much shocked at the

shabbiness of her clothes, which when witnessed by the higher society

of St. Ogg's, would be a discredit to the family, that demanded a

strong and prompt remedy; and the consultation as to what would be

most suitable to this end from among the superfluities of Mrs.

Pullet's wardrobe was one that Lucy as well as Mrs. Tulliver entered

into with some zeal. Maggie must really have an evening dress as soon

as possible, and she was about the same height as aunt Pullet.

"But she's so much broader across the shoulders than I am, it's very

ill-convenient," said Mrs. Pullet, "else she might wear that beautiful

black brocade o' mine without any alteration; and her arms are beyond

everything," added Mrs. Pullet, sorrowfully, as she lifted Maggie's

large round arm, "She'd never get my sleeves on."

"Oh, never mind that, aunt; send us the dress," said Lucy. "I don't

mean Maggie to have long sleeves, and I have abundance of black lace

for trimming. Her arms will look beautiful."

"Maggie's arms \_are\_ a pretty shape," said Mrs. Tulliver. "They're

like mine used to be, only mine was never brown; I wish she'd had

\_our\_ family skin."

"Nonsense, aunty!" said Lucy, patting her aunt Tulliver's shoulder,

"you don't understand those things. A painter would think Maggie's

complexion beautiful."

"Maybe, my dear," said Mrs. Tulliver, submissively. "You know better

than I do. Only when I was young a brown skin wasn't thought well on

among respectable folks."

"No," said uncle Pullet, who took intense interest in the ladies'

conversation as he sucked his lozenges. "Though there was a song about

the 'Nut-brown Maid' too; I think she was crazy,--crazy Kate,--but I

can't justly remember."

"Oh dear, dear!" said Maggie, laughing, but impatient; "I think that

will be the end of \_my\_ brown skin, if it is always to be talked about

so much."

Chapter III

Confidential Moments

When Maggie went up to her bedroom that night, it appeared that she

was not at all inclined to undress. She set down her candle on the

first table that presented itself, and began to walk up and down her

room, which was a large one, with a firm, regular, and rather rapid

step, which showed that the exercise was the instinctive vent of

strong excitement. Her eyes and cheeks had an almost feverish

brilliancy; her head was thrown backward, and her hands were clasped

with the palms outward, and with that tension of the arms which is apt

to accompany mental absorption.

Had anything remarkable happened?

Nothing that you are not likely to consider in the highest degree

unimportant. She had been hearing some fine music sung by a fine bass

voice,--but then it was sung in a provincial, amateur fashion, such as

would have left a critical ear much to desire. And she was conscious

of having been looked at a great deal, in rather a furtive manner,

from beneath a pair of well-marked horizontal eyebrows, with a glance

that seemed somehow to have caught the vibratory influence of the

voice. Such things could have had no perceptible effect on a

thoroughly well-educated young lady, with a perfectly balanced mind,

who had had all the advantages of fortune, training, and refined

society. But if Maggie had been that young lady, you would probably

have known nothing about her: her life would have had so few

vicissitudes that it could hardly have been written; for the happiest

women, like the happiest nations, have no history.

In poor Maggie's highly-strung, hungry nature,--just come away from a

third-rate schoolroom, with all its jarring sounds and petty round of

tasks,--these apparently trivial causes had the effect of rousing and

exalting her imagination in a way that was mysterious to herself. It

was not that she thought distinctly of Mr. Stephen Guest, or dwelt on

the indications that he looked at her with admiration; it was rather

that she felt the half-remote presence of a world of love and beauty

and delight, made up of vague, mingled images from all the poetry and

romance she had ever read, or had ever woven in her dreamy reveries.

Her mind glanced back once or twice to the time when she had courted

privation, when she had thought all longing, all impatience was

subdued; but that condition seemed irrecoverably gone, and she

recoiled from the remembrance of it. No prayer, no striving now, would

bring back that negative peace; the battle of her life, it seemed, was

not to be decided in that short and easy way,--by perfect renunciation

at the very threshold of her youth.

The music was vibrating in her still,--Purcell's music, with its wild

passion and fancy,--and she could not stay in the recollection of that

bare, lonely past. She was in her brighter aerial world again, when a

little tap came at the door; of course it was her cousin, who entered

in ample white dressing-gown.

"Why, Maggie, you naughty child, haven't you begun to undress?" said

Lucy, in astonishment. "I promised not to come and talk to you,

because I thought you must be tired. But here you are, looking as if

you were ready to dress for a ball. Come, come, get on your

dressing-gown and unplait your hair."

"Well, \_you\_ are not very forward," retorted Maggie, hastily reaching

her own pink cotton gown, and looking at Lucy's light-brown hair

brushed back in curly disorder.

"Oh, I have not much to do. I shall sit down and talk to you till I

see you are really on the way to bed."

While Maggie stood and unplaited her long black hair over her pink

drapery, Lucy sat down near the toilette-table, watching her with

affectionate eyes, and head a little aside, like a pretty spaniel. If

it appears to you at all incredible that young ladies should be led on

to talk confidentially in a situation of this kind, I will beg you to

remember that human life furnishes many exceptional cases.

"You really \_have\_ enjoyed the music to-night, haven't you Maggie?"

"Oh yes, that is what prevented me from feeling sleepy. I think I

should have no other mortal wants, if I could always have plenty of

music. It seems to infuse strength into my limbs, and ideas into my

brain. Life seems to go on without effort, when I am filled with

music. At other times one is conscious of carrying a weight."

"And Stephen has a splendid voice, hasn't he?"

"Well, perhaps we are neither of us judges of that," said Maggie,

laughing, as she seated herself and tossed her long hair back. "You

are not impartial, and \_I\_ think any barrel-organ splendid."

"But tell me what you think of him, now. Tell me exactly; good and bad

too."

"Oh, I think you should humiliate him a little. A lover should not be

so much at ease, and so self-confident. He ought to tremble more."

"Nonsense, Maggie! As if any one could tremble at me! You think he is

conceited, I see that. But you don't dislike him, do you?"

"Dislike him! No. Am I in the habit of seeing such charming people,

that I should be very difficult to please? Besides, how could I

dislike any one that promised to make you happy, my dear thing!"

Maggie pinched Lucy's dimpled chin.

"We shall have more music to-morrow evening," said Lucy, looking happy

already, "for Stephen will bring Philip Wakem with him."

"Oh, Lucy, I can't see him," said Maggie, turning pale. "At least, I

could not see him without Tom's leave."

"Is Tom such a tyrant as that?" said Lucy, surprised. "I'll take the

responsibility, then,--tell him it was my fault."

"But, dear," said Maggie, falteringly, "I promised Tom very solemnly,

before my father's death,--I promised him I would not speak to Philip

without his knowledge and consent. And I have a great dread of opening

the subject with Tom,--of getting into a quarrel with him again."

"But I never heard of anything so strange and unreasonable. What harm

can poor Philip have done? May I speak to Tom about it?"

"Oh no, pray don't, dear," said Maggie. "I'll go to him myself

to-morrow, and tell him that you wish Philip to come. I've thought

before of asking him to absolve me from my promise, but I've not had

the courage to determine on it."

They were both silent for some moments, and then Lucy said,--

"Maggie, you have secrets from me, and I have none from you."

Maggie looked meditatively away from Lucy. Then she turned to her and

said, "I \_should\_ like to tell you about Philip. But, Lucy, you must

not betray that you know it to any one--least of all to Philip

himself, or to Mr. Stephen Guest."

The narrative lasted long, for Maggie had never before known the

relief of such an outpouring; she had never before told Lucy anything

of her inmost life; and the sweet face bent toward her with

sympathetic interest, and the little hand pressing hers, encouraged

her to speak on. On two points only she was not expansive. She did not

betray fully what still rankled in her mind as Tom's great

offence,--the insults he had heaped on Philip. Angry as the

remembrance still made her, she could not bear that any one else

should know it at all, both for Tom's sake and Philip's. And she could

not bear to tell Lucy of the last scene between her father and Wakem,

though it was this scene which she had ever since felt to be a new

barrier between herself and Philip. She merely said, she saw now that

Tom was, no the whole, right in regarding any prospect of love and

marriage between her and Philip as put out of the question by the

relation of the two families. Of course Philip's father would never

consent.

"There, Lucy, you have had my story," said Maggie, smiling, with the

tears in her eyes. "You see I am like Sir Andrew Aguecheek. \_I\_ was

adored once."

"Ah, now I see how it is you know Shakespeare and everything, and have

learned so much since you left school; which always seemed to me

witchcraft before,--part of your general uncanniness," said Lucy.

She mused a little with her eyes downward, and then added, looking at

Maggie, "It is very beautiful that you should love Philip; I never

thought such a happiness would befall him. And in my opinion, you

ought not to give him up. There are obstacles now; but they may be

done away with in time."

Maggie shook her head.

"Yes, yes," persisted Lucy; "I can't help being hopeful about it.

There is something romantic in it,--out of the common way,--just what

everything that happens to you ought to be. And Philip will adore you

like a husband in a fairy tale. Oh, I shall puzzle my small brain to

contrive some plot that will bring everybody into the right mind, so

that you may marry Philip when I marry--somebody else. Wouldn't that

be a pretty ending to all my poor, poor Maggie's troubles?"

Maggie tried to smile, but shivered, as if she felt a sudden chill.

"Ah, dear, you are cold," said Lucy. "You must go to bed; and so must

I. I dare not think what time it is."

They kissed each other, and Lucy went away, possessed of a confidence

which had a strong influence over her subsequent impressions. Maggie

had been thoroughly sincere; her nature had never found it easy to be

otherwise. But confidences are sometimes blinding, even when they are

sincere.

Chapter IV

Brother and Sister

Maggie was obliged to go to Tom's lodgings in the middle of the day,

when he would be coming in to dinner, else she would not have found

him at home. He was not lodging with entire strangers. Our friend Bob

Jakin had, with Mumps's tacit consent, taken not only a wife about

eight months ago, but also one of those queer old houses, pierced with

surprising passages, by the water-side, where, as he observed, his

wife and mother could keep themselves out of mischief by letting out

two "pleasure-boats," in which he had invested some of his savings,

and by taking in a lodger for the parlor and spare bedroom. Under

these circumstances, what could be better for the interests of all

parties, sanitary considerations apart, than that the lodger should be

Mr. Tom?

It was Bob's wife who opened the door to Maggie. She was a tiny woman,

with the general physiognomy of a Dutch doll, looking, in comparison

with Bob's mother, who filled up the passage in the rear, very much

like one of those human figures which the artist finds conveniently

standing near a colossal statue to show the proportions. The tiny

woman curtsied and looked up at Maggie with some awe as soon as she

had opened the door; but the words, "Is my brother at home?" which

Maggie uttered smilingly, made her turn round with sudden excitement,

and say,--

"Eh, mother, mother--tell Bob!--it's Miss Maggie! Come in, Miss, for

goodness do," she went on, opening a side door, and endeavoring to

flatten her person against the wall to make the utmost space for the

visitor.

Sad recollections crowded on Maggie as she entered the small parlor,

which was now all that poor Tom had to call by the name of

"home,"--that name which had once, so many years ago, meant for both

of them the same sum of dear familiar objects. But everything was not

strange to her in this new room; the first thing her eyes dwelt on was

the large old Bible, and the sight was not likely to disperse the old

memories. She stood without speaking.

"If you please to take the privilege o' sitting down, Miss," said Mrs.

Jakin, rubbing her apron over a perfectly clean chair, and then

lifting up the corner of that garment and holding it to her face with

an air of embarrassment, as she looked wonderingly at Maggie.

"Bob is at home, then?" said Maggie, recovering herself, and smiling

at the bashful Dutch doll.

"Yes, Miss; but I think he must be washing and dressing himself; I'll

go and see," said Mrs. Jakin, disappearing.

But she presently came back walking with new courage a little way

behind her husband, who showed the brilliancy of his blue eyes and

regular white teeth in the doorway, bowing respectfully.

"How do you do, Bob?" said Maggie, coming forward and putting out her

hand to him; "I always meant to pay your wife a visit, and I shall

come another day on purpose for that, if she will let me. But I was

obliged to come to-day to speak to my brother."

"He'll be in before long, Miss. He's doin' finely, Mr. Tom is; he'll

be one o' the first men hereabouts,--you'll see that."

"Well, Bob, I'm sure he'll be indebted to you, whatever he becomes; he

said so himself only the other night, when he was talking of you."

"Eh, Miss, that's his way o' takin' it. But I think the more on't when

he says a thing, because his tongue doesn't overshoot him as mine

does. Lors! I'm no better nor a tilted bottle, I ar'n't,--I can't stop

mysen when once I begin. But you look rarely, Miss; it does me good to

see you. What do you say now, Prissy?"--here Bob turned to his

wife,--"Isn't it all come true as I said? Though there isn't many

sorts o' goods as I can't over-praise when I set my tongue to't."

Mrs. Bob's small nose seemed to be following the example of her eyes

in turning up reverentially toward Maggie, but she was able now to

smile and curtsey, and say, "I'd looked forrard like aenything to

seein' you, Miss, for my husband's tongue's been runnin' on you, like

as if he was light-headed, iver since first he come a-courtin' on me."

"Well, well," said Bob, looking rather silly. "Go an' see after the

taters, else Mr. Tom 'ull have to wait for 'em."

"I hope Mumps is friendly with Mrs. Jakin, Bob," said Maggie, smiling.

"I remember you used to say he wouldn't like your marrying."

"Eh, Miss," said Bob, "he made up his mind to't when he see'd what a

little un she was. He pretends not to see her mostly, or else to think

as she isn't full-growed. But about Mr. Tom, Miss," said Bob, speaking

lower and looking serious, "he's as close as a iron biler, he is; but

I'm a 'cutish chap, an' when I've left off carrying my pack, an' am at

a loose end, I've got more brains nor I know what to do wi', an' I'm

forced to busy myself wi' other folks's insides. An' it worrets me as

Mr. Tom'll sit by himself so glumpish, a-knittin' his brow, an'

a-lookin' at the fire of a night. He should be a bit livelier now, a

fine young fellow like him. My wife says, when she goes in sometimes,

an' he takes no notice of her, he sits lookin' into the fire, and

frownin' as if he was watchin' folks at work in it."

"He thinks so much about business," said Maggie.

"Ay," said Bob, speaking lower; "but do you think it's nothin' else,

Miss? He's close, Mr. Tom is; but I'm a 'cute chap, I am, an' I

thought tow'rt last Christmas as I'd found out a soft place in him. It

was about a little black spaniel--a rare bit o' breed--as he made a

fuss to get. But since then summat's come over him, as he's set his

teeth again' things more nor iver, for all he's had such good luck.

An' I wanted to tell \_you\_, Miss, 'cause I thought you might work it

out of him a bit, now you're come. He's a deal too lonely, and doesn't

go into company enough."

"I'm afraid I have very little power over him, Bob," said Maggie, a

good deal moved by Bob's suggestion. It was a totally new idea to her

mind that Tom could have his love troubles. Poor fellow!--and in love

with Lucy too! But it was perhaps a mere fancy of Bob's too officious

brain. The present of the dog meant nothing more than cousinship and

gratitude. But Bob had already said, "Here's Mr. Tom," and the outer

door was opening.

"There is no time to spare, Tom," said Maggie, as soon as Bob left the

room. "I must tell you at once what I came about, else I shall be

hindering you from taking your dinner."

Tom stood with his back against the chimney-piece, and Maggie was

seated opposite the light. He noticed that she was tremulous, and he

had a presentiment of the subject she was going to speak about. The

presentiment made his voice colder and harder as he said, "What is

it?"

This tone roused a spirit of resistance in Maggie, and she put her

request in quite a different form from the one she had predetermined

on. She rose from her seat, and looking straight at Tom, said,--

"I want you to absolve me from my promise about Philip Wakem. Or

rather, I promised you not to see him without telling you. I am come

to tell you that I wish to see him."

"Very well," said Tom, still more coldly.

But Maggie had hardly finished speaking in that chill, defiant manner,

before she repented, and felt the dread of alienation from her

brother.

"Not for myself, dear Tom. Don't be angry. I shouldn't have asked it,

only that Philip, you know, is a friend of Lucy's and she wishes him

to come, has invited him to come this evening; and I told her I

couldn't see him without telling you. I shall only see him in the

presence of other people. There will never be anything secret between

us again."

Tom looked away from Maggie, knitting his brow more strongly for a

little while. Then he turned to her and said, slowly and

emphatically,--

"You know what is my feeling on that subject, Maggie. There is no need

for my repeating anything I said a year ago. While my father was

living, I felt bound to use the utmost power over you, to prevent you

from disgracing him as well as yourself, and all of us. But now I must

leave you to your own choice. You wish to be independent; you told me

so after my father's death. My opinion is not changed. If you think of

Philip Wakem as a lover again, you must give up me."

"I don't wish it, dear Tom, at least as things are; I see that it

would lead to misery. But I shall soon go away to another situation,

and I should like to be friends with him again while I am here. Lucy

wishes it."

The severity of Tom's face relaxed a little.

"I shouldn't mind your seeing him occasionally at my uncle's--I don't

want you to make a fuss on the subject. But I have no confidence in

you, Maggie. You would be led away to do anything."

That was a cruel word. Maggie's lip began to tremble.

"Why will you say that, Tom? It is very hard of you. Have I not done

and borne everything as well as I could? And I kept my word to

you--when--when----My life has not been a happy one, any more than

yours."

She was obliged to be childish; the tears would come. When Maggie was

not angry, she was as dependent on kind or cold words as a daisy on

the sunshine or the cloud; the need of being loved would always subdue

her, as, in old days, it subdued her in the worm-eaten attic. The

brother's goodness came uppermost at this appeal, but it could only

show itself in Tom's fashion. He put his hand gently on her arm, and

said, in the tone of a kind pedagogue,--

"Now listen to me, Maggie. I'll tell you what I mean. You're always in

extremes; you have no judgment and self-command; and yet you think you

know best, and will not submit to be guided. You know I didn't wish

you to take a situation. My aunt Pullet was willing to give you a good

home, and you might have lived respectably amongst your relations,

until I could have provided a home for you with my mother. And that is

what I should like to do. I wished my sister to be a lady, and I

always have taken care of you, as my father desired, until you were

well married. But your ideas and mine never accord, and you will not

give way. Yet you might have sense enough to see that a brother, who

goes out into the world and mixes with men, necessarily knows better

what is right and respectable for his sister than she can know

herself. You think I am not kind; but my kindness can only be directed

by what I believe to be good for you."

"Yes, I know, dear Tom," said Maggie, still half-sobbing, but trying

to control her tears. "I know you would do a great deal for me; I know

how you work, and don't spare yourself. I am grateful to you. But,

indeed, you can't quite judge for me; our natures are very different.

You don't know how differently things affect me from what they do

you."

"Yes, I \_do\_ know; I know it too well. I know how differently you must

feel about all that affects our family, and your own dignity as a

young woman, before you could think of receiving secret addresses from

Philip Wakem. If it was not disgusting to me in every other way, I

should object to my sister's name being associated for a moment with

that of a young man whose father must hate the very thought of us all,

and would spurn you. With any one but you, I should think it quite

certain that what you witnessed just before my father's death would

secure you from ever thinking again of Philip Wakem as a lover. But I

don't feel certain of it with you; I never feel certain about anything

with \_you\_. At one time you take pleasure in a sort of perverse

self-denial, and at another you have not resolution to resist a thing

that you know to be wrong."

There was a terrible cutting truth in Tom's words,--that hard rind of

truth which is discerned by unimaginative, unsympathetic minds. Maggie

always writhed under this judgment of Tom's; she rebelled and was

humiliated in the same moment; it seemed as if he held a glass before

her to show her her own folly and weakness, as if he were a prophetic

voice predicting her future fallings; and yet, all the while, she

judged him in return; she said inwardly that he was narrow and unjust,

that he was below feeling those mental needs which were often the

source of the wrong-doing or absurdity that made her life a planless

riddle to him.

She did not answer directly; her heart was too full, and she sat down,

leaning her arm on the table. It was no use trying to make Tom feel

that she was near to him. He always repelled her. Her feeling under

his words was complicated by the allusion to the last scene between

her father and Wakem; and at length that painful, solemn memory

surmounted the immediate grievance. No! She did not think of such

things with frivolous indifference, and Tom must not accuse her of

that. She looked up at him with a grave, earnest gaze and said,--

"I can't make you think better of me, Tom, by anything I can say. But

I am not so shut out from all your feelings as you believe me to be. I

see as well as you do that from our position with regard to Philip's

father--not on other grounds--it would be unreasonable, it would be

wrong, for us to entertain the idea of marriage; and I have given up

thinking of him as a lover. I am telling you the truth, and you have

no right to disbelieve me; I have kept my word to you, and you have

never detected me in a falsehood. I should not only not encourage, I

should carefully avoid, any intercourse with Philip on any other

footing than of quiet friendship. You may think that I am unable to

keep my resolutions; but at least you ought not to treat me with hard

contempt on the ground of faults that I have not committed yet."

"Well, Maggie," said Tom, softening under this appeal, "I don't want

to overstrain matters. I think, all things considered, it will be best

for you to see Philip Wakem, if Lucy wishes him to come to the house.

I believe what you say,--at least you believe it yourself, I know; I

can only warn you. I wish to be as good a brother to you as you will

let me."

There was a little tremor in Tom's voice as he uttered the last words,

and Maggie's ready affection came back with as sudden a glow as when

they were children, and bit their cake together as a sacrament of

conciliation. She rose and laid her hand on Tom's shoulder.

"Dear Tom, I know you mean to be good. I know you have had a great

deal to bear, and have done a great deal. I should like to be a

comfort to you, not to vex you. You don't think I'm altogether

naughty, now, do you?"

Tom smiled at the eager face; his smiles were very pleasant to see

when they did come, for the gray eyes could be tender underneath the

frown.

"No, Maggie."

"I may turn out better than you expect."

"I hope you will."

"And may I come some day and make tea for you, and see this extremely

small wife of Bob's again?"

"Yes; but trot away now, for I've no more time to spare," said Tom,

looking at his watch.

"Not to give me a kiss?"

Tom bent to kiss her cheek, and then said,--

"There! Be a good girl. I've got a great deal to think of to-day. I'm

going to have a long consultation with my uncle Deane this afternoon."

"You'll come to aunt Glegg's to-morrow? We're going all to dine early,

that we may go there to tea. You \_must\_ come; Lucy told me to say so."

"Oh, pooh! I've plenty else to do," said Tom, pulling his bell

violently, and bringing down the small bell-rope.

"I'm frightened; I shall run away," said Maggie, making a laughing

retreat; while Tom, with masculine philosophy, flung the bell-rope to

the farther end of the room; not very far either,--a touch of human

experience which I flatter myself will come home to the bosoms of not

a few substantial or distinguished men who were once at an early stage

of their rise in the world, and were cherishing very large hopes in

very small lodgings.

Chapter V

Showing That Tom Had Opened the Oyster

"And now we've settled this Newcastle business, Tom," said Mr. Deane,

that same afternoon, as they were seated in the private room at the

Bank together, "there's another matter I want to talk to you about.

Since you're likely to have rather a smoky, unpleasant time of it at

Newcastle for the next few weeks, you'll want a good prospect of some

sort to keep up your spirits."

Tom waited less nervously than he had done on a former occasion in

this apartment, while his uncle took out his snuff-box and gratified

each nostril with deliberate impartiality.

"You see, Tom," said Mr. Deane at last, throwing himself backward,

"the world goes on at a smarter pace now than it did when I was a

young fellow. Why, sir, forty years ago, when I was much such a

strapping youngster as you, a man expected to pull between the shafts

the best part of his life, before he got the whip in his hand. The

looms went slowish, and fashions didn't alter quite so fast; I'd a

best suit that lasted me six years. Everything was on a lower scale,

sir,--in point of expenditure, I mean. It's this steam, you see, that

has made the difference; it drives on every wheel double pace, and the

wheel of fortune along with 'em, as our Mr. Stephen Guest said at the

anniversary dinner (he hits these things off wonderfully, considering

he's seen nothing of business). I don't find fault with the change, as

some people do. Trade, sir, opens a man's eyes; and if the population

is to get thicker upon the ground, as it's doing, the world must use

its wits at inventions of one sort or other. I know I've done my share

as an ordinary man of business. Somebody has said it's a fine thing to

make two ears of corn grow where only one grew before; but, sir, it's

a fine thing, too, to further the exchange of commodities, and bring

the grains of corn to the mouths that are hungry. And that's our line

of business; and I consider it as honorable a position as a man can

hold, to be connected with it."

Tom knew that the affair his uncle had to speak of was not urgent; Mr.

Deane was too shrewd and practical a man to allow either his

reminiscences or his snuff to impede the progress of trade. Indeed,

for the last month or two, there had been hints thrown out to Tom

which enabled him to guess that he was going to hear some proposition

for his own benefit. With the beginning of the last speech he had

stretched out his legs, thrust his hands in his pockets, and prepared

himself for some introductory diffuseness, tending to show that Mr.

Deane had succeeded by his own merit, and that what he had to say to

young men in general was, that if they didn't succeed too it was

because of their own demerit. He was rather surprised, then, when his

uncle put a direct question to him.

"Let me see,--it's going on for seven years now since you applied to

me for a situation, eh, Tom?"

"Yes, sir; I'm three-and-twenty now," said Tom.

"Ah, it's as well not to say that, though; for you'd pass for a good

deal older, and age tells well in business. I remember your coming

very well; I remember I saw there was some pluck in you, and that was

what made me give you encouragement. And I'm happy to say I was right;

I'm not often deceived. I was naturally a little shy at pushing my

nephew, but I'm happy to say you've done me credit, sir; and if I'd

had a son o' my own, I shouldn't have been sorry to see him like you."

Mr. Deane tapped his box and opened it again, repeating in a tone of

some feeling, "No, I shouldn't have been sorry to see him like you."

"I'm very glad I've given you satisfaction, sir; I've done my best,"

said Tom, in his proud, independent way.

"Yes, Tom, you've given me satisfaction. I don't speak of your conduct

as a son; though that weighs with me in my opinion of you. But what I

have to do with, as a partner in our firm, is the qualities you've

shown as a man o' business. Ours is a fine business,--a splendid

concern, sir,--and there's no reason why it shouldn't go on growing;

there's a growing capital, and growing outlets for it; but there's

another thing that's wanted for the prosperity of every concern, large

or small, and that's men to conduct it,--men of the right habits; none

o' your flashy fellows, but such as are to be depended on. Now this is

what Mr. Guest and I see clear enough. Three years ago we took Gell

into the concern; we gave him a share in the oil-mill. And why? Why,

because Gell was a fellow whose services were worth a premium. So it

will always be, sir. So it was with me. And though Gell is pretty near

ten years older than you, there are other points in your favor."

Tom was getting a little nervous as Mr. Deane went on speaking; he was

conscious of something he had in his mind to say, which might not be

agreeable to his uncle, simply because it was a new suggestion rather

than an acceptance of the proposition he foresaw.

"It stands to reason," Mr. Deane went on, when he had finished his new

pinch, "that your being my nephew weighs in your favor; but I don't

deny that if you'd been no relation of mine at all, your conduct in

that affair of Pelley's bank would have led Mr. Guest and myself to

make some acknowledgment of the service you've been to us; and, backed

by your general conduct and business ability, it has made us determine

on giving you a share in the business,--a share which we shall be glad

to increase as the years go on. We think that'll be better, on all

grounds, than raising your salary. It'll give you more importance, and

prepare you better for taking some of the anxiety off my shoulders by

and by. I'm equal to a good deal o' work at present, thank God; but

I'm getting older,--there's no denying that. I told Mr. Guest I would

open the subject to you; and when you come back from this northern

business, we can go into particulars. This is a great stride for a

young fellow of three-and-twenty, but I'm bound to say you've deserved

it."

"I'm very grateful to Mr. Guest and you, sir; of course I feel the

most indebted to \_you\_, who first took me into the business, and have

taken a good deal of pains with me since."

Tom spoke with a slight tremor, and paused after he had said this.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Deane. "I don't spare pains when I see they'll be

of any use. I gave myself some trouble with Gell, else he wouldn't

have been what he is."

"But there's one thing I should like to mention to you uncle. I've

never spoken to you of it before. If you remember, at the time my

father's property was sold, there was some thought of your firm buying

the Mill; I know you thought it would be a very good investment,

especially if steam were applied."

"To be sure, to be sure. But Wakem outbid us; he'd made up his mind to

that. He's rather fond of carrying everything over other people's

heads."

"Perhaps it's of no use my mentioning it at present," Tom went on,

"but I wish you to know what I have in my mind about the Mill. I've a

strong feeling about it. It was my father's dying wish that I should

try and get it back again whenever I could; it was in his family for

five generations. I promised my father; and besides that, I'm attached

to the place. I shall never like any other so well. And if it should

ever suit your views to buy it for the firm, I should have a better

chance of fulfilling my father's wish. I shouldn't have liked to

mention the thing to you, only you've been kind enough to say my

services have been of some value. And I'd give up a much greater

chance in life for the sake of having the Mill again,--I mean having

it in my own hands, and gradually working off the price."

Mr. Deane had listened attentively, and now looked thoughtful.

"I see, I see," he said, after a while; "the thing would be possible

if there were any chance of Wakem's parting with the property. But

that I \_don't\_ see. He's put that young Jetsome in the place; and he

had his reasons when he bought it, I'll be bound."

"He's a loose fish, that young Jetsome," said Tom. "He's taking to

drinking, and they say he's letting the business go down. Luke told me

about it,--our old miller. He says he sha'n't stay unless there's an

alteration. I was thinking, if things went on that way, Wakem might be

more willing to part with the Mill. Luke says he's getting very sour

about the way things are going on."

"Well, I'll turn it over, Tom. I must inquire into the matter, and go

into it with Mr. Guest. But, you see, it's rather striking out a new

branch, and putting you to that, instead of keeping you where you are,

which was what we'd wanted."

"I should be able to manage more than the Mill when things were once

set properly going, sir. I want to have plenty of work. There's

nothing else I care about much."

There was something rather sad in that speech from a young man of

three-and-twenty, even in uncle Deane's business-loving ears.

"Pooh, pooh! you'll be having a wife to care about one of these days,

if you get on at this pace in the world. But as to this Mill, we

mustn't reckon on our chickens too early. However, I promise you to

bear it in mind, and when you come back we'll talk of it again. I am

going to dinner now. Come and breakfast with us to-morrow morning, and

say good-bye to your mother and sister before you start."

Chapter VI

Illustrating the Laws of Attraction

It is evident to you now that Maggie had arrived at a moment in her

life which must be considered by all prudent persons as a great

opportunity for a young woman. Launched into the higher society of St.

Ogg's, with a striking person, which had the advantage of being quite

unfamiliar to the majority of beholders, and with such moderate

assistance of costume as you have seen foreshadowed in Lucy's anxious

colloquy with aunt Pullet, Maggie was certainly at a new

starting-point in life. At Lucy's first evening party, young Torry

fatigued his facial muscles more than usual in order that "the

dark-eyed girl there in the corner" might see him in all the

additional style conferred by his eyeglass; and several young ladies

went home intending to have short sleeves with black lace, and to

plait their hair in a broad coronet at the back of their head,--"That

cousin of Miss Deane's looked so very well." In fact, poor Maggie,

with all her inward consciousness of a painful past and her

presentiment of a troublous future, was on the way to become an object

of some envy,--a topic of discussion in the newly established

billiard-room, and between fair friends who had no secrets from each

other on the subject of trimmings. The Miss Guests, who associated

chiefly on terms of condescension with the families of St. Ogg's, and

were the glass of fashion there, took some exception to Maggie's

manners. She had a way of not assenting at once to the observations

current in good society, and of saying that she didn't know whether

those observations were true or not, which gave her an air of

\_gaucherie\_, and impeded the even flow of conversation; but it is a

fact capable of an amiable interpretation that ladies are not the

worst disposed toward a new acquaintance of their own sex because she

has points of inferiority. And Maggie was so entirely without those

pretty airs of coquetry which have the traditional reputation of

driving gentlemen to despair that she won some feminine pity for being

so ineffective in spite of her beauty. She had not had many

advantages, poor thing! and it must be admitted there was no

pretension about her; her abruptness and unevenness of manner were

plainly the result of her secluded and lowly circumstances. It was

only a wonder that there was no tinge of vulgarity about her,

considering what the rest of poor Lucy's relations were--an allusion

which always made the Miss Guests shudder a little. It was not

agreeable to think of any connection by marriage with such people as

the Gleggs and the Pullets; but it was of no use to contradict Stephen

when once he had set his mind on anything, and certainly there was no

possible objection to Lucy in herself,--no one could help liking her.

She would naturally desire that the Miss Guests should behave kindly

to this cousin of whom she was so fond, and Stephen would make a great

fuss if they were deficient in civility. Under these circumstances the

invitations to Park House were not wanting; and elsewhere, also, Miss

Deane was too popular and too distinguished a member of society in St.

Ogg's for any attention toward her to be neglected.

Thus Maggie was introduced for the first time to the young lady's

life, and knew what it was to get up in the morning without any

imperative reason for doing one thing more than another. This new

sense of leisure and unchecked enjoyment amidst the soft-breathing

airs and garden-scents of advancing spring--amidst the new abundance

of music, and lingering strolls in the sunshine, and the delicious

dreaminess of gliding on the river--could hardly be without some

intoxicating effect on her, after her years of privation; and even in

the first week Maggie began to be less haunted by her sad memories and

anticipations. Life was certainly very pleasant just now; it was

becoming very pleasant to dress in the evening, and to feel that she

was one of the beautiful things of this spring-time. And there were

admiring eyes always awaiting her now; she was no longer an unheeded

person, liable to be chid, from whom attention was continually

claimed, and on whom no one felt bound to confer any. It was pleasant,

too, when Stephen and Lucy were gone out riding, to sit down at the

piano alone, and find that the old fitness between her fingers and the

keys remained, and revived, like a sympathetic kinship not to be worn

out by separation; to get the tunes she had heard the evening before,

and repeat them again and again until she had found out a way of

producing them so as to make them a more pregnant, passionate language

to her. The mere concord of octaves was a delight to Maggie, and she

would often take up a book of studies rather than any melody, that she

might taste more keenly by abstraction the more primitive sensation of

intervals. Not that her enjoyment of music was of the kind that

indicates a great specific talent; it was rather that her sensibility

to the supreme excitement of music was only one form of that

passionate sensibility which belonged to her whole nature, and made

her faults and virtues all merge in each other; made her affections

sometimes an impatient demand, but also prevented her vanity from

taking the form of mere feminine coquetry and device, and gave it the

poetry of ambition. But you have known Maggie a long while, and need

to be told, not her characteristics, but her history, which is a thing

hardly to be predicted even from the completest knowledge of

characteristics. For the tragedy of our lives is not created entirely

from within. "Character," says Novalis, in one of his questionable

aphorisms,--"character is destiny." But not the whole of our destiny.

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, was speculative and irresolute, and we have

a great tragedy in consequence. But if his father had lived to a good

old age, and his uncle had died an early death, we can conceive

Hamlet's having married Ophelia, and got through life with a

reputation of sanity, notwithstanding many soliloquies, and some moody

sarcasms toward the fair daughter of Polonius, to say nothing of the

frankest incivility to his father-in-law.

Maggie's destiny, then, is at present hidden, and we must wait for it

to reveal itself like the course of an unmapped river; we only know

that the river is full and rapid, and that for all rivers there is the

same final home. Under the charm of her new pleasures, Maggie herself

was ceasing to think, with her eager prefiguring imagination, of her

future lot; and her anxiety about her first interview with Philip was

losing its predominance; perhaps, unconsciously to herself, she was

not sorry that the interview had been deferred.

For Philip had not come the evening he was expected, and Mr. Stephen

Guest brought word that he was gone to the coast,--probably, he

thought, on a sketching expedition; but it was not certain when he

would return. It was just like Philip, to go off in that way without

telling any one. It was not until the twelfth day that he returned, to

find both Lucy's notes awaiting him; he had left before he knew of

Maggie's arrival.

Perhaps one had need be nineteen again to be quite convinced of the

feelings that were crowded for Maggie into those twelve days; of the

length to which they were stretched for her by the novelty of her

experience in them, and the varying attitudes of her mind. The early

days of an acquaintance almost always have this importance for us, and

fill up a larger space in our memory than longer subsequent periods,

which have been less filled with discovery and new impressions. There

were not many hours in those ten days in which Mr. Stephen Guest was

not seated by Lucy's side, or standing near her at the piano, or

accompanying her on some outdoor excursion; his attentions were

clearly becoming more assiduous, and that was what every one had

expected. Lucy was very happy, all the happier because Stephen's

society seemed to have become much more interesting and amusing since

Maggie had been there. Playful discussions--sometimes serious

ones--were going forward, in which both Stephen and Maggie revealed

themselves, to the admiration of the gentle, unobtrusive Lucy; and it

more than once crossed her mind what a charming quartet they should

have through life when Maggie married Philip. Is it an inexplicable

thing that a girl should enjoy her lover's society the more for the

presence of a third person, and be without the slightest spasm of

jealousy that the third person had the conversation habitually

directed to her? Not when that girl is as tranquil-hearted as Lucy,

thoroughly possessed with a belief that she knows the state of her

companions' affections, and not prone to the feelings which shake such

a belief in the absence of positive evidence against it. Besides, it

was Lucy by whom Stephen sat, to whom he gave his arm, to whom he

appealed as the person sure to agree with him; and every day there was

the same tender politeness toward her, the same consciousness of her

wants and care to supply them. Was there really the same? It seemed to

Lucy that there was more; and it was no wonder that the real

significance of the change escaped her. It was a subtle act of

conscience in Stephen that even he himself was not aware of. His

personal attentions to Maggie were comparatively slight, and there had

even sprung up an apparent distance between them, that prevented the

renewal of that faint resemblance to gallantry into which he had

fallen the first day in the boat. If Stephen came in when Lucy was out

of the room, if Lucy left them together, they never spoke to each

other; Stephen, perhaps, seemed to be examining books or music, and

Maggie bent her head assiduously over her work. Each was oppressively

conscious of the other's presence, even to the finger-ends. Yet each

looked and longed for the same thing to happen the next day. Neither

of them had begun to reflect on the matter, or silently to ask, "To

what does all this tend?" Maggie only felt that life was revealing

something quite new to her; and she was absorbed in the direct,

immediate experience, without any energy left for taking account of it

and reasoning about it. Stephen wilfully abstained from

self-questioning, and would not admit to himself that he felt an

influence which was to have any determining effect on his conduct. And

when Lucy came into the room again, they were once more unconstrained;

Maggie could contradict Stephen, and laugh at him, and he could

recommend to her consideration the example of that most charming

heroine, Miss Sophia Western, who had a great "respect for the

understandings of men." Maggie could look at Stephen, which, for some

reason or other she always avoided when they were alone; and he could

even ask her to play his accompaniment for him, since Lucy's fingers

were so busy with that bazaar-work, and lecture her on hurrying the

tempo, which was certainly Maggie's weak point.

One day--it was the day of Philip's return--Lucy had formed a sudden

engagement to spend the evening with Mrs. Kenn, whose delicate state

of health, threatening to become confirmed illness through an attack

of bronchitis, obliged her to resign her functions at the coming

bazaar into the hands of other ladies, of whom she wished Lucy to be

one. The engagement had been formed in Stephen's presence, and he had

heard Lucy promise to dine early and call at six o'clock for Miss

Torry, who brought Mrs. Kenn's request.

"Here is another of the moral results of this idiotic bazaar," Stephen

burst forth, as soon as Miss Torry had left the room,--"taking young

ladies from the duties of the domestic hearth into scenes of

dissipation among urn-rugs and embroidered reticules! I should like to

know what is the proper function of women, if it is not to make

reasons for husbands to stay at home, and still stronger reasons for

bachelors to go out. If this goes on much longer, the bonds of society

will be dissolved."

"Well, it will not go on much longer," said Lucy, laughing, "for the

bazaar is to take place on Monday week."

"Thank Heaven!" said Stephen. "Kenn himself said the other day that he

didn't like this plan of making vanity do the work of charity; but

just as the British public is not reasonable enough to bear direct

taxation, so St. Ogg's has not got force of motive enough to build and

endow schools without calling in the force of folly."

"Did he say so?" said little Lucy, her hazel eyes opening wide with

anxiety. "I never heard him say anything of that kind; I thought he

approved of what we were doing."

"I'm sure he approves \_you\_," said Stephen, smiling at her

affectionately; "your conduct in going out to-night looks vicious, I

own, but I know there is benevolence at the bottom of it."

"Oh, you think too well of me," said Lucy, shaking her head, with a

pretty blush, and there the subject ended. But it was tacitly

understood that Stephen would not come in the evening; and on the

strength of that tacit understanding he made his morning visit the

longer, not saying good-bye until after four.

Maggie was seated in the drawing-room, alone, shortly after dinner,

with Minny on her lap, having left her uncle to his wine and his nap,

and her mother to the compromise between knitting and nodding, which,

when there was no company, she always carried on in the dining-room

till tea-time. Maggie was stooping to caress the tiny silken pet, and

comforting him for his mistress's absence, when the sound of a

footstep on the gravel made her look up, and she saw Mr. Stephen Guest

walking up the garden, as if he had come straight from the river. It

was very unusual to see him so soon after dinner! He often complained

that their dinner-hour was late at Park House. Nevertheless, there he

was, in his black dress; he had evidently been home, and must have

come again by the river. Maggie felt her cheeks glowing and her heart

beating; it was natural she should be nervous, for she was not

accustomed to receive visitors alone. He had seen her look up through

the open window, and raised his hat as he walked toward it, to enter

that way instead of by the door. He blushed too, and certainly looked

as foolish as a young man of some wit and self-possession can be

expected to look, as he walked in with a roll of music in his hand,

and said, with an air of hesitating improvisation,--

"You are surprised to see me again, Miss Tulliver; I ought to

apologize for coming upon you by surprise, but I wanted to come into

the town, and I got our man to row me; so I thought I would bring

these things from the 'Maid of Artois' for your cousin; I forgot them

this morning. Will you give them to her?"

"Yes," said Maggie, who had risen confusedly with Minny in her arms,

and now, not quite knowing what else to do, sat down again.

Stephen laid down his hat, with the music, which rolled on the floor,

and sat down in the chair close by her. He had never done so before,

and both he and Maggie were quite aware that it was an entirely new

position.

"Well, you pampered minion!" said Stephen, leaning to pull the long

curly ears that drooped over Maggie's arm. It was not a suggestive

remark, and as the speaker did not follow it up by further

development, it naturally left the conversation at a standstill. It

seemed to Stephen like some action in a dream that he was obliged to

do, and wonder at himself all the while,--to go on stroking Minny's

head. Yet it was very pleasant; he only wished he dared look at

Maggie, and that she would look at him,--let him have one long look

into those deep, strange eyes of hers, and then he would be satisfied

and quite reasonable after that. He thought it was becoming a sort of

monomania with him, to want that long look from Maggie; and he was

racking his invention continually to find out some means by which he

could have it without its appearing singular and entailing subsequent

embarrassment. As for Maggie, she had no distinct thought, only the

sense of a presence like that of a closely hovering broad-winged bird

in the darkness, for she was unable to look up, and saw nothing but

Minny's black wavy coat.

But this must end some time, perhaps it ended very soon, and only

\_seemed\_ long, as a minute's dream does. Stephen at last sat upright

sideways in his chair, leaning one hand and arm over the back and

looking at Maggie. What should he say?

"We shall have a splendid sunset, I think; sha'n't you go out and see

it?"

"I don't know," said Maggie. Then courageously raising her eyes and

looking out of the window, "if I'm not playing cribbage with my

uncle."

A pause; during which Minny is stroked again, but has sufficient

insight not to be grateful for it, to growl rather.

"Do you like sitting alone?"

A rather arch look came over Maggie's face, and, just glancing at

Stephen, she said, "Would it be quite civil to say've s'?"

"It \_was\_ rather a dangerous question for an intruder to ask," said

Stephen, delighted with that glance, and getting determined to stay

for another. "But you will have more than half an hour to yourself

after I am gone," he added, taking out his watch. "I know Mr. Deane

never comes in till half-past seven."

Another pause, during which Maggie looked steadily out of the window,

till by a great effort she moved her head to look down at Minny's back

again, and said,--

"I wish Lucy had not been obliged to go out. We lose our music."

"We shall have a new voice to-morrow night," said Stephen. "Will you

tell your cousin that our friend Philip Wakem is come back? I saw him

as I went home."

Maggie gave a little start,--it seemed hardly more than a vibration

that passed from head to foot in an instant. But the new images

summoned by Philip's name dispersed half the oppressive spell she had

been under. She rose from her chair with a sudden resolution, and

laying Minny on his cushion, went to reach Lucy's large work-basket

from its corner. Stephen was vexed and disappointed; he thought

perhaps Maggie didn't like the name of Wakem to be mentioned to her in

that abrupt way, for he now recalled what Lucy had told him of the

family quarrel. It was of no use to stay any longer. Maggie was

seating herself at the table with her work, and looking chill and

proud; and he--he looked like a simpleton for having come. A

gratuitous, entirely superfluous visit of that sort was sure to make a

man disagreeable and ridiculous. Of course it was palpable to Maggie's

thinking that he had dined hastily in his own room for the sake of

setting off again and finding her alone.

A boyish state of mind for an accomplished young gentleman of

five-and-twenty, not without legal knowledge! But a reference to

history, perhaps, may make it not incredible.

At this moment Maggie's ball of knitting-wool rolled along the ground,

and she started up to reach it. Stephen rose too, and picking up the

ball, met her with a vexed, complaining look that gave his eyes quite

a new expression to Maggie, whose own eyes met them as he presented

the ball to her.

"Good-bye," said Stephen, in a tone that had the same beseeching

discontent as his eyes. He dared not put out his hand; he thrust both

hands into his tail-pockets as he spoke. Maggie thought she had

perhaps been rude.

"Won't you stay?" she said timidly, not looking away, for that would

have seemed rude again.

"No, thank you," said Stephen, looking still into the half-unwilling,

half-fascinated eyes, as a thirsty man looks toward the track of the

distant brook. "The boat is waiting for me. You'll tell your cousin?"

"Yes."

"That I brought the music, I mean?"

"Yes."

"And that Philip is come back?"

"Yes." (Maggie did not notice Philip's name this time.)

"Won't you come out a little way into the garden?" said Stephen, in a

still gentler tone; but the next moment he was vexed that she did not

say "No," for she moved away now toward the open window, and he was

obliged to take his hat and walk by her side. But he thought of

something to make him amends.

"Do take my arm," he said, in a low tone, as if it were a secret.

There is something strangely winning to most women in that offer of

the firm arm; the help is not wanted physically at that moment, but

the sense of help, the presence of strength that is outside them and

yet theirs, meets a continual want of the imagination. Either on that

ground or some other, Maggie took the arm. And they walked together

round the grassplot and under the drooping green of the laburnums, in

the same dim, dreamy state as they had been in a quarter of an hour

before; only that Stephen had had the look he longed for, without yet

perceiving in himself the symptoms of returning reasonableness, and

Maggie had darting thoughts across the dimness,--how came he to be

there? Why had she come out? Not a word was spoken. If it had been,

each would have been less intensely conscious of the other.

"Take care of this step," said Stephen at last.

"Oh, I will go in now," said Maggie, feeling that the step had come

like a rescue. "Good-evening."

In an instant she had withdrawn her arm, and was running back to the

house. She did not reflect that this sudden action would only add to

the embarrassing recollections of the last half-hour. She had no

thought left for that. She only threw herself into the low arm-chair,

and burst into tears.

"Oh, Philip, Philip, I wish we were together again--so quietly--in the

Red Deeps."

Stephen looked after her a moment, then went on to the boat, and was

soon landed at the wharf. He spent the evening in the billiard-room,

smoking one cigar after another, and losing "lives" at pool. But he

would not leave off. He was determined not to think,--not to admit any

more distinct remembrance than was urged upon him by the perpetual

presence of Maggie. He was looking at her, and she was on his arm.

But there came the necessity of walking home in the cool starlight,

and with it the necessity of cursing his own folly, and bitterly

determining that he would never trust himself alone with Maggie again.

It was all madness; he was in love, thoroughly attached to Lucy, and

engaged,--engaged as strongly as an honorable man need be. He wished

he had never seen this Maggie Tulliver, to be thrown into a fever by

her in this way; she would make a sweet, strange, troublesome,

adorable wife to some man or other, but he would never have chosen her

himself. Did she feel as he did? He hoped she did--not. He ought not

to have gone. He would master himself in future. He would make himself

disagreeable to her, quarrel with her perhaps. Quarrel with her? Was

it possible to quarrel with a creature who had such eyes,--defying and

deprecating, contradicting and clinging, imperious and beseeching,--

full of delicious opposites? To see such a creature subdued by love

for one would be a lot worth having--to another man.

There was a muttered exclamation which ended this inward soliloquy, as

Stephen threw away the end of his last cigar, and thrusting his hands

into his pockets, stalked along at a quieter pace through the

shrubbery. It was not of a benedictory kind.

Chapter VII

Philip Re-enters

The next morning was very wet,--the sort of morning on which male

neighbors who have no imperative occupation at home are likely to pay

their fair friends an illimitable visit. The rain, which has been

endurable enough for the walk or ride one way, is sure to become so

heavy, and at the same time so certain to clear up by and by, that

nothing but an open quarrel can abbreviate the visit; latent

detestation will not do at all. And if people happen to be lovers,

what can be so delightful, in England, as a rainy morning? English

sunshine is dubious; bonnets are never quite secure; and if you sit

down on the grass, it may lead to catarrhs. But the rain is to be

depended on. You gallop through it in a mackintosh, and presently find

yourself in the seat you like best,--a little above or a little below

the one on which your goddess sits (it is the same thing to the

metaphysical mind, and that is the reason why women are at once

worshipped and looked down upon), with a satisfactory confidence that

there will be no lady-callers.

"Stephen will come earlier this morning, I know," said Lucy; "he

always does when it's rainy."

Maggie made no answer. She was angry with Stephen; she began to think

she should dislike him; and if it had not been for the rain, she would

have gone to her aunt Glegg's this morning, and so have avoided him

altogether. As it was, she must find some reason for remaining out of

the room with her mother.

But Stephen did not come earlier, and there was another visitor--a

nearer neighbor--who preceded him. When Philip entered the room, he

was going merely to bow to Maggie, feeling that their acquaintance was

a secret which he was bound not to betray; but when she advanced

toward him and put out her hand, he guessed at once that Lucy had been

taken into her confidence. It was a moment of some agitation to both,

though Philip had spent many hours in preparing for it; but like all

persons who have passed through life with little expectation of

sympathy, he seldom lost his self-control, and shrank with the most

sensitive pride from any noticeable betrayal of emotion. A little

extra paleness, a little tension of the nostril when he spoke, and the

voice pitched in rather a higher key, that to strangers would seem

expressive of cold indifference, were all the signs Philip usually

gave of an inward drama that was not without its fierceness. But

Maggie, who had little more power of concealing the impressions made

upon her than if she had been constructed of musical strings, felt her

eyes getting larger with tears as they took each other's hands in

silence. They were not painful tears; they had rather something of the

same origin as the tears women and children shed when they have found

some protection to cling to and look back on the threatened danger.

For Philip, who a little while ago was associated continually in

Maggie's mind with the sense that Tom might reproach her with some

justice, had now, in this short space, become a sort of outward

conscience to her, that she might fly to for rescue and strength. Her

tranquil, tender affection for Philip, with its root deep down in her

childhood, and its memories of long quiet talk confirming by distinct

successive impressions the first instinctive bias,--the fact that in

him the appeal was more strongly to her pity and womanly devotedness

than to her vanity or other egoistic excitability of her

nature,--seemed now to make a sort of sacred place, a sanctuary where

she could find refuge from an alluring influence which the best part

of herself must resist; which must bring horrible tumult within,

wretchedness without. This new sense of her relation to Philip

nullified the anxious scruples she would otherwise have felt, lest she

should overstep the limit of intercourse with him that Tom would

sanction; and she put out her hand to him, and felt the tears in her

eyes without any consciousness of an inward check. The scene was just

what Lucy expected, and her kind heart delighted in bringing Philip

and Maggie together again; though, even with all \_her\_ regard for

Philip, she could not resist the impression that her cousin Tom had

some excuse for feeling shocked at the physical incongruity between

the two,--a prosaic person like cousin Tom, who didn't like poetry and

fairy tales. But she began to speak as soon as possible, to set them

at ease.

"This was very good and virtuous of you," she said, in her pretty

treble, like the low conversational notes of little birds, "to come so

soon after your arrival. And as it is, I think I will pardon you for

running away in an inopportune manner, and giving your friends no

notice. Come and sit down here," she went on, placing the chair that

would suit him best, "and you shall find yourself treated mercifully."

"You will never govern well, Miss Deane," said Philip, as he seated

himself, "because no one will ever believe in your severity. People

will always encourage themselves in misdemeanors by the certainty that

you will be indulgent."

Lucy gave some playful contradiction, but Philip did not hear what it

was, for he had naturally turned toward Maggie, and she was looking at

him with that open, affectionate scrutiny which we give to a friend

from whom we have been long separated. What a moment their parting had

been! And Philip felt as if he were only in the morrow of it. He felt

this so keenly,--with such intense, detailed remembrance, with such

passionate revival of all that had been said and looked in their last

conversation,--that with that jealousy and distrust which in diffident

natures is almost inevitably linked with a strong feeling, he thought

he read in Maggie's glance and manner the evidence of a change. The

very fact that he feared and half expected it would be sure to make

this thought rush in, in the absence of positive proof to the

contrary.

"I am having a great holiday, am I not?" said Maggie. "Lucy is like a

fairy godmother; she has turned me from a drudge into a princess in no

time. I do nothing but indulge myself all day long, and she always

finds out what I want before I know it myself."

"I am sure she is the happier for having you, then," said Philip. "You

must be better than a whole menagerie of pets to her. And you look

well. You are benefiting by the change."

Artificial conversation of this sort went on a little while, till

Lucy, determined to put an end to it, exclaimed, with a good imitation

of annoyance, that she had forgotten something, and was quickly out of

the room.

In a moment Maggie and Philip leaned forward, and the hands were

clasped again, with a look of sad contentment, like that of friends

who meet in the memory of recent sorrow.

"I told my brother I wished to see you, Philip; I asked him to release

me from my promise, and he consented."

Maggie, in her impulsiveness, wanted Philip to know at once the

position they must hold toward each other; but she checked herself.

The things that had happened since he had spoken of his love for her

were so painful that she shrank from being the first to allude to them.

It seemed almost like an injury toward Philip even to mention her

brother,--her brother, who had insulted him. But he was thinking too

entirely of her to be sensitive on any other point at that moment.

"Then we can at least be friends, Maggie? There is nothing to hinder

that now?"

"Will not your father object?" said Maggie, withdrawing her hand.

"I should not give you up on any ground but your own wish, Maggie,"

said Philip, coloring. "There are points on which I should always

resist my father, as I used to tell you. \_That\_ is one."

"Then there is nothing to hinder our being friends, Philip,--seeing

each other and talking to each other while I am here; I shall soon go

away again. I mean to go very soon, to a new situation."

"Is that inevitable, Maggie?"

"Yes; I must not stay here long. It would unfit me for the life I must

begin again at last. I can't live in dependence,--I can't live with my

brother, though he is very good to me. He would like to provide for

me; but that would be intolerable to me."

Philip was silent a few moments, and then said, in that high, feeble

voice which with him indicated the resolute suppression of emotion,--

"Is there no other alternative, Maggie? Is that life, away from those

who love you, the only one you will allow yourself to look forward

to?"

"Yes, Philip," she said, looking at him pleadingly, as if she

entreated him to believe that she was compelled to this course. "At

least, as things are; I don't know what may be in years to come. But I

begin to think there can never come much happiness to me from loving;

I have always had so much pain mingled with it. I wish I could make

myself a world outside it, as men do."

"Now you are returning to your old thought in a new form, Maggie,--the

thought I used to combat," said Philip, with a slight tinge of

bitterness. "You want to find out a mode of renunciation that will be

an escape from pain. I tell you again, there is no such escape

possible except by perverting or mutilating one's nature. What would

become of me, if I tried to escape from pain? Scorn and cynicism would

be my only opium; unless I could fall into some kind of conceited

madness, and fancy myself a favorite of Heaven because I am not a

favorite with men."

The bitterness had taken on some impetuosity as Philip went on

speaking; the words were evidently an outlet for some immediate

feeling of his own, as well as an answer to Maggie. There was a pain

pressing on him at that moment. He shrank with proud delicacy from the

faintest allusion to the words of love, of plighted love that had

passed between them. It would have seemed to him like reminding Maggie

of a promise; it would have had for him something of the baseness of

compulsion. He could not dwell on the fact that he himself had not

changed; for that too would have had the air of an appeal. His love

for Maggie was stamped, even more than the rest of his experience,

with the exaggerated sense that he was an exception,--that she, that

every one, saw him in the light of an exception.

But Maggie was conscience-stricken.

"Yes, Philip," she said, with her childish contrition when he used to

chide her, "you are right, I know. I do always think too much of my

own feelings, and not enough of others',--not enough of yours. I had

need have you always to find fault with me and teach me; so many

things have come true that you used to tell me."

Maggie was resting her elbow on the table, leaning her head on her

hand and looking at Philip with half-penitent dependent affection, as

she said this; while he was returning her gaze with an expression

that, to her consciousness, gradually became less vague,--became

charged with a specific recollection. Had his mind flown back to

something that \_she\_ now remembered,--something about a lover of

Lucy's? It was a thought that made her shudder; it gave new

definiteness to her present position, and to the tendency of what had

happened the evening before. She moved her arm from the table, urged

to change her position by that positive physical oppression at the

heart that sometimes accompanies a sudden mental pang.

"What is the matter, Maggie? Has something happened?" Philip said, in

inexpressible anxiety, his imagination being only too ready to weave

everything that was fatal to them both.

"No, nothing," said Maggie, rousing her latent will. Philip must not

have that odious thought in his mind; she would banish it from her

own. "Nothing," she repeated, "except in my own mind. You used to say

I should feel the effect of my starved life, as you called it; and I

do. I am too eager in my enjoyment of music and all luxuries, now they

are come to me."

She took up her work and occupied herself resolutely, while Philip

watched her, really in doubt whether she had anything more than this

general allusion in her mind. It was quite in Maggie's character to be

agitated by vague self-reproach. But soon there came a violent

well-known ring at the door-bell resounding through the house.

"Oh, what a startling announcement!" said Maggie, quite mistress of

herself, though not without some inward flutter. "I wonder where Lucy

is."

Lucy had not been deaf to the signal, and after an interval long

enough for a few solicitous but not hurried inquiries, she herself

ushered Stephen in.

"Well, old fellow," he said, going straight up to Philip and shaking

him heartily by the hand, bowing to Maggie in passing, "it's glorious

to have you back again; only I wish you'd conduct yourself a little

less like a sparrow with a residence on the house-top, and not go in

and out constantly without letting the servants know. This is about

the twentieth time I've had to scamper up those countless stairs to

that painting-room of yours, all to no purpose, because your people

thought you were at home. Such incidents embitter friendship."

"I've so few visitors, it seems hardly worth while to leave notice of

my exit and entrances," said Philip, feeling rather oppressed just

then by Stephen's bright strong presence and strong voice.

"Are you quite well this morning, Miss Tulliver?" said Stephen,

turning to Maggie with stiff politeness, and putting out his hand with

the air of fulfilling a social duty.

Maggie gave the tips of her fingers, and said, "Quite well, thank

you," in a tone of proud indifference. Philip's eyes were watching

them keenly; but Lucy was used to seeing variations in their manner to

each other, and only thought with regret that there was some natural

antipathy which every now and then surmounted their mutual good-will.

"Maggie is not the sort of woman Stephen admires, and she is irritated

by something in him which she interprets as conceit," was the silent

observation that accounted for everything to guileless Lucy. Stephen

and Maggie had no sooner completed this studied greeting than each

felt hurt by the other's coldness. And Stephen, while rattling on in

questions to Philip about his recent sketching expedition, was

thinking all the more about Maggie because he was not drawing her into

the conversation as he had invariably done before. "Maggie and Philip

are not looking happy," thought Lucy; "this first interview has been

saddening to them."

"I think we people who have not been galloping," she said to Stephen,

"are all a little damped by the rain. Let us have some music. We ought

to take advantage of having Philip and you together. Give us the duet

in 'Masaniello'; Maggie has not heard that, and I know it will suit

her."

"Come, then," said Stephen, going toward the piano, and giving a

foretaste of the tune in his deep "brum-brum," very pleasant to hear.

"You, please, Philip,--you play the accompaniment," said Lucy, "and

then I can go on with my work. You \_will\_ like to play, sha'n't you?"

she added, with a pretty, inquiring look, anxious, as usual, lest she

should have proposed what was not pleasant to another; but with

yearnings toward her unfinished embroidery.

Philip had brightened at the proposition, for there is no feeling,

perhaps, except the extremes of fear and grief, that does not find

relief in music,--that does not make a man sing or play the better;

and Philip had an abundance of pent-up feeling at this moment, as

complex as any trio or quartet that was ever meant to express love and

jealousy and resignation and fierce suspicion, all at the same time.

"Oh, yes," he said, seating himself at the piano, "it is a way of

eking out one's imperfect life and being three people at once,--to

sing and make the piano sing, and hear them both all the while,--or

else to sing and paint."

"Ah, there you are an enviable fellow. I can do nothing with my

hands," said Stephen. "That has generally been observed in men of

great administrative capacity, I believe,--a tendency to predominance

of the reflective powers in me! Haven't you observed that, Miss

Tulliver?"

Stephen had fallen by mistake into his habit of playful appeal to

Maggie, and she could not repress the answering flush and epigram.

"I \_have\_ observed a tendency to predominance," she said, smiling; and

Philip at that moment devoutly hoped that she found the tendency

disagreeable.

"Come, come," said Lucy; "music, music! We will discuss each other's

qualities another time."

Maggie always tried in vain to go on with her work when music began.

She tried harder than ever to-day; for the thought that Stephen knew

how much she cared for his singing was one that no longer roused a

merely playful resistance; and she knew, too, that it was his habit

always to stand so that he could look at her. But it was of no use;

she soon threw her work down, and all her intentions were lost in the

vague state of emotion produced by the inspiring duet,--emotion that

seemed to make her at once strong and weak; strong for all enjoyment,

weak for all resistance. When the strain passed into the minor, she

half started from her seat with the sudden thrill of that change. Poor

Maggie! She looked very beautiful when her soul was being played on in

this way by the inexorable power of sound. You might have seen the

slightest perceptible quivering through her whole frame as she leaned

a little forward, clasping her hands as if to steady herself; while

her eyes dilated and brightened into that wide-open, childish

expression of wondering delight which always came back in her happiest

moments. Lucy, who at other times had always been at the piano when

Maggie was looking in this way, could not resist the impulse to steal

up to her and kiss her. Philip, too, caught a glimpse of her now and

then round the open book on the desk, and felt that he had never

before seen her under so strong an influence.

"More, more!" said Lucy, when the duet had been encored. "Something

spirited again. Maggie always says she likes a great rush of sound."

"It must be 'Let us take the road,' then," said Stephen,--"so suitable

for a wet morning. But are you prepared to abandon the most sacred

duties of life, and come and sing with us?"

"Oh, yes," said Lucy, laughing. "If you will look out the 'Beggar's

Opera' from the large canterbury. It has a dingy cover."

"That is a great clue, considering there are about a score covers here

of rival dinginess," said Stephen, drawing out the canterbury.

"Oh, play something the while, Philip," said Lucy, noticing that his

fingers were wandering over the keys. "What is that you are falling

into?--something delicious that I don't know."

"Don't you know that?" said Philip, bringing out the tune more

definitely. "It's from the 'Sonnambula'--'Ah! perchÃ¨ non posso

odiarti.' I don't know the opera, but it appears the tenor is telling

the heroine that he shall always love her though she may forsake him.

You've heard me sing it to the English words, 'I love thee still.'"

It was not quite unintentionally that Philip had wandered into this

song, which might be an indirect expression to Maggie of what he could

not prevail on himself to say to her directly. Her ears had been open

to what he was saying, and when he began to sing, she understood the

plaintive passion of the music. That pleading tenor had no very fine

qualities as a voice, but it was not quite new to her; it had sung to

her by snatches, in a subdued way, among the grassy walks and hollows,

and underneath the leaning ash-tree in the Red Deeps. There seemed to

be some reproach in the words; did Philip mean that? She wished she

had assured him more distinctly in their conversation that she desired

not to renew the hope of love between them, \_only\_ because it clashed

with her inevitable circumstances. She was touched, not thrilled by

the song; it suggested distinct memories and thoughts, and brought

quiet regret in the place of excitement.

"That's the way with you tenors," said Stephen, who was waiting with

music in his hand while Philip finished the song. "You demoralize the

fair sex by warbling your sentimental love and constancy under all

sorts of vile treatment. Nothing short of having your heads served up

in a dish like that mediÃ¦val tenor or troubadour, would prevent you

from expressing your entire resignation. I must administer an

antidote, while Miss Deane prepares to tear herself away from her

bobbins."

Stephen rolled out, with saucy energy,--

"Shall I, wasting in despair,

Die because a woman's fair?"

and seemed to make all the air in the room alive with a new influence.

Lucy, always proud of what Stephen did, went toward the piano with

laughing, admiring looks at him; and Maggie, in spite of her

resistance to the spirit of the song and to the singer, was taken hold

of and shaken by the invisible influence,--was borne along by a wave

too strong for her.

But, angrily resolved not to betray herself, she seized her work, and

went on making false stitches and pricking her fingers with much

perseverance, not looking up or taking notice of what was going

forward, until all the three voices united in "Let us take the road."

I am afraid there would have been a subtle, stealing gratification in

her mind if she had known how entirely this saucy, defiant Stephen was

occupied with her; how he was passing rapidly from a determination to

treat her with ostentatious indifference to an irritating desire for

some sign of inclination from her,--some interchange of subdued word

or look with her. It was not long before he found an opportunity, when

they had passed to the music of "The Tempest." Maggie, feeling the

need of a footstool, was walking across the room to get one, when

Stephen, who was not singing just then, and was conscious of all her

movements, guessed her want, and flew to anticipate her, lifting the

footstool with an entreating look at her, which made it impossible not

to return a glance of gratitude. And then, to have the footstool

placed carefully by a too self-confident personage,--not \_any\_

self-confident personage, but one in particular, who suddenly looks

humble and anxious, and lingers, bending still, to ask if there is not

some draught in that position between the window and the fireplace,

and if he may not be allowed to move the work-table for her,--these

things will summon a little of the too ready, traitorous tenderness

into a woman's eyes, compelled as she is in her girlish time to learn

her life-lessons in very trivial language. And to Maggie such things

had not been every-day incidents, but were a new element in her life,

and found her keen appetite for homage quite fresh. That tone of

gentle solicitude obliged her to look at the face that was bent toward

her, and to say, "No, thank you"; and nothing could prevent that

mutual glance from being delicious to both, as it had been the evening

before.

It was but an ordinary act of politeness in Stephen; it had hardly

taken two minutes; and Lucy, who was singing, scarcely noticed it. But

to Philip's mind, filled already with a vague anxiety that was likely

to find a definite ground for itself in any trivial incident, this

sudden eagerness in Stephen, and the change in Maggie's face, which

was plainly reflecting a beam from his, seemed so strong a contrast

with the previous overwrought signs of indifference, as to be charged

with painful meaning. Stephen's voice, pouring in again, jarred upon

his nervous susceptibility as if it had been the clang of sheet-iron,

and he felt inclined to make the piano shriek in utter discord. He had

really seen no communicable ground for suspecting any ususual feeling

between Stephen and Maggie; his own reason told him so, and he wanted

to go home at once that he might reflect coolly on these false images,

till he had convinced himself of their nullity. But then, again, he

wanted to stay as long as Stephen stayed,--always to be present when

Stephen was present with Maggie. It seemed to poor Philip so natural,

nay, inevitable, that any man who was near Maggie should fall in love

with her! There was no promise of happiness for her if she were

beguiled into loving Stephen Guest; and this thought emboldened Philip

to view his own love for her in the light of a less unequal offering.

He was beginning to play very falsely under this deafening inward

tumult, and Lucy was looking at him in astonishment, when Mrs.

Tulliver's entrance to summon them to lunch came as an excuse for

abruptly breaking off the music.

"Ah, Mr. Philip!" said Mr. Deane, when they entered the dining-room,

"I've not seen you for a long while. Your father's not at home, I

think, is he? I went after him to the office the other day, and they

said he was out of town."

"He's been to Mudport on business for several days," said Philip; "but

he's come back now."

"As fond of his farming hobby as ever, eh?"

"I believe so," said Philip, rather wondering at this sudden interest

in his father's pursuits.

"Ah!" said Mr. Deane, "he's got some land in his own hands on this

side the river as well as the other, I think?"

"Yes, he has."

"Ah!" continued Mr. Deane, as he dispensed the pigeonpie, "he must

find farming a heavy item,--an expensive hobby. I never had a hobby

myself, never would give in to that. And the worst of all hobbies are

those that people think they can get money at. They shoot their money

down like corn out of a sack then."

Lucy felt a little nervous under her father's apparently gratuitous

criticism of Mr. Wakem's expenditure. But it ceased there, and Mr.

Deane became unusually silent and meditative during his luncheon.

Lucy, accustomed to watch all indications in her father, and having

reasons, which had recently become strong, for an extra interest in

what referred to the Wakems, felt an unusual curiosity to know what had

prompted her father's questions. His subsequent silence made her

suspect there had been some special reason for them in his mind.

With this idea in her head, she resorted to her usual plan when she

wanted to tell or ask her father anything particular: she found a

reason for her aunt Tulliver to leaving the dining-room after dinner,

and seated herself on a small stool at her father's knee. Mr. Deane,

under those circumstances, considered that he tasted some of the most

agreeable moments his merits had purchased him in life,

notwithstanding that Lucy, disliking to have her hair powdered with

snuff, usually began by mastering his snuff-box on such occasions.

"You don't want to go to sleep yet, papa, \_do\_ you?" she said, as she

brought up her stool and opened the large fingers that clutched the

snuff-box.

"Not yet," said Mr. Deane, glancing at the reward of merit in the

decanter. "But what do \_you\_ want?" he added, pinching the dimpled

chin fondly,--"to coax some more sovereigns out of my pocket for your

bazaar? Eh?"

"No, I have no base motives at all to-day. I only want to talk, not to

beg. I want to know what made you ask Philip Wakem about his father's

farming to-day, papa? It seemed rather odd, because you never hardly

say anything to him about his father; and why should you care about

Mr. Wakem's losing money by his hobby?"

"Something to do with business," said Mr. Deane, waving his hands, as

if to repel intrusion into that mystery.

"But, papa, you always say Mr. Wakem has brought Philip up like a

girl; how came you to think you should get any business knowledge out

of him? Those abrupt questions sounded rather oddly. Philip thought

them queer."

"Nonsense, child!" said Mr. Deane, willing to justify his social

demeanor, with which he had taken some pains in his upward progress.

"There's a report that Wakem's mill and farm on the other side of the

river--Dorlcote Mill, your uncle Tulliver's, you know--isn't answering

so well as it did. I wanted to see if your friend Philip would let

anything out about his father's being tired of farming."

"Why? Would you buy the mill, papa, if he would part with it?" said

Lucy, eagerly. "Oh, tell me everything; here, you shall have your

snuff-box if you'll tell me. Because Maggie says all their hearts are

set on Tom's getting back the mill some time. It was one of the last

things her father said to Tom, that he must get back the mill."

"Hush, you little puss," said Mr. Deane, availing himself of the

restored snuff-box. "You must not say a word about this thing; do you

hear? There's very little chance of their getting the mill or of

anybody's getting it out of Wakem's hands. And if he knew that we

wanted it with a view to the Tulliver's getting it again, he'd be the

less likely to part with it. It's natural, after what happened. He

behaved well enough to Tulliver before; but a horsewhipping is not

likely to be paid for with sugar-plums."

"Now, papa," said Lucy, with a little air of solemnity, "will you

trust me? You must not ask me all my reasons for what I'm going to

say, but I have very strong reasons. And I'm very cautious; I am,

indeed."

"Well, let us hear."

"Why, I believe, if you will let me take Philip Wakem into our

confidence,--let me tell him all about your wish to buy, and what it's

for; that my cousins wish to have it, and why they wish to have it,--I

believe Philip would help to bring it about. I know he would desire to

do it."

"I don't see how that can be, child," said Mr. Deane, looking puzzled.

"Why should \_he\_ care?"--then, with a sudden penetrating look at his

daughter, "You don't think the poor lad's fond of you, and so you can

make him do what you like?" (Mr. Deane felt quite safe about his

daughter's affections.)

"No, papa; he cares very little about me,--not so much as I care about

him. But I have a reason for being quite sure of what I say. Don't you

ask me. And if you ever guess, don't tell me. Only give me leave to do

as I think fit about it."

Lucy rose from her stool to seat herself on her father's knee, and

kissed him with that last request.

"Are you sure you won't do mischief, now?" he said, looking at her

with delight.

"Yes, papa, quite sure. I'm very wise; I've got all your business

talents. Didn't you admire my accompt-book, now, when I showed it

you?"

"Well, well, if this youngster will keep his counsel, there won't be

much harm done. And to tell the truth, I think there's not much chance

for us any other way. Now, let me go off to sleep."

Chapter VIII

Wakem in a New Light

Before three days had passed after the conversation you have just

overheard between Lucy and her father she had contrived to have a

private interview with Philip during a visit of Maggie's to her aunt

Glegg. For a day and a night Philip turned over in his mind with

restless agitation all that Lucy had told him in that interview, till

he had thoroughly resolved on a course of action. He thought he saw

before him now a possibility of altering his position with respect to

Maggie, and removing at least one obstacle between them. He laid his

plan and calculated all his moves with the fervid deliberation of a

chess-player in the days of his first ardor, and was amazed himself at

his sudden genius as a tactician. His plan was as bold as it was

thoroughly calculated. Having watched for a moment when his father had

nothing more urgent on his hands than the newspaper, he went behind

him, laid a hand on his shoulder, and said,--

"Father, will you come up into my sanctum, and look at my new

sketches? I've arranged them now."

"I'm getting terrible stiff in the joints, Phil, for climbing those

stairs of yours," said Wakem, looking kindly at his son as he laid

down his paper. "But come along, then."

"This is a nice place for you, isn't it, Phil?--a capital light that

from the roof, eh?" was, as usual, the first thing he said on entering

the painting-room. He liked to remind himself and his son too that his

fatherly indulgence had provided the accommodation. He had been a good

father. Emily would have nothing to reproach him with there, if she

came back again from her grave.

"Come, come," he said, putting his double eye-glass over his nose, and

seating himself to take a general view while he rested, "you've got a

famous show here. Upon my word, I don't see that your things aren't as

good as that London artist's--what's his name--that Leyburn gave so

much money for."

Philip shook his head and smiled. He had seated himself on his

painting-stool, and had taken a lead pencil in his hand, with which he

was making strong marks to counteract the sense of tremulousness. He

watched his father get up, and walk slowly round, good-naturedly

dwelling on the pictures much longer than his amount of genuine taste

for landscape would have prompted, till he stopped before a stand on

which two pictures were placed,--one much larger than the other, the

smaller one in a leather case.

"Bless me! what have you here?" said Wakem, startled by a sudden

transition from landscape to portrait. "I thought you'd left off

figures. Who are these?"

"They are the same person," said Philip, with calm promptness, "at

different ages."

"And what person?" said Wakem, sharply fixing his eyes with a growing

look of suspicion on the larger picture.

"Miss Tulliver. The small one is something like what she was when I

was at school with her brother at King's Lorton; the larger one is not

quite so good a likeness of what she was when I came from abroad."

Wakem turned round fiercely, with a flushed face, letting his

eye-glass fall, and looking at his son with a savage expression for a

moment, as if he was ready to strike that daring feebleness from the

stool. But he threw himself into the armchair again, and thrust his

hands into his trouser-pockets, still looking angrily at his son,

however. Philip did not return the look, but sat quietly watching the

point of his pencil.

"And do you mean to say, then, that you have had any acquaintance with

her since you came from abroad?" said Wakem, at last, with that vain

effort which rage always makes to throw as much punishment as it

desires to inflict into words and tones, since blows are forbidden.

"Yes; I saw a great deal of her for a whole year before her father's

death. We met often in that thicket--the Red Deeps--near Dorlcote

Mill. I love her dearly; I shall never love any other woman. I have

thought of her ever since she was a little girl."

"Go on, sir! And you have corresponded with her all this while?"

"No. I never told her I loved her till just before we parted, and she

promised her brother not to see me again or to correspond with me. I

am not sure that she loves me or would consent to marry me. But if she

would consent,--if she \_did\_ love me well enough,--I should marry

her."

"And this is the return you make me for all the indulgences I've

heaped on you?" said Wakem, getting white, and beginning to tremble

under an enraged sense of impotence before Philip's calm defiance and

concentration of purpose.

"No, father," said Philip, looking up at him for the first time; "I

don't regard it as a return. You have been an indulgent father to me;

but I have always felt that it was because you had an affectionate

wish to give me as much happiness as my unfortunate lot would admit,

not that it was a debt you expected me to pay by sacrificing all my

chances of happiness to satisfy feelings of yours which I can never

share."

"I think most sons would share their father's feelings in this case,"

said Wakem, bitterly. "The girl's father was an ignorant mad brute,

who was within an inch of murdering me. The whole town knows it. And

the brother is just as insolent, only in a cooler way. He forbade her

seeing you, you say; he'll break every bone in your body, for your

greater happiness, if you don't take care. But you seem to have made

up your mind; you have counted the consequences, I suppose. Of course

you are independent of me; you can marry this girl to-morrow, if you

like; you are a man of five-and-twenty,--you can go your way, and I

can go mine. We need have no more to do with each other."

Wakem rose and walked toward the door, but something held him back,

and instead of leaving the room, he walked up and down it. Philip was

slow to reply, and when he spoke, his tone had a more incisive

quietness and clearness than ever.

"No; I can't marry Miss Tulliver, even if she would have me, if I have

only my own resources to maintain her with. I have been brought up to

no profession. I can't offer her poverty as well as deformity."

"Ah, \_there\_ is a reason for your clinging to me, doubtless," said

Wakem, still bitterly, though Philip's last words had given him a

pang; they had stirred a feeling which had been a habit for a quarter

of a century. He threw himself into the chair again.

"I expected all this," said Philip. "I know these scenes are often

happening between father and son. If I were like other men of my age,

I might answer your angry words by still angrier; we might part; I

should marry the woman I love, and have a chance of being as happy as

the rest. But if it will be a satisfaction to you to annihilate the

very object of everything you've done for me, you have an advantage

over most fathers; you can completely deprive me of the only thing

that would make my life worth having."

Philip paused, but his father was silent.

"You know best what satisfaction you would have, beyond that of

gratifying a ridiculous rancor worthy only of wandering savages."

"Ridiculous rancor!" Wakem burst out. "What do you mean? Damn it! is a

man to be horsewhipped by a boor and love him for it? Besides, there's

that cold, proud devil of a son, who said a word to me I shall not

forget when we had the settling. He would be as pleasant a mark for a

bullet as I know, if he were worth the expense."

"I don't mean your resentment toward them," said Philip, who had his

reasons for some sympathy with this view of Tom, "though a feeling of

revenge is not worth much, that you should care to keep it. I mean

your extending the enmity to a helpless girl, who has too much sense

and goodness to share their narrow prejudices. \_She\_ has never entered

into the family quarrels."

"What does that signify? We don't ask what a woman does; we ask whom

she belongs to. It's altogether a degrading thing to you, to think of

marrying old Tulliver's daughter."

For the first time in the dialogue, Philip lost some of his

self-control, and colored with anger.

"Miss Tulliver," he said, with bitter incisiveness, "has the only

grounds of rank that anything but vulgar folly can suppose to belong

to the middle class; she is thoroughly refined, and her friends,

whatever else they may be, are respected for irreproachable honor and

integrity. All St. Ogg's, I fancy, would pronounce her to be more than

my equal."

Wakem darted a glance of fierce question at his son; but Philip was

not looking at him, and with a certain penitent consciousness went on,

in a few moments, as if in amplification of his last words,--

"Find a single person in St. Ogg's who will not tell you that a

beautiful creature like her would be throwing herself away on a

pitiable object like me."

"Not she!" said Wakem, rising again, and forgetting everything else in

a burst of resentful pride, half fatherly, half personal. "It would be

a deuced fine match for her. It's all stuff about an accidental

deformity, when a girl's really attached to a man."

"But girls are not apt to get attached under those circumstances,"

said Philip.

"Well, then," said Wakem, rather brutally, trying to recover his

previous position, "if she doesn't care for you, you might have spared

yourself the trouble of talking to me about her, and you might have

spared me the trouble of refusing my consent to what was never likely

to happen."

Wakem strode to the door, and without looking round again, banged it

after him.

Philip was not without confidence that his father would be ultimately

wrought upon as he had expected, by what had passed; but the scene had

jarred upon his nerves, which were as sensitive as a woman's. He

determined not to go down to dinner; he couldn't meet his father again

that day. It was Wakem's habit, when he had no company at home, to go

out in the evening, often as early as half-past seven; and as it was

far on in the afternoon now, Philip locked up his room and went out

for a long ramble, thinking he would not return until his father was

out of the house again. He got into a boat, and went down the river to

a favorite village, where he dined, and lingered till it was late

enough for him to return. He had never had any sort of quarrel with

his father before, and had a sickening fear that this contest, just

begun, might go on for weeks; and what might not happen in that time?

He would not allow himself to define what that involuntary question

meant. But if he could once be in the position of Maggie's accepted,

acknowledged lover, there would be less room for vague dread. He went

up to his painting-room again, and threw himself with a sense of

fatigue into the armchair, looking round absently at the views of

water and rock that were ranged around, till he fell into a doze, in

which he fancied Maggie was slipping down a glistening, green, slimy

channel of a waterfall, and he was looking on helpless, till he was

awakened by what seemed a sudden, awful crash.

It was the opening of the door, and he could hardly have dozen more

than a few moments, for there was no perceptible change in the evening

light. It was his father who entered; and when Philip moved to vacate

the chair for him, he said,--

"Sit still. I'd rather walk about."

He stalked up and down the room once or twice, and then, standing

opposite Philip with his hands thrust in his side pockets, he said, as

if continuing a conversation that had not been broken off,--

"But this girl seems to have been fond of you, Phil, else she wouldn't

have met you in that way."

Philip's heart was beating rapidly, and a transient flush passed over

his face like a gleam. It was not quite easy to speak at once.

"She liked me at King's Lorton, when she was a little girl, because I

used to sit with her brother a great deal when he had hurt his foot.

She had kept that in her memory, and thought of me as a friend of a

long while ago. She didn't think of me as a lover when she met me."

"Well, but you made love to her at last. What did she say then?" said

Wakem, walking about again.

"She said she \_did\_ love me then."

"Confound it, then; what else do you want? Is she a jilt?"

"She was very young then," said Philip, hesitatingly. "I'm afraid she

hardly knew what she felt. I'm afraid our long separation, and the

idea that events must always divide us, may have made a difference."

"But she's in the town. I've seen her at church. Haven't you spoken to

her since you came back?"

"Yes, at Mr. Deane's. But I couldn't renew my proposals to her on

several grounds. One obstacle would be removed if you would give your

consent,--if you would be willing to think of her as a daughter-in-law."

Wakem was silent a little while, pausing before Maggie's picture.

"She's not the sort of woman your mother was, though, Phil," he said,

at last. "I saw her at church,--she's handsomer than this,--deuced

fine eyes and fine figure, I saw; but rather dangerous and

unmanageable, eh?"

"She's very tender and affectionate, and so simple,--without the airs

and petty contrivances other women have."

"Ah?" said Wakem. Then looking round at his son, "But your mother

looked gentler; she had that brown wavy hair and gray eyes, like

yours. You can't remember her very well. It was a thousand pities I'd

no likeness of her."

"Then, shouldn't you be glad for me to have the same sort of

happiness, father, to sweeten my life for me? There can never be

another tie so strong to you as that which began eight-and-twenty

years ago, when you married my mother, and you have been tightening it

ever since."

"Ah, Phil, you're the only fellow that knows the best of me," said

Wakem, giving his hand to his son. "We must keep together if we can.

And now, what am I to do? You must come downstairs and tell me. Am I

to go and call on this dark-eyed damsel?"

The barrier once thrown down in this way, Philip could talk freely to

his father of their entire relation with the Tullivers,--of the desire

to get the mill and land back into the family, and of its transfer to

Guest & Co. as an intermediate step. He could venture now to be

persuasive and urgent, and his father yielded with more readiness than

he had calculated on.

"\_I\_ don't care about the mill," he said at last, with a sort of angry

compliance. "I've had an infernal deal of bother lately about the

mill. Let them pay me for my improvements, that's all. But there's one

thing you needn't ask me. I shall have no direct transactions with

young Tulliver. If you like to swallow him for his sister's sake, you

may; but I've no sauce that will make him go down."

I leave you to imagine the agreeable feelings with which Philip went

to Mr. Deane the next day, to say that Mr. Wakem was ready to open the

negotiations, and Lucy's pretty triumph as she appealed to her father

whether she had not proved her great business abilities. Mr. Deane was

rather puzzled, and suspected that there had been something "going on"

among the young people to which he wanted a clew. But to men of Mr.

Deane's stamp, what goes on among the young people is as extraneous to

the real business of life as what goes on among the birds and

butterflies, until it can be shown to have a malign bearing on

monetary affairs. And in this case the bearing appeared to be entirely

propitious.

Chapter IX

Charity in Full-Dress

The culmination of Maggie's career as an admired member of society in

St. Ogg's was certainly the day of the bazaar, when her simple noble

beauty, clad in a white muslin of some soft-floating kind, which I

suspect must have come from the stores of aunt Pullet's wardrobe,

appeared with marked distinction among the more adorned and

conventional women around her. We perhaps never detect how much of our

social demeanor is made up of artificial airs until we see a person

who is at once beautiful and simple; without the beauty, we are apt to

call simplicity awkwardness. The Miss Guests were much too well-bred

to have any of the grimaces and affected tones that belong to

pretentious vulgarity; but their stall being next to the one where

Maggie sat, it seemed newly obvious to-day that Miss Guest held her

chin too high, and that Miss Laura spoke and moved continually with a

view to effect.

All well-dressed St. Ogg's and its neighborhood were there; and it

would have been worth while to come even from a distance, to see the

fine old hall, with its open roof and carved oaken rafters, and great

oaken folding-doors, and light shed down from a height on the

many-colored show beneath; a very quaint place, with broad faded

stripes painted on the walls, and here and there a show of heraldic

animals of a bristly, long-snouted character, the cherished emblems of

a noble family once the seigniors of this now civic hall. A grand

arch, cut in the upper wall at one end, surmounted an oaken orchestra,

with an open room behind it, where hothouse plants and stalls for

refreshments were disposed; an agreeable resort for gentlemen disposed

to loiter, and yet to exchange the occasional crush down below for a

more commodious point of view. In fact, the perfect fitness of this

ancient building for an admirable modern purpose, that made charity

truly elegant, and led through vanity up to the supply of a deficit,

was so striking that hardly a person entered the room without

exchanging the remark more than once. Near the great arch over the

orchestra was the stone oriel with painted glass, which was one of the

venerable inconsistencies of the old hall; and it was close by this

that Lucy had her stall, for the convenience of certain large plain

articles which she had taken charge of for Mrs. Kenn. Maggie had

begged to sit at the open end of the stall, and to have the sale of

these articles rather than of bead-mats and other elaborate products

of which she had but a dim understanding. But it soon appeared that

the gentlemen's dressing-gowns, which were among her commodities, were

objects of such general attention and inquiry, and excited so

troublesome a curiosity as to their lining and comparative merits,

together with a determination to test them by trying on, as to make

her post a very conspicuous one. The ladies who had commodities of

their own to sell, and did not want dressing-gowns, saw at once the

frivolity and bad taste of this masculine preference for goods which

any tailor could furnish; and it is possible that the emphatic notice

of various kinds which was drawn toward Miss Tulliver on this public

occasion, threw a very strong and unmistakable light on her subsequent

conduct in many minds then present. Not that anger, on account of

spurned beauty can dwell in the celestial breasts of charitable

ladies, but rather that the errors of persons who have once been much

admired necessarily take a deeper tinge from the mere force of

contrast; and also, that to-day Maggie's conspicuous position, for the

first time, made evident certain characteristics which were

subsequently felt to have an explanatory bearing. There was something

rather bold in Miss Tulliver's direct gaze, and something undefinably

coarse in the style of her beauty, which placed her, in the opinion of

all feminine judges, far below her cousin Miss Deane; for the ladies

of St. Ogg's had now completely ceded to Lucy their hypothetic claims

on the admiration of Mr. Stephen Guest.

As for dear little Lucy herself, her late benevolent triumph about the

Mill, and all the affectionate projects she was cherishing for Maggie

and Philip, helped to give her the highest spirits to-day, and she

felt nothing but pleasure in the evidence of Maggie's attractiveness.

It is true, she was looking very charming herself, and Stephen was

paying her the utmost attention on this public occasion; jealously

buying up the articles he had seen under her fingers in the process of

making, and gayly helping her to cajole the male customers into the

purchase of the most effeminate futilities. He chose to lay aside his

hat and wear a scarlet fez of her embroidering; but by superficial

observers this was necessarily liable to be interpreted less as a

compliment to Lucy than as a mark of coxcombry. "Guest is a great

coxcomb," young Torry observed; "but then he is a privileged person in

St. Ogg's--he carries all before him; if another fellow did such

things, everybody would say he made a fool of himself."

And Stephen purchased absolutely nothing from Maggie, until Lucy said,

in rather a vexed undertone,--

"See, now; all the things of Maggie's knitting will be gone, and you

will not have bought one. There are those deliciously soft warm things

for the wrists,--do buy them."

"Oh no," said Stephen, "they must be intended for imaginative persons,

who can chill themselves on this warm day by thinking of the frosty

Caucasus. Stern reason is my forte, you know. You must get Philip to

buy those. By the way, why doesn't he come?"

"He never likes going where there are many people, though I enjoined

him to come. He said he would buy up any of my goods that the rest of

the world rejected. But now, do go and buy something of Maggie."

"No, no; see, she has got a customer; there is old Wakem himself just

coming up."

Lucy's eyes turned with anxious interest toward Maggie to see how she

went through this first interview, since a sadly memorable time, with

a man toward whom she must have so strange a mixture of feelings; but

she was pleased to notice that Wakem had tact enough to enter at once

into talk about the bazaar wares, and appear interested in purchasing,

smiling now and then kindly at Maggie, and not calling on her to speak

much, as if he observed that she was rather pale and tremulous.

"Why, Wakem is making himself particularly amiable to your cousin,"

said Stephen, in an undertone to Lucy; "is it pure magnanimity? You

talked of a family quarrel."

"Oh, that will soon be quite healed, I hope," said Lucy, becoming a

little indiscreet in her satisfaction, and speaking with an air of

significance. But Stephen did not appear to notice this, and as some

lady-purchasers came up, he lounged on toward Maggie's end, handling

trifles and standing aloof until Wakem, who had taken out his purse,

had finished his t transactions.

"My son came with me," he overheard Wakem saying, "but he has vanished

into some other part of the building, and has left all these

charitable gallantries to me. I hope you'll reproach him for his

shabby conduct."

She returned his smile and bow without speaking, and he turned away,

only then observing Stephen and nodding to him. Maggie, conscious that

Stephen was still there, busied herself with counting money, and

avoided looking up. She had been well pleased that he had devoted

himself to Lucy to-day, and had not come near her. They had begun the

morning with an indifferent salutation, and both had rejoiced in being

aloof from each other, like a patient who has actually done without

his opium, in spite of former failures in resolution. And during the

last few days they had even been making up their minds to failures,

looking to the outward events that must soon come to separate them, as

a reason for dispensing with self-conquest in detail.

Stephen moved step by step as if he were being unwillingly dragged,

until he had got round the open end of the stall, and was half hidden

by a screen of draperies. Maggie went on counting her money till she

suddenly heard a deep gentle voice saying, "Aren't you very tried? Do

let me bring you something,--some fruit or jelly, mayn't I?"

The unexpected tones shook her like a sudden accidental vibration of a

harp close by her.

"Oh no, thank you," she said faintly, and only half looking up for an

instant.

"You look so pale," Stephen insisted, in a more entreating tone. "I'm

sure you're exhausted. I must disobey you, and bring something."

"No, indeed, I couldn't take it."

"Are you angry with me? What have I done? \_Do\_ look at me."

"Pray, go away," said Maggie, looking at him helplessly, her eyes

glancing immediately from him to the opposite corner of the orchestra,

which was half hidden by the folds of the old faded green curtain.

Maggie had no sooner uttered this entreaty than she was wretched at

the admission it implied; but Stephen turned away at once, and

following her upward glance, he saw Philip Wakem sealed in the

half-hidden corner, so that he could command little more than that

angle of the hall in which Maggie sat. An entirely new though occurred

to Stephen, and linking itself with what he had observed of Wakem's

manner, and with Lucy's reply to his observation, it convinced him

that there had been some former relation between Philip and Maggie

beyond that childish one of which he had heard. More than one impulse

made him immediately leave the hall and go upstairs to the

refreshment-room, where, walking up to Philip, he sat down behind him,

and put his hand on his shoulder.

"Are you studying for a portrait, Phil," he said, "or for a sketch of

that oriel window? By George, it makes a capital bit from this dark

corner, with the curtain just marking it off."

"I have been studying expression," said Philip, curtly.

"What! Miss Tulliver's? It's rather of the savage-moody order to-day,

I think,--something of the fallen princess serving behind a counter.

Her cousin sent me to her with a civil offer to get her some

refreshment, but I have been snubbed, as usual. There's natural

antipathy between us, I suppose; I have seldom the honor to please

her."

"What a hypocrite you are!" said Philip, flushing angrily.

"What! because experience must have told me that I'm universally

pleasing? I admit the law, but there's some disturbing force here."

"I am going," said Philip, rising abruptly.

"So am I--to get a breath of fresh air; this place gets oppressive. I

think I have done suit and service long enough."

The two friends walked downstairs together without speaking. Philip

turned through the outer door into the court-yard; but Stephen,

saying, "Oh, by the by, I must call in here," went on along the

passage to one of the rooms at the other end of the building, which

were appropriated to the town library. He had the room all to himself,

and a man requires nothing less than this when he wants to dash his

cap on the table, throw himself astride a chair, and stare at a high

brick wall with a frown which would not have been beneath the occasion

if he had been slaying "the giant Python." The conduct that issues

from a moral conflict has often so close a resemblance to vice that

the distinction escapes all outward judgments founded on a mere

comparison of actions. It is clear to you, I hope, that Stephen was

not a hypocrite,--capable of deliberate doubleness for a selfish end;

and yet his fluctuations between the indulgence of a feeling and the

systematic concealment of it might have made a good case in support of

Philip's accusation.

Meanwhile, Maggie sat at her stall cold and trembling, with that

painful sensation in the eyes which comes from resolutely repressed

tears. Was her life to be always like this,--always bringing some new

source of inward strife? She heard confusedly the busy, indifferent

voices around her, and wished her mind could flow into that easy

babbling current. It was at this moment that Dr. Kenn, who had quite

lately come into the hall, and was now walking down the middle with

his hands behind him, taking a general view, fixed his eyes on Maggie

for the first time, and was struck with the expression of pain on her

beautiful face. She was sitting quite still, for the stream of

customers had lessened at this late hour in the afternoon; the

gentlemen had chiefly chosen the middle of the day, and Maggie's stall

was looking rather bare. This, with her absent, pained expression,

finished the contrast between her and her companions, who were all

bright, eager, and busy. He was strongly arrested. Her face had

naturally drawn his attention as a new and striking one at church, and

he had been introduced to her during a short call on business at Mr.

Deane's, but he had never spoken more than three words to her. He

walked toward her now, and Maggie, perceiving some one approaching,

roused herself to look up and be prepared to speak. She felt a

childlike, instinctive relief from the sense of uneasiness in this

exertion, when she saw it was Dr. Kenn's face that was looking at her;

that plain, middle-aged face, with a grave, penetrating kindness in

it, seeming to tell of a human being who had reached a firm, safe

strand, but was looking with helpful pity toward the strugglers still

tossed by the waves, had an effect on Maggie at this moment which was

afterward remembered by her as if it had been a promise. The

middle-aged, who have lived through their strongest emotions, but are

yet in the time when memory is still half passionate and not merely

contemplative, should surely be a sort of natural priesthood, whom

life has disciplined and consecrated to be the refuge and rescue of

early stumblers and victims of self-despair. Most of us, at some

moment in our young lives, would have welcomed a priest of that

natural order in any sort of canonicals or uncanonicals, but had to

scramble upward into all the difficulties of nineteen entirely without

such aid, as Maggie did.

"You find your office rather a fatiguing one, I fear, Miss Tulliver,"

said Dr. Kenn.

"It is, rather," said Maggie, simply, not being accustomed to simpler

amiable denials of obvious facts.

"But I can tell Mrs. Kenn that you have disposed of her goods very

quickly," he added; "she will be very much obliged to you."

"Oh, I have done nothing; the gentlemen came very fast to buy the

dressing-gowns and embroidered waistcoats, but I think any of the

other ladies would have sold more; I didn't know what to say about

them."

Dr. Kenn smiled. "I hope I'm going to have you as a permanent

parishioner now, Miss Tulliver; am I? You have been at a distance from

us hitherto."

"I have been a teacher in a school, and I'm going into another

situation of the same kind very soon."

"Ah? I was hoping you would remain among your friends, who are all in

this neighborhood, I believe."

"Oh, \_I must go\_," said Maggie, earnestly, looking at Dr. Kenn with an

expression of reliance, as if she had told him her history in those

three words. It was one of those moments of implicit revelation which

will sometimes happen even between people who meet quite

transiently,--on a mile's journey, perhaps, or when resting by the

wayside. There is always this possibility of a word or look from a

stranger to keep alive the sense of human brotherhood.

Dr. Kenn's ear and eye took in all the signs that this brief

confidence of Maggie's was charged with meaning.

"I understand," he said; "you feel it right to go. But that will not

prevent our meeting again, I hope; it will not prevent my knowing you

better, if I can be of any service to you."

He put out his hand and pressed hers kindly before he turned away.

"She has some trouble or other at heart," he thought. "Poor child! she

looks as if she might turn out to be one of

'The souls by nature pitched too high,

By suffering plunged too low.'

"There's something wonderfully honest in those beautiful eyes."

It may be surprising that Maggie, among whose many imperfections an

excessive delight in admiration and acknowledged supremacy were not

absent now, any more than when she was instructing the gypsies with a

view toward achieving a royal position among them, was not more elated

on a day when she had had the tribute of so many looks and smiles,

together with that satisfactory consciousness which had necessarily

come from being taken before Lucy's chevalglass, and made to look at

the full length of her tall beauty, crowned by the night of her massy

hair. Maggie had smiled at herself then, and for the moment had

forgotten everything in the sense of her own beauty. If that state of

mind could have lasted, her choice would have been to have Stephen

Guest at her feet, offering her a life filled with all luxuries, with

daily incense of adoration near and distant, and with all

possibilities of culture at her command. But there were things in her

stronger than vanity,--passion and affection, and long, deep memories

of early discipline and effort, of early claims on her love and pity;

and the stream of vanity was soon swept along and mingled

imperceptibly with that wider current which was at its highest force

today, under the double urgency of the events and inward impulses

brought by the last week.

Philip had not spoken to her himself about the removal of obstacles

between them on his father's side,--he shrank from that; but he had

told everything to Lucy, with the hope that Maggie, being informed

through her, might give him some encouraging sign that their being

brought thus much nearer to each other was a happiness to her. The

rush of conflicting feelings was too great for Maggie to say much when

Lucy, with a face breathing playful joy, like one of Correggio's

cherubs, poured forth her triumphant revelation; and Lucy could hardly

be surprised that she could do little more than cry with gladness at

the thought of her father's wish being fulfilled, and of Tom's getting

the Mill again in reward for all his hard striving. The details of

preparation for the bazaar had then come to usurp Lucy's attention for

the next few days, and nothing had been said by the cousins on

subjects that were likely to rouse deeper feelings. Philip had been to

the house more than once, but Maggie had had no private conversation

with him, and thus she had been left to fight her inward battle

without interference.

But when the bazaar was fairly ended, and the cousins were alone

again, resting together at home, Lucy said,--

"You must give up going to stay with your aunt Moss the day after

to-morrow, Maggie; write a note to her, and tell her you have put it

off at my request, and I'll send the man with it. She won't be

displeased; you'll have plenty of time to go by-and-by; and I don't

want you to go out of the way just now."

"Yes, indeed I must go, dear; I can't put it off. I wouldn't leave

aunt Gritty out for the world. And I shall have very little time, for

I'm going away to a new situation on the 25th of June."

"Maggie!" said Lucy, almost white with astonishment.

"I didn't tell you, dear," said Maggie, making a great effort to

command herself, "because you've been so busy. But some time ago I

wrote to our old governess, Miss Firniss, to ask her to let me know if

she met with any situation that I could fill, and the other day I had

a letter from her telling me that I could take three orphan pupils of

hers to the coast during the holidays, and then make trial of a

situation with her as teacher. I wrote yesterday to accept the offer."

Lucy felt so hurt that for some moments she was unable to speak.

"Maggie," she said at last, "how could you be so unkind to me--not to

tell me--to take \_such\_ a step--and now!" She hesitated a little, and

then added, "And Philip? I thought everything was going to be so

happy. Oh, Maggie, what is the reason? Give it up; let me write. There

is nothing now to keep you and Philip apart."

"Yes," said Maggie, faintly. "There is Tom's feeling. He said I must

give him up if I married Philip. And I know he will not change--at

least not for a long while--unless something happened to soften him."

"But I will talk to him; he's coming back this week. And this good

news about the Mill will soften him. And I'll talk to him about

Philip. Tom's always very compliant to me; I don't think he's so

obstinate."

"But I must go," said Maggie, in a distressed voice. "I must leave

some time to pack. Don't press me to stay, dear Lucy."

Lucy was silent for two or three minutes, looking away and ruminating.

At length she knelt down by her cousin, and looking up in her face

with anxious seriousness, said,--

"Maggie, is it that you don't love Philip well enough to marry him?

Tell me--trust me."

Maggie held Lucy's hands tightly in silence a little while. Her own

hands were quite cold. But when she spoke, her voice was quite clear

and distinct.

"Yes, Lucy, I would choose to marry him. I think it would be the best

and highest lot for me,--to make his life happy. He loved me first. No

one else could be quite what he is to me. But I can't divide myself

from my brother for life. I must go away, and wait. Pray don't speak

to me again about it."

Lucy obeyed in pain and wonder. The next word she said was,--

"Well, dear Maggie, at least you will go to the dance at Park House

to-morrow, and have some music and brightness, before you go to pay

these dull dutiful visits. Ah! here come aunty and the tea."

Chapter X

The Spell Seems Broken

The suite of rooms opening into each other at Park House looked duly

brilliant with lights and flowers and the personal splendors of

sixteen couples, with attendant parents and guardians. The focus of

brilliancy was the long drawing-room, where the dancing went forward,

under the inspiration of the grand piano; the library, into which it

opened at one end, had the more sober illumination of maturity, with

caps and cards; and at the other end the pretty sitting-room, with a

conservatory attached, was left as an occasional cool retreat. Lucy,

who had laid aside her black for the first time, and had her pretty

slimness set off by an abundant dress of white crape, was the

acknowledged queen of the occasion; for this was one of the Miss

Guests' thoroughly condescending parties, including no member of any

aristocracy higher than that of St. Ogg's, and stretching to the

extreme limits of commercial and professional gentility.

Maggie at first refused to dance, saying that she had forgotten all

the figures--it was so many years since she had danced at school; and

she was glad to have that excuse, for it is ill dancing with a heavy

heart. But at length the music wrought in her young limbs, and the

longing came; even though it was the horrible young Torry, who walked

up a second time to try and persuade her. She warned him that she

could not dance anything but a country-dance; but he, of course, was

willing to wait for that high felicity, meaning only to be

complimentary when he assured her at several intervals that it was a

"great bore" that she couldn't waltz, he would have liked so much to

waltz with her. But at last it was the turn of the good old-fashioned

dance which has the least of vanity and the most of merriment in it,

and Maggie quite forgot her troublous life in a childlike enjoyment of

that half-rustic rhythm which seems to banish pretentious etiquette.

She felt quite charitably toward young Torry, as his hand bore her

along and held her up in the dance; her eyes and cheeks had that fire

of young joy in them which will flame out if it can find the least

breath to fan it; and her simple black dress, with its bit of black

lace, seemed like the dim setting of a jewel.

Stephen had not yet asked her to dance; had not yet paid her more than

a passing civility. Since yesterday, that inward vision of her which

perpetually made part of his consciousness, had been half screened by

the image of Philip Wakem, which came across it like a blot; there was

some attachment between her and Philip; at least there was an

attachment on his side, which made her feel in some bondage. Here,

then, Stephen told himself, was another claim of honor which called on

him to resist the attraction that was continually threatening to

overpower him. He told himself so; and yet he had once or twice felt a

certain savage resistance, and at another moment a shuddering

repugnance, to this intrusion of Philip's image, which almost made it

a new incitement to rush toward Maggie and claim her for himself.

Nevertheless, he had done what he meant to do this evening,--he had

kept aloof from her; he had hardly looked at her; and he had been

gayly assiduous to Lucy. But now his eyes were devouring Maggie; he

felt inclined to kick young Torry out of the dance, and take his

place. Then he wanted the dance to end that he might get rid of his

partner. The possibility that he too should dance with Maggie, and

have her hand in his so long, was beginning to possess him like a

thirst. But even now their hands were meeting in the dance,--were

meeting still to the very end of it, though they were far off each

other.

Stephen hardly knew what happened, or in what automatic way he got

through the duties of politeness in the interval, until he was free

and saw Maggie seated alone again, at the farther end of the room. He

made his way toward her round the couples that were forming for the

waltz; and when Maggie became conscious that she was the person he

sought, she felt, in spite of all the thoughts that had gone before, a

glowing gladness at heart. Her eyes and cheeks were still brightened

with her childlike enthusiasm in the dance; her whole frame was set to

joy and tenderness; even the coming pain could not seem bitter,--she

was ready to welcome it as a part of life, for life at this moment

seemed a keen, vibrating consciousness poised above pleasure or pain.

This one, this last night, she might expand unrestrainedly in the

warmth of the present, without those chill, eating thoughts of the

past and the future.

"They're going to waltz again," said Stephen, bending to speak to her,

with that glance and tone of subdued tenderness which young dreams

create to themselves in the summer woods when low, cooing voices fill

the air. Such glances and tones bring the breath of poetry with them

into a room that is half stifling with glaring gas and hard

flirtation.

"They are going to waltz again. It is rather dizzy work to look on,

and the room is very warm; shall we walk about a little?"

He took her hand and placed it within his arm, and they walked on into

the sitting-room, where the tables were strewn with engravings for the

accommodation of visitors who would not want to look at them. But no

visitors were here at this moment. They passed on into the

conservatory.

"How strange and unreal the trees and flowers look with the lights

among them!" said Maggie, in a low voice. "They look as if they

belonged to an enchanted land, and would never fade away; I could

fancy they were all made of jewels."

She was looking at the tier of geraniums as she spoke, and Stephen

made no answer; but he was looking at her; and does not a supreme poet

blend light and sound into one, calling darkness mute, and light

eloquent? Something strangely powerful there was in the light of

Stephen's long gaze, for it made Maggie's face turn toward it and look

upward at it, slowly, like a flower at the ascending brightness. And

they walked unsteadily on, without feeling that they were walking;

without feeling anything but that long, grave, mutual gaze which has

the solemnity belonging to all deep human passion. The hovering

thought that they must and would renounce each other made this moment

of mute confession more intense in its rapture.

But they had reached the end of the conservatory, and were obliged to

pause and turn. The change of movement brought a new consciousness to

Maggie; she blushed deeply, turned away her head, and drew her arm

from Stephen's, going up to some flowers to smell them. Stephen stood

motionless, and still pale.

"Oh, may I get this rose?" said Maggie, making a great effort to say

something, and dissipate the burning sense of irretrievable

confession. "I think I am quite wicked with roses; I like to gather

them and smell them till they have no scent left."

Stephen was mute; he was incapable of putting a sentence together, and

Maggie bent her arm a little upward toward the large half-opened rose

that had attracted her. Who has not felt the beauty of a woman's arm?

The unspeakable suggestions of tenderness that lie in the dimpled

elbow, and all the varied gently lessening curves, down to the

delicate wrist, with its tiniest, almost imperceptible nicks in the

firm softness. A woman's arm touched the soul of a great sculptor two

thousand years ago, so that he wrought an image of it for the

Parthenon which moves us still as it clasps lovingly the timeworn

marble of a headless trunk. Maggie's was such an arm as that, and it

had the warm tints of life.

A mad impulse seized on Stephen; he darted toward the arm, and

showered kisses on it, clasping the wrist.

But the next moment Maggie snatched it from him, and glared at him

like a wounded war-goddess, quivering with rage and humiliation.

"How dare you?" She spoke in a deeply shaken, half-smothered voice.

"What right have I given you to insult me?"

She darted from him into the adjoining room, and threw herself on the

sofa, panting and trembling.

A horrible punishment was come upon her for the sin of allowing a

moment's happiness that was treachery to Lucy, to Philip, to her own

better soul. That momentary happiness had been smitten with a blight,

a leprosy; Stephen thought more lightly of \_her\_ than he did of Lucy.

As for Stephen, he leaned back against the framework of the

conservatory, dizzy with the conflict of passions,--love, rage, and

confused despair; despair at his want of self-mastery, and despair

that he had offended Maggie.

The last feeling surmounted every other; to be by her side again and

entreat forgiveness was the only thing that had the force of a motive

for him, and she had not been seated more than a few minutes when he

came and stood humbly before her. But Maggie's bitter rage was

unspent.

"Leave me to myself, if you please," she said, with impetuous

haughtiness, "and for the future avoid me."

Stephen turned away, and walked backward and forward at the other end

of the room. There was the dire necessity of going back into the

dancing-room again, and he was beginning to be conscious of that. They

had been absent so short a time, that when he went in again the waltz

was not ended.

Maggie, too, was not long before she re-entered. All the pride of her

nature was stung into activity; the hateful weakness which had dragged

her within reach of this wound to her self-respect had at least

wrought its own cure. The thoughts and temptations of the last month

should all be flung away into an unvisited chamber of memory. There

was nothing to allure her now; duty would be easy, and all the old

calm purposes would reign peacefully once more. She re-entered the

drawing-room still with some excited brightness in her face, but with

a sense of proud self-command that defied anything to agitate her. She

refused to dance again, but she talked quite readily and calmly with

every one who addressed her. And when they got home that night, she

kissed Lucy with a free heart, almost exulting in this scorching

moment, which had delivered her from the possibility of another word

or look that would have the stamp of treachery toward that gentle,

unsuspicious sister.

The next morning Maggie did not set off to Basset quite so soon as she

had expected. Her mother was to accompany her in the carriage, and

household business could not be dispatched hastily by Mrs. Tulliver.

So Maggie, who had been in a hurry to prepare herself, had to sit

waiting, equipped for the drive, in the garden. Lucy was busy in the

house wrapping up some bazaar presents for the younger ones at Basset,

and when there was a loud ring at the door-bell, Maggie felt some

alarm lest Lucy should bring out Stephen to her; it was sure to be

Stephen.

But presently the visitor came out into the garden alone, and seated

himself by her on the garden-chair. It was not Stephen.

"We can just catch the tips of the Scotch firs, Maggie, from this

seat," said Philip.

They had taken each other's hands in silence, but Maggie had looked at

him with a more complete revival of the old childlike affectionate

smile than he had seen before, and he felt encouraged.

"Yes," she said, "I often look at them, and wish I could see the low

sunlight on the stems again. But I have never been that way but

once,--to the churchyard with my mother."

"I have been there, I go there, continually," said Philip. "I have

nothing but the past to live upon."

A keen remembrance and keen pity impelled Maggie to put her hand in

Philip's. They had so often walked hand in hand!

"I remember all the spots," she said,--"just where you told me of

particular things, beautiful stories that I had never heard of

before."

"You will go there again soon, won't you, Maggie?" said Philip,

getting timid. "The Mill will soon be your brother's home again."

"Yes; but I shall not be there," said Maggie. "I shall only hear of

that happiness. I am going away again; Lucy has not told you,

perhaps?"

"Then the future will never join on to the past again, Maggie? That

book is quite closed?"

The gray eyes that had so often looked up at her with entreating

worship, looked up at her now, with a last struggling ray of hope in

them, and Maggie met them with her large sincere gaze.

"That book never will be closed, Philip," she said, with grave

sadness; "I desire no future that will break the ties of the past. But

the tie to my brother is one of the strongest. I can do nothing

willingly that will divide me always from him."

"Is that the only reason that would keep us apart forever, Maggie?"

said Philip, with a desperate determination to have a definite answer.

"The only reason," said Maggie, with calm decision. And she believed

it. At that moment she felt as if the enchanted cup had been dashed to

the ground. The reactionary excitement that gave her a proud

self-mastery had not subsided, and she looked at the future with a

sense of calm choice.

They sat hand in hand without looking at each other or speaking for a

few minutes; in Maggie's mind the first scenes of love and parting

were more present than the actual moment, and she was looking at

Philip in the Red Deeps.

Philip felt that he ought to have been thoroughly happy in that answer

of hers; she was as open and transparent as a rock-pool. Why was he

not thoroughly happy? Jealousy is never satisfied with anything short

of an omniscience that would detect the subtlest fold of the heart.

Chapter XI

In the Lane

Maggie had been four days at her aunt Moss's giving the early June

sunshine quite a new brightness in the care-dimmed eyes of that

affectionate woman, and making an epoch for her cousins great and

small, who were learning her words and actions by heart, as if she had

been a transient avatar of perfect wisdom and beauty.

She was standing on the causeway with her aunt and a group of cousins

feeding the chickens, at that quiet moment in the life of the

farmyards before the afternoon milking-time. The great buildings round

the hollow yard were as dreary and tumbledown as ever, but over the

old garden-wall the straggling rose-bushes were beginning to toss

their summer weight, and the gray wood and old bricks of the house, on

its higher level, had a look of sleepy age in the broad afternoon

sunlight, that suited the quiescent time. Maggie, with her bonnet over

her arm, was smiling down at the hatch of small fluffy chickens, when

her aunt exclaimed,--

"Goodness me! who is that gentleman coming in at the gate?"

It was a gentleman on a tall bay horse; and the flanks and neck of the

horse were streaked black with fast riding. Maggie felt a beating at

head and heart, horrible as the sudden leaping to life of a savage

enemy who had feigned death.

"Who is it, my dear?" said Mrs. Moss, seeing in Maggie's face the

evidence that she knew.

"It is Mr. Stephen Guest," said Maggie, rather faintly. "My cousin

Lucy's--a gentleman who is very intimate at my cousin's."

Stephen was already close to them, had jumped off his horse, and now

raised his hat as he advanced.

"Hold the horse, Willy," said Mrs. Moss to the twelve-year-old boy.

"No, thank you," said Stephen, pulling at the horse's impatiently

tossing head. "I must be going again immediately. I have a message to

deliver to you, Miss Tulliver, on private business. May I take the

liberty of asking you to walk a few yards with me?"

He had a half-jaded, half-irritated look, such as a man gets when he

has been dogged by some care or annoyance that makes his bed and his

dinner of little use to him. He spoke almost abruptly, as if his

errand were too pressing for him to trouble himself about what would

be thought by Mrs. Moss of his visit and request. Good Mrs. Moss,

rather nervous in the presence of this apparently haughty gentleman,

was inwardly wondering whether she would be doing right or wrong to

invite him again to leave his horse and walk in, when Maggie, feeling

all the embarrassment of the situation, and unable to say anything,

put on her bonnet, and turned to walk toward the gate.

Stephen turned too, and walked by her side, leading his horse.

Not a word was spoken till they were out in the lane, and had walked

four or five yards, when Maggie, who had been looking straight before

her all the while, turned again to walk back, saying, with haughty

resentment,--

"There is no need for me to go any farther. I don't know whether you

consider it gentlemanly and delicate conduct to place me in a position

that forced me to come out with you, or whether you wished to insult

me still further by thrusting an interview upon me in this way."

"Of course you are angry with me for coming," said Stephen, bitterly.

"Of course it is of no consequence what a man has to suffer; it is

only your woman's dignity that you care about."

Maggie gave a slight start, such as might have come from the slightest

possible electric shock.

"As if it were not enough that I'm entangled in this way; that I'm mad

with love for you; that I resist the strongest passion a man can feel,

because I try to be true to other claims; but you must treat me as if

I were a coarse brute, who would willingly offend you. And when, if I

had my own choice, I should ask you to take my hand and my fortune and

my whole life, and do what you liked with them! I know I forgot

myself. I took an unwarrantable liberty. I hate myself for having done

it. But I repented immediately; I've been repenting ever since. You

ought not to think it unpardonable; a man who loves with his whole

soul, as I do you, is liable to be mastered by his feelings for a

moment; but you know--you must believe--that the worst pain I could

have is to have pained you; that I would give the world to recall the

error."

Maggie dared not speak, dared not turn her head. The strength that had

come from resentment was all gone, and her lips were quivering

visibly. She could not trust herself to utter the full forgiveness

that rose in answer to that confession.

They were come nearly in front of the gate again, and she paused,

trembling.

"You must not say these things; I must not hear them," she said,

looking down in misery, as Stephen came in front of her, to prevent

her from going farther toward the gate. "I'm very sorry for any pain

you have to go through; but it is of no use to speak."

"Yes, it \_is\_ of use," said Stephen, impetuously. "It would be of use

if you would treat me with some sort of pity and consideration,

instead of doing me vile injustice in your mind. I could bear

everything more quietly if I knew you didn't hate me for an insolent

coxcomb. Look at me; see what a hunted devil I am; I've been riding

thirty miles every day to get away from the thought of you."

Maggie did not--dared not--look. She had already seen the harassed

face. But she said gently,--

"I don't think any evil of you."

"Then, dearest, look at me," said Stephen, in deepest, tenderest tones

of entreaty. "Don't go away from me yet. Give me a moment's happiness;

make me feel you've forgiven me."

"Yes, I do forgive you," said Maggie, shaken by those tones, and all

the more frightened at herself. "But pray let me go in again. Pray go

away."

A great tear fell from under her lowered eyelids.

"I can't go away from you; I can't leave you," said Stephen, with

still more passionate pleading. "I shall come back again if you send

me away with this coldness; I can't answer for myself. But if you will

go with me only a little way I can live on that. You see plainly

enough that your anger has only made me ten times more unreasonable."

Maggie turned. But Tancred, the bay horse, began to make such spirited

remonstrances against this frequent change of direction, that Stephen,

catching sight of Willy Moss peeping through the gate, called out,

"Here! just come and hold my horse for five minutes."

"Oh, no," said Maggie, hurriedly, "my aunt will think it so strange."

"Never mind," Stephen answered impatiently; "they don't know the

people at St. Ogg's. Lead him up and down just here for five minutes,"

he added to Willy, who was now close to them; and then he turned to

Maggie's side, and they walked on. It was clear that she \_must\_ go on

now.

"Take my arm," said Stephen, entreatingly; and she took it, feeling

all the while as if she were sliding downward in a nightmare.

"There is no end to this misery," she began, struggling to repel the

influence by speech. "It is wicked--base--ever allowing a word or look

that Lucy--that others might not have seen. Think of Lucy."

"I do think of her--bless her. If I didn't----" Stephen had laid his

hand on Maggie's that rested on his arm, and they both felt it

difficult to speak.

"And I have other ties," Maggie went on, at last, with a desperate

effort, "even if Lucy did not exist."

"You are engaged to Philip Wakem?" said Stephen, hastily. "Is it so?"

"I consider myself engaged to him; I don't mean to marry any one

else."

Stephen was silent again until they had turned out of the sun into a

side lane, all grassy and sheltered. Then he burst out impetuously,--

"It is unnatural, it is horrible. Maggie, if you loved me as I love

you, we should throw everything else to the winds for the sake of

belonging to each other. We should break all these mistaken ties that

were made in blindness, and determine to marry each other."

"I would rather die than fall into that temptation," said Maggie, with

deep, slow distinctness, all the gathered spiritual force of painful

years coming to her aid in this extremity. She drew her arm from his

as she spoke.

"Tell me, then, that you don't care for me," he said, almost

violently. "Tell me that you love some one else better."

It darted through Maggie's mind that here was a mode of releasing

herself from outward struggle,--to tell Stephen that her whole heart

was Philip's. But her lips would not utter that, and she was silent.

"If you do love me, dearest," said Stephen, gently, taking her hand

again and laying it within his arm, "it is better--it is right that we

should marry each other. We can't help the pain it will give. It is

come upon us without our seeking; it is natural; it has taken hold of

me in spite of every effort I have made to resist it. God knows, I've

been trying to be faithful to tacit engagements, and I've only made

things worse; I'd better have given way at first."

Maggie was silent. If it were \_not\_ wrong--if she were once convinced

of that, and need no longer beat and struggle against this current,

soft and yet strong as the summer stream!

"Say've s' dearest," said Stephen, leaning to look entreatingly in

her face. "What could we care about in the whole world beside, if we

belonged to each other?"

Her breath was on his face, his lips were very near hers, but there

was a great dread dwelling in his love for her.

Her lips and eyelids quivered; she opened her eyes full on his for an

instant, like a lovely wild animal timid and struggling under

caresses, and then turned sharp round toward home again.

"And after all," he went on, in an impatient tone, trying to defeat

his own scruples as well as hers, "I am breaking no positive

engagement; if Lucy's affections had been withdrawn from me and given

to some one else, I should have felt no right to assert a claim on

her. If you are not absolutely pledged to Philip, we are neither of us

bound."

"You don't believe that; it is not your real feeling," said Maggie,

earnestly. "You feel, as I do, that the real tie lies in the feelings

and expectations we have raised in other minds. Else all pledges might

be broken, when there was no outward penalty. There would be no such

thing as faithfulness."

Stephen was silent; he could not pursue that argument; the opposite

conviction had wrought in him too strongly through his previous time

of struggle. But it soon presented itself in a new form.

"The pledge \_can't\_ be fulfilled," he said, with impetuous insistence.

"It is unnatural; we can only pretend to give ourselves to any one

else. There is wrong in that too; there may be misery in it for \_them\_

as well as for us. Maggie, you must see that; you do see that."

He was looking eagerly at her face for the least sign of compliance;

his large, firm, gentle grasp was on her hand. She was silent for a

few moments, with her eyes fixed on the ground; then she drew a deep

breath, and said, looking up at him with solemn sadness,--

"Oh, it is difficult,--life is very difficult! It seems right to me

sometimes that we should follow our strongest feeling; but then, such

feelings continually come across the ties that all our former life has

made for us,--the ties that have made others dependent on us,--and

would cut them in two. If life were quite easy and simple, as it might

have been in Paradise, and we could always see that one being first

toward whom--I mean, if life did not make duties for us before love

comes, love would be a sign that two people ought to belong to each

other. But I see--I feel it is not so now; there are things we must

renounce in life; some of us must resign love. Many things are

difficult and dark to me; but I see one thing quite clearly,--that I

must not, cannot, seek my own happiness by sacrificing others. Love is

natural; but surely pity and faithfulness and memory are natural too.

And they would live in me still, and punish me if I did not obey them.

I should be haunted by the suffering I had caused. Our love would be

poisoned. Don't urge me; help me,--help me, \_because\_ I love you."

Maggie had become more and more earnest as she went on; her face had

become flushed, and her eyes fuller and fuller of appealing love.

Stephen had the fibre of nobleness in him that vibrated to her appeal;

but in the same moment--how could it be otherwise?--that pleading

beauty gained new power over him.

"Dearest," he said, in scarcely more than a whisper, while his arm

stole round her, "I'll do, I'll bear anything you wish. But--one

kiss--one--the last--before we part."

One kiss, and then a long look, until Maggie said tremulously, "Let me

go,--let me make haste back."

She hurried along, and not another word was spoken. Stephen stood

still and beckoned when they came within sight of Willy and the horse,

and Maggie went on through the gate. Mrs. Moss was standing alone at

the door of the old porch; she had sent all the cousins in, with kind

thoughtfulness. It might be a joyful thing that Maggie had a rich and

handsome lover, but she would naturally feel embarrassed at coming in

again; and it might \_not\_ be joyful. In either case Mrs. Moss waited

anxiously to receive Maggie by herself. The speaking face told plainly

enough that, if there was joy, it was of a very agitating, dubious

sort.

"Sit down here a bit, my dear." She drew Maggie into the porch, and

sat down on the bench by her; there was no privacy in the house.

"Oh, aunt Gritty, I'm very wretched! I wish I could have died when I

was fifteen. It seemed so easy to give things up then; it is so hard

now."

The poor child threw her arms round her aunt's neck, and fell into

long, deep sobs.

Chapter XII

A Family Party

Maggie left her good aunt Gritty at the end of the week, and went to

Garum Firs to pay her visit to aunt Pullet according to agreement. In

the mean time very unexpected things had happened, and there was to be

a family party at Garum to discuss and celebrate a change in the

fortunes of the Tullivers, which was likely finally to carry away the

shadow of their demerits like the last limb of an eclipse, and cause

their hitherto obscured virtues to shine forth in full-rounded

splendor. It is pleasant to know that a new ministry just come into

office are not the only fellow-men who enjoy a period of high

appreciation and full-blown eulogy; in many respectable families

throughout this realm, relatives becoming creditable meet with a

similar cordiality of recognition, which in its fine freedom from the

coercion of any antecedents, suggests the hopeful possibility that we

may some day without any notice find ourselves in full millennium,

with cockatrices who have ceased to bite, and wolves that no longer

show their teeth with any but the blandest intentions.

Lucy came so early as to have the start even of aunt Glegg; for she

longed to have some undisturbed talk with Maggie about the wonderful

news. It seemed, did it not? said Lucy, with her prettiest air of

wisdom, as if everything, even other people's misfortunes (poor

creatures!) were conspiring now to make poor dear aunt Tulliver, and

cousin Tom, and naughty Maggie too, if she were not obstinately bent

on the contrary, as happy as they deserved to be after all their

troubles. To think that the very day--the \_very day\_--after Tom had

come back from Newcastle, that unfortunate young Jetsome, whom Mr.

Wakem had placed at the Mill, had been pitched off his horse in a

drunken fit, and was lying at St. Ogg's in a dangerous state, so that

Wakem had signified his wish that the new purchasers should enter on

the premises at once!

It was very dreadful for that unhappy young man, but it did seem as if

the misfortune had happened then, rather than at any other time, in

order that cousin Tom might all the sooner have the fit reward of his

exemplary conduct,--papa thought so very highly of him. Aunt Tulliver

must certainly go to the Mill now, and keep house for Tom; that was

rather a loss to Lucy in the matter of household comfort; but then, to

think of poor aunty being in her old place again, and gradually

getting comforts about her there!

On this last point Lucy had her cunning projects, and when she and

Maggie had made their dangerous way down the bright stairs into the

handsome parlor, where the very sunbeams seemed cleaner than

elsewhere, she directed her manÅuvres, as any other great tactician

would have done, against the weaker side of the enemy.

"Aunt Pullet," she said, seating herself on the sofa, and caressingly

adjusting that lady's floating cap-string, "I want you to make up your

mind what linen and things you will give Tom toward housekeeping;

because you are always so generous,--you give such nice things, you

know; and if you set the example, aunt Glegg will follow."

"That she never can, my dear," said Mrs. Pullet, with unusual vigor,

"for she hasn't got the linen to follow suit wi' mine, I can tell you.

She'd niver the taste, not if she'd spend the money. Big checks and

live things, like stags and foxes, all her table-linen is,--not a spot

nor a diamond among 'em. But it's poor work dividing one's linen

before one dies,--I niver thought to ha' done that, Bessy," Mrs.

Pullet continued, shaking her head and looking at her sister Tulliver,

"when you and me chose the double diamont, the first flax iver we'd

spun, and the Lord knows where yours is gone."

"I'd no choice, I'm sure, sister," said poor Mrs. Tulliver, accustomed

to consider herself in the light of an accused person. "I'm sure it

was no wish o' mine, iver, as I should lie awake o' nights thinking o'

my best bleached linen all over the country."

"Take a peppermint, Mrs. Tulliver," said uncle Pullet, feeling that he

was offering a cheap and wholesome form of comfort, which he was

recommending by example.

"Oh, but, aunt Pullet," said Lucy, "you've so much beautiful linen.

And suppose you had had daughters! Then you must have divided it when

they were married."

"Well, I don't say as I won't do it," said Mrs. Pullet, "for now Tom's

so lucky, it's nothing but right his friends should look on him and

help him. There's the tablecloths I bought at your sale, Bessy; it was

nothing but good natur' o' me to buy 'em, for they've been lying in

the chest ever since. But I'm not going to give Maggie any more o' my

Indy muslin and things, if she's to go into service again, when she

might stay and keep me company, and do my sewing for me, if she wasn't

wanted at her brother's."

"Going into service" was the expression by which the Dodson mind

represented to itself the position of teacher or governess; and

Maggie's return to that menial condition, now circumstances offered

her more eligible prospects, was likely to be a sore point with all

her relatives, besides Lucy. Maggie in her crude form, with her hair

down her back, and altogether in a state of dubious promise, was a

most undesirable niece; but now she was capable of being at once

ornamental and useful. The subject was revived in aunt and uncle

Glegg's presence, over the tea and muffins.

"Hegh, hegh!" said Mr. Glegg, good-naturedly patting Maggie on the

back, "nonsense, nonsense! Don't let us hear of you taking a place

again, Maggie. Why, you must ha' picked up half-a-dozen sweethearts at

the bazaar; isn't there one of 'em the right sort of article? Come,

now?"

"Mr. Glegg," said his wife, with that shade of increased politeness in

her severity which she always put on with her crisper fronts, "you'll

excuse me, but you're far too light for a man of your years. It's

respect and duty to her aunts, and the rest of her kin as are so good

to her, should have kept my niece from fixing about going away again

without consulting us; not sweethearts, if I'm to use such a word,

though it was never heared in \_my\_ family."

"Why, what did they call us, when we went to see 'em, then, eh,

neighbor Pullet? They thought us sweet enough then," said Mr. Glegg,

winking pleasantly; while Mr. Pullet, at the suggestion of sweetness,

took a little more sugar.

"Mr. Glegg," said Mrs. G., "if you're going to be undelicate, let me

know."

"La, Jane, your husband's only joking," said Mrs. Pullet; "let him

joke while he's got health and strength. There's poor Mr. Tilt got his

mouth drawn all o' one side, and couldn't laugh if he was to try."

"I'll trouble you for the muffineer, then, Mr. Glegg," said Mrs. G.,

"if I may be so bold to interrupt your joking. Though it's other

people must see the joke in a niece's putting a slight on her mother's

eldest sister, as is the head o' the family; and only coming in and

out on short visits, all the time she's been in the town, and then

settling to go away without my knowledge,--as I'd laid caps out on

purpose for her to make 'em up for me,--and me as have divided my

money so equal----"

"Sister," Mrs. Tulliver broke in anxiously, "I'm sure Maggie never

thought o' going away without staying at your house as well as the

others. Not as it's my wish she should go away at all, but quite

contrairy. I'm sure I'm innocent. I've said over and over again, 'My

dear, you've no call to go away.' But there's ten days or a fortnight

Maggie'll have before she's fixed to go; she can stay at your house

just as well, and I'll step in when I can, and so will Lucy."

"Bessy," said Mrs. Glegg, "if you'd exercise a little more thought,

you might know I should hardly think it was worth while to unpin a

bed, and go to all that trouble now, just at the end o' the time, when

our house isn't above a quarter of an hour's walk from Mr. Deane's.

She can come the first thing in the morning, and go back the last at

night, and be thankful she's got a good aunt so close to her to come

and sit with. I know \_I\_ should, when I was her age."

"La, Jane," said Mrs. Pullet, "it 'ud do your beds good to have

somebody to sleep in 'em. There's that striped room smells dreadful

mouldy, and the glass mildewed like anything. I'm sure I thought I

should be struck with death when you took me in."

"Oh, there is Tom!" exclaimed Lucy, clapping her hands. "He's come on

Sindbad, as I told him. I was afraid he was not going to keep his

promise."

Maggie jumped up to kiss Tom as he entered, with strong feeling, at

this first meeting since the prospect of returning to the Mill had

been opened to him; and she kept his hand, leading him to the chair by

her side. To have no cloud between herself and Tom was still a

perpetual yearning in her, that had its root deeper than all change.

He smiled at her very kindly this evening, and said, "Well, Magsie,

how's aunt Moss?"

"Come, come, sir," said Mr. Glegg putting out his hand. "Why, you're

such a big man, you carry all before you, it, seems. You're come into

your luck a good deal earlier than us old folks did; but I wish you

joy, I wish you joy. You'll get the Mill all for your own again some

day, I'll be bound. You won't stop half-way up the hill."

"But I hope he'll bear in mind as it's his mother's family as he owes

it to," said Mrs. Glegg. "If he hadn't had them to take after, he'd

ha' been poorly off. There was never any failures, nor lawing, nor

wastefulness in our family, nor dying without wills----"

"No, nor sudden deaths," said aunt Pullet; "allays the doctor called

in. But Tom had the Dodson skin; I said that from the first. And I

don't know what \_you\_ mean to do, sister Glegg, but I mean to give him

a tablecloth of all my three biggest sizes but one, besides sheets. I

don't say what more I shall do; but \_that\_ I shall do, and if I should

die to-morrow, Mr. Pullet, you'll bear it in mind,--though you'll be

blundering with the keys, and never remember as that on the third

shelf o' the left-hand wardrobe, behind the night-caps with the broad

ties,--not the narrow-frilled uns,--is the key of the drawer in the

Blue Room, where the key o' the Blue Closet is. You'll make a mistake,

and I shall niver be worthy to know it. You've a memory for my pills

and draughts, wonderful,--I'll allays say that of you,--but you're

lost among the keys." This gloomy prospect of the confusion that would

ensue on her decease was very affecting to Mrs. Pullet.

"You carry it too far, Sophy,--that locking in and out," said Mrs.

Glegg, in a tone of some disgust at this folly. "You go beyond your

own family. There's nobody can say I don't lock up; but I do what's

reasonable, and no more. And as for the linen, I shall look out what's

serviceable, to make a present of to my nephey; I've got cloth as has

never been whitened, better worth having than other people's fine

holland; and I hope he'll lie down in it and think of his aunt."

Tom thanked Mrs. Glegg, but evaded any promise to meditate nightly on

her virtues; and Mrs. Glegg effected a diversion for him by asking

about Mr. Deane's intentions concerning steam.

Lucy had had her far-sighted views in begging Tom to come on Sindbad.

It appeared, when it was time to go home, that the man-servant was to

ride the horse, and cousin Tom was to drive home his mother and Lucy.

"You must sit by yourself, aunty," said that contriving young lady,

"because I must sit by Tom; I've a great deal to say to him."

In the eagerness of her affectionate anxiety for Maggie, Lucy could

not persuade herself to defer a conversation about her with Tom, who,

she thought, with such a cup of joy before him as this rapid

fulfilment of his wish about the Mill, must become pliant and

flexible. Her nature supplied her with no key to Tom's; and she was

puzzled as well as pained to notice the unpleasant change on his

countenance when she gave him the history of the way in which Philip

had used his influence with his father. She had counted on this

revelation as a great stroke of policy, which was to turn Tom's heart

toward Philip at once, and, besides that, prove that the elder Wakem

was ready to receive Maggie with all the honors of a daughter-in-law.

Nothing was wanted, then, but for dear Tom, who always had that

pleasant smile when he looked at cousin Lucy, to turn completely

round, say the opposite of what he had always said before, and declare

that he, for his part, was delighted that all the old grievances

should be healed, and that Maggie should have Philip with all suitable

despatch; in cousin Lucy's opinion nothing could be easier.

But to minds strongly marked by the positive and negative qualities

that create severity,--strength of will, conscious rectitude of

purpose, narrowness of imagination and intellect, great power of

self-control, and a disposition to exert control over others,--prejudices

come as the natural food of tendencies which can get no sustenance

out of that complex, fragmentary, doubt-provoking knowledge which

we call truth. Let a prejudice be bequeathed, carried in the air,

adopted by hearsay, caught in through the eye,--however it may come,

these minds will give it a habitation; it is something to assert

strongly and bravely, something to fill up the void of spontaneous

ideas, something to impose on others with the authority of conscious

right; it is at once a staff and a baton. Every prejudice that will

answer these purposes is self-evident. Our good, upright Tom Tulliver's

mind was of this class; his inward criticism of his father's faults

did not prevent him from adopting his father's prejudice; it was a

prejudice against a man of lax principle and lax life, and it was a

meeting-point for all the disappointed feelings of family and personal

pride. Other feelings added their force to produce Tom's bitter

repugnance to Philip, and to Maggie's union with him; and

notwithstanding Lucy's power over her strong-willed cousin, she got

nothing but a cold refusal ever to sanction such a marriage; "but of

course Maggie could do as she liked,--she had declared her

determination to be independent. For Tom's part, he held himself bound

by his duty to his father's memory, and by every manly feeling, never

to consent to any relation with the Wakems."

Thus, all that Lucy had effected by her zealous mediation was to fill

Tom's mind with the expectation that Maggie's perverse resolve to go

into a situation again would presently metamorphose itself, as her

resolves were apt to do, into something equally perverse, but entirely

different,--a marriage with Philip Wakem.

Chapter XIII

Borne Along by the Tide

In less than a week Maggie was at St. Ogg's again,--outwardly in much

the same position as when her visit there had just begun. It was easy

for her to fill her mornings apart from Lucy without any obvious

effort; for she had her promised visits to pay to her aunt Glegg, and

it was natural that she should give her mother more than usual of her

companionship in these last weeks, especially as there were

preparations to be thought of for Tom's housekeeping. But Lucy would

hear of no pretext for her remaining away in the evenings; she must

always come from aunt Glegg's before dinner,--"else what shall I have

of you?" said Lucy, with a tearful pout that could not be resisted.

And Mr. Stephen Guest had unaccountably taken to dining at Mr. Deane's

as often as possible, instead of avoiding that, as he used to do. At

first he began his mornings with a resolution that he would not dine

there, not even go in the evening, till Maggie was away. He had even

devised a plan of starting off on a journey in this agreeable June

weather; the headaches which he had constantly been alleging as a

ground for stupidity and silence were a sufficient ostensible motive.

But the journey was not taken, and by the fourth morning no distinct

resolution was formed about the evenings; they were only foreseen as

times when Maggie would still be present for a little while,--when one

more touch, one more glance, might be snatched. For why not? There was

nothing to conceal between them; they knew, they had confessed their

love, and they had renounced each other; they were going to part.

Honor and conscience were going to divide them; Maggie, with that

appeal from her inmost soul, had decided it; but surely they might

cast a lingering look at each other across the gulf, before they

turned away never to look again till that strange light had forever

faded out of their eyes.

Maggie, all this time, moved about with a quiescence and even torpor

of manner, so contrasted with her usual fitful brightness and ardor,

that Lucy would have had to seek some other cause for such a change,

if she had not been convinced that the position in which Maggie stood

between Philip and her brother, and the prospect of her self-imposed

wearisome banishment, were quite enough to account for a large amount

of depression. But under this torpor there was a fierce battle of

emotions, such as Maggie in all her life of struggle had never known

or foreboded; it seemed to her as if all the worst evil in her had

lain in ambush till now, and had suddenly started up full-armed, with

hideous, overpowering strength! There were moments in which a cruel

selfishness seemed to be getting possession of her; why should not

Lucy, why should not Philip, suffer? \_She\_ had had to suffer through

many years of her life; and who had renounced anything for her? And

when something like that fulness of existence--love, wealth, ease,

refinement, all that her nature craved--was brought within her reach,

why was she to forego it, that another might have it,--another, who

perhaps needed it less? But amidst all this new passionate tumult

there were the old voices making themselves heard with rising power,

till, from time to time, the tumult seemed quelled. \_Was\_ that

existence which tempted her the full existence she dreamed? Where,

then, would be all the memories of early striving; all the deep pity

for another's pain, which had been nurtured in her through years of

affection and hardship; all the divine presentiment of something

higher than mere personal enjoyment, which had made the sacredness of

life? She might as well hope to enjoy walking by maiming her feet, as

hope to enjoy an existence in which she set out by maiming the faith

and sympathy that were the best organs of her soul. And then, if pain

were so hard to \_her\_, what was it to others? "Ah, God! preserve me

from inflicting--give me strength to bear it." How had she sunk into

this struggle with a temptation that she would once have thought

herself as secure from as from deliberate crime? When was that first

hateful moment in which she had been conscious of a feeling that

clashed with her truth, affection, and gratitude, and had not shaken

it from her with horror, as if it had been a loathsome thing? And yet,

since this strange, sweet, subduing influence did not, should not,

conquer her,--since it was to remain simply her own suffering,--her

mind was meeting Stephen's in that thought of his, that they might

still snatch moments of mute confession before the parting came. For

was not he suffering too? She saw it daily--saw it in the sickened

look of fatigue with which, as soon as he was not compelled to exert

himself, he relapsed into indifference toward everything but the

possibility of watching her. Could she refuse sometimes to answer that

beseeching look which she felt to be following her like a low murmur

of love and pain? She refused it less and less, till at last the

evening for them both was sometimes made of a moment's mutual gaze;

they thought of it till it came, and when it had come, they thought of

nothing else.

One other thing Stephen seemed now and then to care for, and that was

to sing; it was a way of speaking to Maggie. Perhaps he was not

distinctly conscious that he was impelled to it by a secret

longing--running counter to all his self-confessed resolves--to deepen

the hold he had on her. Watch your own speech, and notice how it is

guided by your less conscious purposes, and you will understand that

contradiction in Stephen.

Philip Wakem was a less frequent visitor, but he came occasionally in

the evening, and it happened that he was there when Lucy said, as they

sat out on the lawn, near sunset,--

"Now Maggie's tale of visits to aunt Glegg is completed, I mean that

we shall go out boating every day until she goes. She has not had half

enough boating because of these tiresome visits, and she likes it

better than anything. Don't you, Maggie?"

"Better than any sort of locomotion, I hope you mean," said Philip,

smiling at Maggie, who was lolling backward in a low garden-chair;

"else she will be selling her soul to that ghostly boatman who haunts

the Floss, only for the sake of being drifted in a boat forever."

"Should you like to be her boatman?" said Lucy. "Because, if you

would, you can come with us and take an oar. If the Floss were but a

quiet lake instead of a river, we should be independent of any

gentleman, for Maggie can row splendidly. As it is, we are reduced to

ask services of knights and squires, who do not seem to offer them

with great alacrity."

She looked playful reproach at Stephen, who was sauntering up and

down, and was just singing in pianissimo falsetto,--

"The thirst that from the soul doth rise

Doth ask a drink divine."

He took no notice, but still kept aloof; he had done so frequently

during Philip's recent visits.

"You don't seem inclined for boating," said Lucy, when he came to sit

down by her on the bench. "Doesn't rowing suit you now?"

"Oh, I hate a large party in a boat," he said, almost irritably. "I'll

come when you have no one else."

Lucy colored, fearing that Philip would be hurt; it was quite a new

thing for Stephen to speak in that way; but he had certainly not been

well of late. Philip colored too, but less from a feeling of personal

offence than from a vague suspicion that Stephen's moodiness had some

relation to Maggie, who had started up from her chair as he spoke, and

had walked toward the hedge of laurels to look at the descending

sunlight on the river.

"As Miss Deane didn't know she was excluding others by inviting me,"

said Philip, "I am bound to resign."

"No, indeed, you shall not," said Lucy, much vexed. "I particularly

wish for your company to-morrow. The tide will suit at half-past ten;

it will be a delicious time for a couple of hours to row to Luckreth

and walk back, before the sun gets too hot. And how can you object to

four people in a boat?" she added, looking at Stephen.

"I don't object to the people, but the number," said Stephen, who had

recovered himself, and was rather ashamed of his rudeness. "If I voted

for a fourth at all, of course it would be you, Phil. But we won't

divide the pleasure of escorting the ladies; we'll take it

alternately. I'll go the next day."

This incident had the effect of drawing Philip's attention with

freshened solicitude toward Stephen and Maggie; but when they

re-entered the house, music was proposed, and Mrs. Tulliver and Mr.

Deane being occupied with cribbage, Maggie sat apart near the table

where the books and work were placed, doing nothing, however, but

listening abstractedly to the music. Stephen presently turned to a

duet which he insisted that Lucy and Philip should sing; he had often

done the same thing before; but this evening Philip thought he divined

some double intention in every word and look of Stephen's, and watched

him keenly, angry with himself all the while for this clinging

suspicion. For had not Maggie virtually denied any ground for his

doubts on her side? And she was truth itself; it was impossible not to

believe her word and glance when they had last spoken together in the

garden. Stephen might be strongly fascinated by her (what was more

natural?), but Philip felt himself rather base for intruding on what

must be his friend's painful secret. Still he watched. Stephen, moving

away from the piano, sauntered slowly toward the table near which

Maggie sat, and turned over the newspapers, apparently in mere

idleness. Then he seated himself with his back to the piano, dragging

a newspaper under his elbow, and thrusting his hand through his hair,

as if he had been attracted by some bit of local news in the "Laceham

Courier." He was in reality looking at Maggie who had not taken the

slightest notice of his approach. She had always additional strength

of resistance when Philip was present, just as we can restrain our

speech better in a spot that we feel to be hallowed. But at last she

heard the word "dearest" uttered in the softest tone of pained

entreaty, like that of a patient who asks for something that ought to

have been given without asking. She had never heard that word since

the moments in the lane at Basset, when it had come from Stephen again

and again, almost as involuntarily as if it had been an inarticulate

cry. Philip could hear no word, but he had moved to the opposite side

of the piano, and could see Maggie start and blush, raise her eyes an

instant toward Stephen's face, but immediately look apprehensively

toward himself. It was not evident to her that Philip had observed

her; but a pang of shame, under the sense of this concealment, made

her move from her chair and walk to her mother's side to watch the

game at cribbage.

Philip went home soon after in a state of hideous doubt mingled with

wretched certainty. It was impossible for him now to resist the

conviction that there was some mutual consciousness between Stephen

and Maggie; and for half the night his irritable, susceptible nerves

were pressed upon almost to frenzy by that one wretched fact; he could

attempt no explanation that would reconcile it with her words and

actions. When, at last, the need for belief in Maggie rose to its

habitual predominance, he was not long in imagining the truth,--she

was struggling, she was banishing herself; this was the clue to all he

had seen since his return. But athwart that belief there came other

possibilities that would not be driven out of sight. His imagination

wrought out the whole story; Stephen was madly in love with her; he

must have told her so; she had rejected him, and was hurrying away.

But would he give her up, knowing--Philip felt the fact with

heart-crushing despair--that she was made half helpless by her feeling

toward him?

When the morning came, Philip was too ill to think of keeping his

engagement to go in the boat. In his present agitation he could decide

on nothing; he could only alternate between contradictory intentions.

First, he thought he must have an interview with Maggie, and entreat

her to confide in him; then, again, he distrusted his own

interference. Had he not been thrusting himself on Maggie all along?

She had uttered words long ago in her young ignorance; it was enough

to make her hate him that these should be continually present with her

as a bond. And had he any right to ask her for a revelation of

feelings which she had evidently intended to withhold from him? He

would not trust himself to see her, till he had assured himself that

he could act from pure anxiety for her, and not from egoistic

irritation. He wrote a brief note to Stephen, and sent it early by the

servant, saying that he was not well enough to fulfil his engagement

to Miss Deane. Would Stephen take his excuse, and fill his place?

Lucy had arranged a charming plan, which had made her quite content

with Stephen's refusal to go in the boat. She discovered that her

father was to drive to Lindum this morning at ten; Lindum was the very

place she wanted to go to, to make purchases,--important purchases,

which must by no means be put off to another opportunity; and aunt

Tulliver must go too, because she was concerned in some of the

purchases.

"You will have your row in the boat just the same, you know," she said

to Maggie when they went out of the breakfast-room and upstairs

together; "Philip will be here it half-past ten, and it is a delicious

morning. Now don't say a word against it, you dear dolorous thing.

What is the use of my being a fairy godmother, if you set your face

against all the wonders I work for you? Don't think of awful cousin

Tom; you may disobey him a little."

Maggie did not persist in objecting. She was almost glad of the plan,

for perhaps it would bring her some strength and calmness to be alone

with Philip again; it was like revisiting the scene of a quieter life,

in which the very struggles were repose, compared with the daily

tumult of the present. She prepared herself for the boat and at

half-past ten sat waiting in the drawing-room.

The ring of the door-bell was punctual, and she was thinking with

half-sad, affectionate pleasure of the surprise Philip would have in

finding that he was to be with her alone, when she distinguished a

firm, rapid step across the hall, that was certainly not Philip's; the

door opened, and Stephen Guest entered.

In the first moment they were both too much agitated to speak; for

Stephen had learned from the servant that the others were gone out.

Maggie had started up and sat down again, with her heart beating

violently; and Stephen, throwing down his cap and gloves, came and sat

by her in silence. She thought Philip would be coming soon; and with

great effort--for she trembled visibly--she rose to go to a distant

chair.

"He is not coming," said Stephen, in a low tone. "I am going in the

boat."

"Oh, we can't go," said Maggie, sinking into her chair again. "Lucy

did not expect--she would be hurt. Why is not Philip come?"

"He is not well; he asked me to come instead."

"Lucy is gone to Lindum," said Maggie, taking off her bonnet with

hurried, trembling fingers. "We must not go."

"Very well," said Stephen, dreamily, looking at her, as he rested his

arm on the back of his chair. "Then we'll stay here."

He was looking into her deep, deep eyes, far off and mysterious at the

starlit blackness, and yet very near, and timidly loving. Maggie sat

perfectly still--perhaps for moments, perhaps for minutes--until the

helpless trembling had ceased, and there was a warm glow on her check.

"The man is waiting; he has taken the cushions," she said. "Will you

go and tell him?"

"What shall I tell him?" said Stephen, almost in a whisper. He was

looking at the lips now.

Maggie made no answer.

"Let us go," Stephen murmured entreatingly, rising, and taking her

hand to raise her too. "We shall not be long together."

And they went. Maggie felt that she was being led down the garden

among the roses, being helped with firm, tender care into the boat,

having the cushion and cloak arranged for her feet, and her parasol

opened for her (which she had forgotten), all by this stronger

presence that seemed to bear her along without any act of her own

will, like the added self which comes with the sudden exalting

influence of a strong tonic, and she felt nothing else. Memory was

excluded.

They glided rapidly along, Stephen rowing, helped by the

backward-flowing tide, past the Tofton trees and houses; on between

the silent sunny fields and pastures, which seemed filled with a

natural joy that had no reproach for theirs. The breath of the young,

unwearied day, the delicious rhythmic dip of the oars, the fragmentary

song of a passing bird heard now and then, as if it were only the

overflowing of brimful gladness, the sweet solitude of a twofold

consciousness that was mingled into one by that grave, untiring gaze

which need not be averted,--what else could there be in their minds

for the first hour? Some low, subdued, languid exclamation of love

came from Stephen from time to time, as he went on rowing idly, half

automatically; otherwise they spoke no word; for what could words have

been but an inlet to thought? and thought did not belong to that

enchanted haze in which they were enveloped,--it belonged to the past

and the future that lay outside the haze. Maggie was only dimly

conscious of the banks, as they passed them, and dwelt with no

recognition on the villages; she knew there were several to be passed

before they reached Luckreth, where they always stopped and left the

boat. At all times she was so liable to fits of absence, that she was

likely enough to let her waymarks pass unnoticed.

But at last Stephen, who had been rowing more and more idly, ceased to

row, laid down the oars, folded his arms, and looked down on the water

as if watching the pace at which the boat glided without his help.

This sudden change roused Maggie. She looked at the far-stretching

fields, at the banks close by, and felt that they were entirely

strange to her. A terrible alarm took possession of her.

"Oh, have we passed Luckreth, where we were to stop?" she exclaimed,

looking back to see if the place were out of sight. No village was to

be seen. She turned around again, with a look of distressed

questioning at Stephen.

He went on watching the water, and said, in a strange, dreamy, absent

tone, "Yes, a long way."

"Oh, what shall I do?" cried Maggie, in an agony. "We shall not get

home for hours, and Lucy? O God, help me!"

She clasped her hands and broke into a sob, like a frightened child;

she thought of nothing but of meeting Lucy, and seeing her look of

pained surprise and doubt, perhaps of just upbraiding.

Stephen moved and sat near her, and gently drew down the clasped

hands.

"Maggie," he said, in a deep tone of slow decision, "let us never go

home again, till no one can part us,--till we are married."

The unusual tone, the startling words, arrested Maggie's sob, and she

sat quite still, wondering; as if Stephen might have seen some

possibilities that would alter everything, and annul the wretched

facts.

"See, Maggie, how everything has come without our seeking,--in spite

of all our efforts. We never thought of being alone together again; it

has all been done by others. See how the tide is carrying us out, away

from all those unnatural bonds that we have been trying to make faster

round us, and trying in vain. It will carry us on to Torby, and we can

land there, and get some carriage, and hurry on to York and then to

Scotland,--and never pause a moment till we are bound to each other,

so that only death can part us. It is the only right thing, dearest;

it is the only way of escaping from this wretched entanglement.

Everything has concurred to point it out to us. We have contrived

nothing, we have thought of nothing ourselves."

Stephen spoke with deep, earnest pleading. Maggie listened, passing

from her startled wonderment to the yearning after that belief that

the tide was doing it all, that she might glide along with the swift,

silent stream, and not struggle any more. But across that stealing

influence came the terrible shadow of past thoughts; and the sudden

horror lest now, at last, the moment of fatal intoxication was close

upon her, called up feelings of angry resistance toward Stephen.

"Let me go!" she said, in an agitated tone, flashing an indignant look

at him, and trying to get her hands free. "You have wanted to deprive

me of any choice. You knew we were come too far; you have dared to

take advantage of my thoughtlessness. It is unmanly to bring me into

such a position."

Stung by this reproach, he released her hands, moved back to his

former place, and folded his arms, in a sort of desperation at the

difficulty Maggie's words had made present to him. If she would not

consent to go on, he must curse himself for the embarrassment he had

led her into. But the reproach was the unendurable thing; the one

thing worse than parting with her was, that she should feel he had

acted unworthily toward her. At last he said, in a tone of suppressed

rage,--

"I didn't notice that we had passed Luckreth till we had got to the

next village; and then it came into my mind that we would go on. I

can't justify it; I ought to have told you. It is enough to make you

hate me, since you don't love me well enough to make everything else

indifferent to you, as I do you. Shall I stop the boat and try to get

you out here? I'll tell Lucy that I was mad, and that you hate me; and

you shall be clear of me forever. No one can blame you, because I have

behaved unpardonably to you."

Maggie was paralyzed; it was easier to resist Stephen's pleading than

this picture he had called up of himself suffering while she was

vindicated; easier even to turn away from his look of tenderness than

from this look of angry misery, that seemed to place her in selfish

isolation from him. He had called up a state of feeling in which the

reasons which had acted on her conscience seemed to be transmitted

into mere self-regard. The indignant fire in her eyes was quenched,

and she began to look at him with timid distress. She had reproached

him for being hurried into irrevocable trespass,--she, who had been so

weak herself.

"As if I shouldn't feel what happened to you--just the same," she

said, with reproach of another kind,--the reproach of love, asking for

more trust. This yielding to the idea of Stephen's suffering was more

fatal than the other yielding, because it was less distinguishable

from that sense of others' claims which was the moral basis of her

resistance.

He felt all the relenting in her look and tone; it was heaven opening

again. He moved to her side, and took her hand, leaning his elbow on

the back of the boat, and saying nothing. He dreaded to utter another

word, he dreaded to make another movement, that might provoke another

reproach or denial from her. Life hung on her consent; everything else

was hopeless, confused, sickening misery. They glided along in this

way, both resting in that silence as in a haven, both dreading lest

their feelings should be divided again,--till they became aware that

the clouds had gathered, and that the slightest perceptible freshening

of the breeze was growing and growing, so that the whole character of

the day was altered.

"You will be chill, Maggie, in this thin dress. Let me raise the cloak

over your shoulders. Get up an instant, dearest."

Maggie obeyed; there was an unspeakable charm in being told what to

do, and having everything decided for her. She sat down again covered

with the cloak, and Stephen took to his oars again, making haste; for

they must try to get to Torby as fast as they could. Maggie was hardly

conscious of having said or done anything decisive. All yielding is

attended with a less vivid consciousness than resistance; it is the

partial sleep of thought; it is the submergence of our own personality

by another. Every influence tended to lull her into acquiescence. That

dreamy gliding in the boat which had lasted for four hours, and had

brought some weariness and exhaustion; the recoil of her fatigued

sensations from the impracticable difficulty of getting out of the

boat at this unknown distance from home, and walking for long

miles,--all helped to bring her into more complete subjection to that

strong, mysterious charm which made a last parting from Stephen seem

the death of all joy, and made the thought of wounding him like the

first touch of the torturing iron before which resolution shrank. And

then there was the present happiness of being with him, which was

enough to absorb all her languid energy.

Presently Stephen observed a vessel coming after them. Several

vessels, among them the steamer to Mudport, had passed them with the

early tide, but for the last hour they had seen none. He looked more

and more eagerly at this vessel, as if a new thought had come into his

mind along with it, and then he looked at Maggie hesitatingly.

"Maggie, dearest," he said at last, "if this vessel should be going to

Mudport, or to any convenient place on the coast northward, it would

be our best plan to get them to take us on board. You are fatigued,

and it may soon rain; it may be a wretched business, getting to Torby

in this boat. It's only a trading vessel, but I dare say you can be

made tolerably comfortable. We'll take the cushions out of the boat.

It is really our best plan. They'll be glad enough to take us. I've

got plenty of money about me. I can pay them well."

Maggie's heart began to beat with reawakened alarm at this new

proposition; but she was silent,--one course seemed as difficult as

another.

Stephen hailed the vessel. It was a Dutch vessel going to Mudport, the

English mate informed him, and, if this wind held, would be there in

less than two days.

"We had got out too far with our boat," said Stephen. "I was trying to

make for Torby. But I'm afraid of the weather; and this lady--my

wife--will be exhausted with fatigue and hunger. Take us on

board--will you?--and haul up the boat. I'll pay you well."

Maggie, now really faint and trembling with fear, was t aken on board,

making an interesting object of contemplation to admiring Dutchmen.

The mate feared the lady would have a poor time of it on board, for

they had no accommodation for such entirely unlooked-for

passengers,--no private cabin larger than an old-fashioned church-pew.

But at least they had Dutch cleanliness, which makes all other

inconveniences tolerable; and the boat cushions were spread into a

couch for Maggie on the poop with all alacrity. But to pace up and

down the deck leaning on Stephen--being upheld by his strength--was

the first change that she needed; then came food, and then quiet

reclining on the cushions, with the sense that no new resolution

\_could\_ be taken that day. Everything must wait till to-morrow.

Stephen sat beside her with her hand in his; they could only speak to

each other in low tones; only look at each other now and then, for it

would take a long while to dull the curiosity of the five men on

board, and reduce these handsome young strangers to that minor degree

of interest which belongs, in a sailor's regard, to all objects nearer

than the horizon. But Stephen was triumphantly happy. Every other

thought or care was thrown into unmarked perspective by the certainty

that Maggie must be his. The leap had been taken now; he had been

tortured by scruples, he had fought fiercely with overmastering

inclination, he had hesitated; but repentance was impossible. He

murmured forth in fragmentary sentences his happiness, his adoration,

his tenderness, his belief that their life together must be heaven,

that her presence with him would give rapture to every common day;

that to satisfy her lightest wish was dearer to him than all other

bliss; that everything was easy for her sake, except to part with her;

and now they never \_would\_ part; he would belong to her forever, and

all that was his was hers,--had no value for him except as it was

hers. Such things, uttered in low, broken tones by the one voice that

has first stirred the fibre of young passion, have only a feeble

effect--on experienced minds at a distance from them. To poor Maggie

they were very near; they were like nectar held close to thirsty lips;

there was, there \_must\_ be, then, a life for mortals here below which

was not hard and chill,--in which affection would no longer be

self-sacrifice. Stephen's passionate words made the vision of such a

life more fully present to her than it had ever been before; and the

vision for the time excluded all realities,--all except the returning

sun-gleams which broke out on the waters as the evening approached,

and mingled with the visionary sunlight of promised happiness; all

except the hand that pressed hers, and the voice that spoke to her,

and the eyes that looked at her with grave, unspeakable love.

There was to be no rain, after all; the clouds rolled off to the

horizon again, making the great purple rampart and long purple isles

of that wondrous land which reveals itself to us when the sun goes

down,--the land that the evening star watches over. Maggie was to

sleep all night on the poop; it was better than going below; and she

was covered with the warmest wrappings the ship could furnish. It was

still early, when the fatigues of the day brought on a drowsy longing

for perfect rest, and she laid down her head, looking at the faint,

dying flush in the west, where the one golden lamp was getting

brighter and brighter. Then she looked up at Stephen, who was still

seated by her, hanging over her as he leaned his arm against the

vessel's side. Behind all the delicious visions of these last hours,

which had flowed over her like a soft stream, and made her entirely

passive, there was the dim consciousness that the condition was a

transient one, and that the morrow must bring back the old life of

struggle; that there were thoughts which would presently avenge

themselves for this oblivion. But now nothing was distinct to her; she

was being lulled to sleep with that soft stream still flowing over

her, with those delicious visions melting and fading like the wondrous

aerial land of the west.

Chapter XIV

Waking

When Maggie was gone to sleep, Stephen, weary too with his

unaccustomed amount of rowing, and with the intense inward life of the

last twelve hours, but too restless to sleep, walked and lounged about

the deck with his cigar far on into midnight, not seeing the dark

water, hardly conscious there were stars, living only in the near and

distant future. At last fatigue conquered restlessness, and he rolled

himself up in a piece of tarpaulin on the deck near Maggie's feet.

She had fallen asleep before nine, and had been sleeping for six hours

before the faintest hint of a midsummer daybreak was discernible. She

awoke from that vivid dreaming which makes the margin of our deeper

rest. She was in a boat on the wide water with Stephen, and in the

gathering darkness something like a star appeared, that grew and grew

till they saw it was the Virgin seated in St. Ogg's boat, and it came

nearer and nearer, till they saw the Virgin was Lucy and the boatman

was Philip,--no, not Philip, but her brother, who rowed past without

looking at her; and she rose to stretch out her arms and call to him,

and their own boat turned over with the movement, and they began to

sink, till with one spasm of dread she seemed to awake, and find she

was a child again in the parlor at evening twilight, and Tom was not

really angry. From the soothed sense of that false waking she passed

to the real waking,--to the plash of water against the vessel, and the

sound of a footstep on the deck, and the awful starlit sky. There was

a moment of utter bewilderment before her mind could get disentangled

from the confused web of dreams; but soon the whole terrible truth

urged itself upon her. Stephen was not by her now; she was alone with

her own memory and her own dread. The irrevocable wrong that must blot

her life had been committed; she had brought sorrow into the lives of

others,--into the lives that were knit up with hers by trust and love.

The feeling of a few short weeks had hurried her into the sins her

nature had most recoiled from,--breach of faith and cruel selfishness;

she had rent the ties that had given meaning to duty, and had made

herself an outlawed soul, with no guide but the wayward choice of her

own passion. And where would that lead her? Where had it led her now?

She had said she would rather die than fall into that temptation. She

felt it now,--now that the consequences of such a fall had come before

the outward act was completed. There was at least this fruit from all

her years of striving after the highest and best,--that her soul

though betrayed, beguiled, ensnared, could never deliberately consent

to a choice of the lower. And a choice of what? O God! not a choice of

joy, but of conscious cruelty and hardness; for could she ever cease

to see before her Lucy and Philip, with their murdered trust and

hopes? Her life with Stephen could have no sacredness; she must

forever sink and wander vaguely, driven by uncertain impulse; for she

had let go the clue of life,--that clue which once in the far-off

years her young need had clutched so strongly. She had renounced all

delights then, before she knew them, before they had come within her

reach. Philip had been right when he told her that she knew nothing of

renunciation; she had thought it was quiet ecstasy; she saw it face to

face now,--that sad, patient, loving strength which holds the clue of

life,--and saw that the thorns were forever pressing on its brow. The

yesterday, which could never be revoked,--if she could have changed it

now for any length of inward silent endurance, she would have bowed

beneath that cross with a sense of rest.

Day break came and the reddening eastern light, while her past life

was grasping her in this way, with that tightening clutch which comes

in the last moments of possible rescue. She could see Stephen now

lying on the deck still fast asleep, and with the sight of him there

came a wave of anguish that found its way in a long-suppressed sob.

The worst bitterness of parting--the thought that urged the sharpest

inward cry for help--was the pain it must give to \_him\_. But

surmounting everything was the horror at her own possible failure, the

dread lest her conscience should be benumbed again, and not rise to

energy till it was too late. Too late! it was too late already not to

have caused misery; too late for everything, perhaps, but to rush away

from the last act of baseness,--the tasting of joys that were wrung

from crushed hearts.

The sun was rising now, and Maggie started up with the sense that a

day of resistance was beginning for her. Her eyelashes were still wet

with tears, as, with her shawl over her head, she sat looking at the

slowly rounding sun. Something roused Stephen too, and getting up from

his hard bed, he came to sit beside her. The sharp instinct of anxious

love saw something to give him alarm in the very first glance. He had

a hovering dread of some resistance in Maggie's nature that he would

be unable to overcome. He had the uneasy consciousness that he had

robbed her of perfect freedom yesterday; there was too much native

honor in him, for him not to feel that, if her will should recoil, his

conduct would have been odious, and she would have a right to reproach

him.

But Maggie did not feel that right; she was too conscious of fatal

weakness in herself, too full of the tenderness that comes with the

foreseen need for inflicting a wound. She let him take her hand when

he came to sit down beside her, and smiled at him, only with rather a

sad glance; she could say nothing to pain him till the moment of

possible parting was nearer. And so they drank their cup of coffee

together, and walked about the deck, and heard the captain's assurance

that they should be in at Mudport by five o'clock, each with an inward

burthen; but in him it was an undefined fear, which he trusted to the

coming hours to dissipate; in her it was a definite resolve on which

she was trying silently to tighten her hold. Stephen was continually,

through the morning, expressing his anxiety at the fatigue and

discomfort she was suffering, and alluded to landing and to the change

of motion and repose she would have in a carriage, wanting to assure

himself more completely by presupposing that everything would be as he

had arranged it. For a long while Maggie contented herself with

assuring him that she had had a good night's rest, and that she didn't

mind about being on the vessel,--it was not like being on the open

sea, it was only a little less pleasant than being in a boat on the

Floss. But a suppressed resolve will betray itself in the eyes, and

Stephen became more and more uneasy as the day advanced, under the

sense that Maggie had entirely lost her passiveness. He longed, but

did not dare, to speak of their marriage, of where they would go after

it, and the steps he would take to inform his father, and the rest, of

what had happened. He longed to assure himself of a tacit assent from

her. But each time he looked at her, he gathered a stronger dread of

the new, quiet sadness with which she met his eyes. And they were more

and more silent.

"Here we are in sight of Mudport," he said at last. "Now, dearest," he

added, turning toward her with a look that was half beseeching, "the

worst part of your fatigue is over. On the land we can command

swiftness. In another hour and a half we shall be in a chaise

together, and that will seem rest to you after this."

Maggie felt it was time to speak; it would only be unkind now to

assent by silence. She spoke in the lowest tone, as he had done, but

with distinct decision.

"We shall not be together; we shall have parted."

The blood rushed to Stephen's face.

"We shall not," he said. "I'll die first."

It was as he had dreaded--there was a struggle coming. But neither of

them dared to say another word till the boat was let down, and they

were taken to the landing-place. Here there was a cluster of gazers

and passengers awaiting the departure of the steamboat to St. Ogg's.

Maggie had a dim sense, when she had landed, and Stephen was hurrying

her along on his arm, that some one had advanced toward her from that

cluster as if he were coming to speak to her. But she was hurried

along, and was indifferent to everything but the coming trial.

A porter guided them to the nearest inn and posting-house, and Stephen

gave the order for the chaise as they passed through the yard. Maggie

took no notice of this, and only said, "Ask them to show us into a

room where we can sit down."

When they entered, Maggie did not sit down, and Stephen, whose face

had a desperate determination in it, was about to ring the bell, when

she said, in a firm voice,--

"I'm not going; we must part here."

"Maggie," he said, turning round toward her, and speaking in the tones

of a man who feels a process of torture beginning, "do you mean to

kill me? What is the use of it now? The whole thing is done."

"No, it is not done," said Maggie. "Too much is done,--more than we

can ever remove the trace of. But I will go no farther. Don't try to

prevail with me again. I couldn't choose yesterday."

What was he to do? He dared not go near her; her anger might leap out,

and make a new barrier. He walked backward and forward in maddening

perplexity.

"Maggie," he said at last, pausing before her, and speaking in a tone

of imploring wretchedness, "have some pity--hear me--forgive me for

what I did yesterday. I will obey you now; I will do nothing without

your full consent. But don't blight our lives forever by a rash

perversity that can answer no good purpose to any one, that can only

create new evils. Sit down, dearest; wait--think what you are going to

do. Don't treat me as if you couldn't trust me."

He had chosen the most effective appeal; but Maggie's will was fixed

unswervingly on the coming wrench. She had made up her mind to suffer.

"We must not wait," she said, in a low but distinct voice; "we must

part at once."

"We \_can't\_ part, Maggie," said Stephen, more impetuously. "I can't

bear it. What is the use of inflicting that misery on me? The

blow--whatever it may have been--has been struck now. Will it help any

one else that you should drive me mad?"

"I will not begin any future, even for you," said Maggie, tremulously,

"with a deliberate consent to what ought not to have been. What I told

you at Basset I feel now; I would rather have died than fall into this

temptation. It would have been better if we had parted forever then.

But we must part now."

"We will \_not\_ part," Stephen burst out, instinctively placing his

back against the door, forgetting everything he had said a few moments

before; "I will not endure it. You'll make me desperate; I sha'n't

know what I do."

Maggie trembled. She felt that the parting could not be effected

suddenly. She must rely on a slower appeal to Stephen's better self;

she must be prepared for a harder task than that of rushing away while

resolution was fresh. She sat down. Stephen, watching her with that

look of desperation which had come over him like a lurid light,

approached slowly from the door, seated himself close beside her, and

grasped her hand. Her heart beat like the heart of a frightened bird;

but this direct opposition helped her. She felt her determination

growing stronger.

"Remember what you felt weeks ago," she began, with beseeching

earnestness; "remember what we both felt,--that we owed ourselves to

others, and must conquer every inclination which could make us false

to that debt. We have failed to keep our resolutions; but the wrong

remains the same."

"No, it does \_not\_ remain the same," said Stephen. "We have proved

that it was impossible to keep our resolutions. We have proved that

the feeling which draws us toward each other is too strong to be

overcome. That natural law surmounts every other; we can't help what

it clashes with."

"It is not so, Stephen; I'm quite sure that is wrong. I have tried to

think it again and again; but I see, if we judged in that way, there

would be a warrant for all treachery and cruelty; we should justify

breaking the most sacred ties that can ever be formed on earth. If the

past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but

the inclination of the moment."

"But there are ties that can't be kept by mere resolution," said

Stephen, starting up and walking about again. "What is outward

faithfulness? Would they have thanked us for anything so hollow as

constancy without love?"

Maggie did not answer immediately. She was undergoing an inward as

well as an outward contest. At last she said, with a passionate

assertion of her conviction, as much against herself as against him,--

"That seems right--at first; but when I look further, I'm sure it is

\_not\_ right. Faithfulness and constancy mean something else besides

doing what is easiest and pleasantest to ourselves. They mean

renouncing whatever is opposed to the reliance others have in

us,--whatever would cause misery to those whom the course of our lives

has made dependent on us. If we--if I had been better, nobler, those

claims would have been so strongly present with me,--I should have

felt them pressing on my heart so continually, just as they do now in

the moments when my conscience is awake,--that the opposite feeling

would never have grown in me, as it has done; it would have been

quenched at once, I should have prayed for help so earnestly, I should

have rushed away as we rush from hideous danger. I feel no excuse for

myself, none. I should never have failed toward Lucy and Philip as I

have done, if I had not been weak, selfish, and hard,--able to think

of their pain without a pain to myself that would have destroyed all

temptation. Oh, what is Lucy feeling now? She believed in me--she

loved me--she was so good to me. Think of her----"

Maggie's voice was getting choked as she uttered these last words.

"I \_can't\_ think of her," said Stephen, stamping as if with pain. "I

can think of nothing but you, Maggie. You demand of a man what is

impossible. I felt that once; but I can't go back to it now. And where

is the use of \_your\_ thinking of it, except to torture me? You can't

save them from pain now; you can only tear yourself from me, and make

my life worthless to me. And even if we could go back, and both fulfil

our engagements,--if that were possible now,--it would be hateful,

horrible, to think of your ever being Philip's wife,--of your ever

being the wife of a man you didn't love. We have both been rescued

from a mistake."

A deep flush came over Maggie's face, and she couldn't speak. Stephen

saw this. He sat down again, taking her hand in his, and looking at

her with passionate entreaty.

"Maggie! Dearest! If you love me, you are mine. Who can have so great

a claim on you as I have? My life is bound up in your love. There is

nothing in the past that can annul our right to each other; it is the

first time we have either of us loved with our whole heart and soul."

Maggie was still silent for a little while, looking down. Stephen was

in a flutter of new hope; he was going to triumph. But she raised her

eyes and met his with a glance that was filled with the anguish of

regret, not with yielding.

"No, not with my whole heart and soul, Stephen," she said with timid

resolution. "I have never consented to it with my whole mind. There

are memories, and affections, and longings after perfect goodness,

that have such a strong hold on me; they would never quit me for long;

they would come back and be pain to me--repentance. I couldn't live in

peace if I put the shadow of a wilful sin between myself and God. I

have caused sorrow already--I know--I feel it; but I have never

deliberately consented to it; I have never said, 'They shall suffer,

that I may have joy.' It has never been my will to marry you; if you

were to win consent from the momentary triumph of my feeling for you,

you would not have my whole soul. If I could wake back again into the

time before yesterday, I would choose to be true to my calmer

affections, and live without the joy of love."

Stephen loosed her hand, and rising impatiently, walked up and down

the room in suppressed rage.

"Good God!" he burst out at last, "what a miserable thing a woman's

love is to a man's! I could commit crimes for you,--and you can

balance and choose in that way. But you \_don't\_ love me; if you had a

tithe of the feeling for me that I have for you, it would be

impossible to you to think for a moment of sacrificing me. But it

weighs nothing with you that you are robbing me of \_my\_ life's

happiness."

Maggie pressed her fingers together almost convulsively as she held

them clasped on her lap. A great terror was upon her, as if she were

ever and anon seeing where she stood by great flashes of lightning,

and then again stretched forth her hands in the darkness.

"No, I don't sacrifice you--I couldn't sacrifice you," she said, as

soon as she could speak again; "but I can't believe in a good for you,

that I feel, that we both feel, is a wrong toward others. We can't

choose happiness either for ourselves or for another; we can't tell

where that will lie. We can only choose whether we will indulge

ourselves in the present moment, or whether we will renounce that, for

the sake of obeying the divine voice within us,--for the sake of being

true to all the motives that sanctify our lives. I know this belief is

hard; it has slipped away from me again and again; but I have felt

that if I let it go forever, I should have no light through the

darkness of this life."

"But, Maggie," said Stephen, seating himself by her again, "is it

possible you don't see that what happened yesterday has altered the

whole position of things? What infatuation is it, what obstinate

prepossession, that blinds you to that? It is too late to say what we

might have done or what we ought to have done. Admitting the very

worst view of what has been done, it is a fact we must act on now; our

position is altered; the right course is no longer what it was before.

We must accept our own actions and start afresh from them. Suppose we

had been married yesterday? It is nearly the same thing. The effect on

others would not have been different. It would only have made this

difference to ourselves," Stephen added bitterly, "that you might have

acknowledged then that your tie to me was stronger than to others."

Again a deep flush came over Maggie's face, and she was silent.

Stephen thought again that he was beginning to prevail,--he had never

yet believed that he should \_not\_ prevail; there are possibilities

which our minds shrink from too completely for us to fear them.

"Dearest," he said, in his deepest, tenderest tone, leaning toward

her, and putting his arm round her, "you \_are\_ mine now,--the world

believes it; duty must spring out of that now.

"In a few hours you will be legally mine, and those who had claims on

us will submit,--they will see that there was a force which declared

against their claims."

Maggie's eyes opened wide in one terrified look at the face that was

close to hers, and she started up, pale again.

"Oh, I can't do it," she said, in a voice almost of agony; "Stephen,

don't ask me--don't urge me. I can't argue any longer,--I don't know

what is wise; but my heart will not let me do it. I see,--I feel their

trouble now; it is as if it were branded on my mind. \_I\_ have

suffered, and had no one to pity me; and now I have made others

suffer. It would never leave me; it would embitter your love to me. I

\_do\_ care for Philip--in a different way; I remember all we said to

each other; I know how he thought of me as the one promise of his

life. He was given to me that I might make his lot less hard; and I

have forsaken him. And Lucy--she has been deceived; she who trusted me

more than any one. I cannot marry you; I cannot take a good for myself

that has been wrung out of their misery. It is not the force that

ought to rule us,--this that we feel for each other; it would rend me

away from all that my past life has made dear and holy to me. I can't

set out on a fresh life, and forget that; I must go back to it, and

cling to it, else I shall feel as if there were nothing firm beneath

my feet."

"Good God, Maggie!" said Stephen, rising too and grasping her arm,

"you rave. How can you go back without marrying me? You don't know

what will be said, dearest. You see nothing as it really is."

"Yes, I do. But they will believe me. I will confess everything. Lucy

will believe me--she will forgive you, and--and--oh, \_some\_ good will

come by clinging to the right. Dear, dear Stephen, let me go!--don't

drag me into deeper remorse. My whole soul has never consented; it

does not consent now."

Stephen let go her arm, and sank back on his chair, half-stunned by

despairing rage. He was silent a few moments, not looking at her;

while her eyes were turned toward him yearningly, in alarm at this

sudden change. At last he said, still without looking at her,--

"Go, then,--leave me; don't torture me any longer,--I can't bear it."

Involuntarily she leaned toward him and put out her hand to touch his.

But he shrank from it as if it had been burning iron, and said

again,--

"Leave me."

Maggie was not conscious of a decision as she turned away from that

gloomy averted face, and walked out of the room; it was like an

automatic action that fulfils a forgotten intention. What came after?

A sense of stairs descended as if in a dream, of flagstones, of a

chaise and horses standing, then a street, and a turning into another

street where a stage-coach was standing, taking in passengers, and the

darting thought that that coach would take her away, perhaps toward

home. But she could ask nothing yet; she only got into the coach.

Home--where her mother and brother were, Philip, Lucy, the scene of

her very cares and trials--was the haven toward which her mind tended;

the sanctuary where sacred relics lay, where she would be rescued from

more falling. The thought of Stephen was like a horrible throbbing

pain, which yet, as such pains do, seemed to urge all other thoughts

into activity. But among her thoughts, what others would say and think

of her conduct was hardly present. Love and deep pity and remorseful

anguish left no room for that.

The coach was taking her to York, farther away from home; but she did

not learn that until she was set down in the old city at midnight. It

was no matter; she could sleep there, and start home the next day. She

had her purse in her pocket, with all her money in it,--a bank-note

and a sovereign; she had kept it in her pocket from forgetfulness,

after going out to make purchases the day before yesterday.

Did she lie down in the gloomy bedroom of the old inn that night with

her will bent unwaveringly on the path of penitent sacrifice? The

great struggles of life are not so easy as that; the great problems of

life are not so clear. In the darkness of that night she saw Stephen's

face turned toward her in passionate, reproachful misery; she lived

through again all the tremulous delights of his presence with her that

made existence an easy floating in a stream of joy, instead of a quiet

resolved endurance and effort. The love she had renounced came back

upon her with a cruel charm; she felt herself opening her arms to

receive it once more; and then it seemed to slip away and fade and

vanish, leaving only the dying sound of a deep, thrilling voice that

said, "Gone, forever gone."

Book VII

\_The Final Rescue\_

Chapter I

The Return to the Mill

Between four and five o'clock on the afternoon of the fifth day from

that on which Stephen and Maggie had left St. Ogg's, Tom Tulliver was

standing on the gravel walk outside the old house at Dorlcote Mill. He

was master there now; he had half fulfilled his father's dying wish,

and by years of steady self-government and energetic work he had

brought himself near to the attainment of more than the old

respectability which had been the proud inheritance of the Dodsons and

Tullivers.

But Tom's face, as he stood in the hot, still sunshine of that summer

afternoon, had no gladness, no triumph in it. His mouth wore its

bitterest expression, his severe brow its hardest and deepest fold, as

he drew down his hat farther over his eyes to shelter them from the

sun, and thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, began to walk up

and down the gravel. No news of his sister had been heard since Bob

Jakin had come back in the steamer from Mudport, and put an end to all

improbable suppositions of an accident on the water by stating that he

had seen her land from a vessel with Mr. Stephen Guest. Would the next

news be that she was married,--or what? Probably that she was not

married; Tom's mind was set to the expectation of the worst that could

happen,--not death, but disgrace.

As he was walking with his back toward the entrance gate, and his face

toward the rushing mill-stream, a tall, dark-eyed figure, that we know

well, approached the gate, and paused to look at him with a

fast-beating heart. Her brother was the human being of whom she had

been most afraid from her childhood upward; afraid with that fear

which springs in us when we love one who is inexorable, unbending,

unmodifiable, with a mind that we can never mould ourselves upon, and

yet that we cannot endure to alienate from us.

That deep-rooted fear was shaking Maggie now; but her mind was

unswervingly bent on returning to her brother, as the natural refuge

that had been given her. In her deep humiliation under the retrospect

of her own weakness,--in her anguish at the injury she had

inflicted,--she almost desired to endure the severity of Tom's

reproof, to submit in patient silence to that harsh, disapproving

judgment against which she had so often rebelled; it seemed no more

than just to her now,--who was weaker than she was? She craved that

outward help to her better purpose which would come from complete,

submissive confession; from being in the presence of those whose looks

and words would be a reflection of her own conscience.

Maggie had been kept on her bed at York for a day with that

prostrating headache which was likely to follow on the terrible strain

of the previous day and night. There was an expression of physical

pain still about her brow and eyes, and her whole appearance, with her

dress so long unchanged, was worn and distressed. She lifted the latch

of the gate and walked in slowly. Tom did not hear the gate; he was

just then close upon the roaring dam; but he presently turned, and

lifting up his eyes, saw the figure whose worn look and loneliness

seemed to him a confirmation of his worst conjectures. He paused,

trembling and white with disgust and indignation.

Maggie paused too, three yards before him. She felt the hatred in his

face, felt it rushing through her fibres; but she must speak.

"Tom," she began faintly, "I am come back to you,--I am come back

home--for refuge--to tell you everything."

"You will find no home with me," he answered, with tremulous rage.

"You have disgraced us all. You have disgraced my father's name. You

have been a curse to your best friends. You have been base, deceitful;

no motives are strong enough to restrain you. I wash my hands of you

forever. You don't belong to me."

Their mother had come to the door now. She stood paralyzed by the

double shock of seeing Maggie and hearing Tom's words.

"Tom," said Maggie, with more courage, "I am perhaps not so guilty as

you believe me to be. I never meant to give way to my feelings. I

struggled against them. I was carried too far in the boat to come back

on Tuesday. I came back as soon as I could."

"I can't believe in you any more," said Tom, gradually passing from

the tremulous excitement of the first moment to cold inflexibility.

"You have been carrying on a clandestine relation with Stephen

Guest,--as you did before with another. He went to see you at my aunt

Moss's; you walked alone with him in the lanes; you must have behaved

as no modest girl would have done to her cousin's lover, else that

could never have happened. The people at Luckreth saw you pass; you

passed all the other places; you knew what you were doing. You have

been using Philip Wakem as a screen to deceive Lucy,--the kindest

friend you ever had. Go and see the return you have made her. She's

ill; unable to speak. My mother can't go near her, lest she should

remind her of you."

Maggie was half stunned,--too heavily pressed upon by her anguish even

to discern any difference between her actual guilt and her brother's

accusations, still less to vindicate herself.

"Tom," she said, crushing her hands together under her cloak, in the

effort to speak again, "whatever I have done, I repent it bitterly. I

want to make amends. I will endure anything. I want to be kept from

doing wrong again."

"What \_will\_ keep you?" said Tom, with cruel bitterness. "Not

religion; not your natural feelings of gratitude and honor. And he--he

would deserve to be shot, if it were not----But you are ten times

worse than he is. I loathe your character and your conduct. You

struggled with your feelings, you say. Yes! \_I\_ have had feelings to

struggle with; but I conquered them. I have had a harder life than you

have had; but I have found \_my\_ comfort in doing my duty. But I will

sanction no such character as yours; the world shall know that \_I\_

feel the difference between right and wrong. If you are in want, I

will provide for you; let my mother know. But you shall not come under

my roof. It is enough that I have to bear the thought of your

disgrace; the sight of you is hateful to me."

Slowly Maggie was turning away with despair in her heart. But the poor

frightened mother's love leaped out now, stronger than all dread.

"My child! I'll go with you. You've got a mother."

Oh, the sweet rest of that embrace to the heart-stricken Maggie! More

helpful than all wisdom is one draught of simple human pity that will

not forsake us.

Tom turned and walked into the house.

"Come in, my child," Mrs. Tulliver whispered. "He'll let you stay and

sleep in my bed. He won't deny that if I ask him."

"No, mother," said Maggie, in a low tone, like a moan. "I will never

go in."

"Then wait for me outside. I'll get ready and come with you."

When his mother appeared with her bonnet on, Tom came out to her in

the passage, and put money into her hands.

"My house is yours, mother, always," he said. "You will come and let

me know everything you want; you will come back to me."

Poor Mrs. Tulliver took the money, too frightened to say anything. The

only thing clear to her was the mother's instinct that she would go

with her unhappy child.

Maggie was waiting outside the gate; she took her mother's hand and

they walked a little way in silence.

"Mother," said Maggie, at last, "we will go to Luke's cottage. Luke

will take me in. He was very good to me when I was a little girl."

"He's got no room for us, my dear, now; his wife's got so many

children. I don't know where to go, if it isn't to one o' your aunts;

and I hardly durst," said poor Mrs. Tulliver, quite destitute of

mental resources in this extremity.

Maggie was silent a little while, and then said,--

"Let us go to Bob Jakin's, mother; his wife will have room for us, if

they have no other lodger."

So they went on their way to St. Ogg's, to the old house by the

river-side.

Bob himself was at home, with a heaviness at heart which resisted even

the new joy and pride of possessing a two-months'-old baby, quite the

liveliest of its age that had ever been born to prince or packman. He

would perhaps not so thoroughly have understood all the dubiousness of

Maggie's appearance with Mr. Stephen Guest on the quay at Mudport if

he had not witnessed the effect it produced on Tom when he went to

report it; and since then, the circumstances which in any case gave a

disastrous character to her elopement had passed beyond the more

polite circles of St. Ogg's, and had become matter of common talk,

accessible to the grooms and errand-boys. So that when he opened the

door and saw Maggie standing before him in her sorrow and weariness,

he had no questions to ask except one which he dared only ask

himself,--where was Mr. Stephen Guest? Bob, for his part, hoped he

might be in the warmest department of an asylum understood to exist in

the other world for gentlemen who are likely to be in fallen

circumstances there.

The lodgings were vacant, and both Mrs. Jakin the larger and Mrs.

Jakin the less were commanded to make all things comfortable for "the

old Missis and the young Miss"; alas that she was still "Miss!" The

ingenious Bob was sorely perplexed as to how this result could have

come about; how Mr. Stephen Guest could have gone away from her, or

could have let her go away from him, when he had the chance of keeping

her with him. But he was silent, and would not allow his wife to ask

him a question; would not present himself in the room, lest it should

appear like intrusion and a wish to pry; having the same chivalry

toward dark-eyed Maggie as in the days when he had bought her the

memorable present of books.

But after a day or two Mrs. Tulliver was gone to the Mill again for a

few hours to see to Tom's household matters. Maggie had wished this;

after the first violent outburst of feeling which came as soon as she

had no longer any active purpose to fulfil, she was less in need of

her mother's presence; she even desired to be alone with her grief.

But she had been solitary only a little while in the old sitting-room

that looked on the river, when there came a tap at the door, and

turning round her sad face as she said "Come in," she saw Bob enter,

with the baby in his arms and Mumps at his heels.

"We'll go back, if it disturbs you, Miss," said Bob.

"No," said Maggie, in a low voice, wishing she could smile.

Bob, closing the door behind him, came and stood before her.

"You see, we've got a little un, Miss, and I want'd you to look at it,

and take it in your arms, if you'd be so good. For we made free to

name it after you, and it 'ud be better for your takin' a bit o'

notice on it."

Maggie could not speak, but she put out her arms to receive the tiny

baby, while Mumps snuffed at it anxiously, to ascertain that this

transference was all right. Maggie's heart had swelled at this action

and speech of Bob's; she knew well enough that it was a way he had

chosen to show his sympathy and respect.

"Sit down, Bob," she said presently, and he sat down in silence,

finding his tongue unmanageable in quite a new fashion, refusing to

say what he wanted it to say.

"Bob," she said, after a few moments, looking down at the baby, and

holding it anxiously, as if she feared it might slip from her mind and

her fingers, "I have a favor to ask of you."

"Don't you speak so, Miss," said Bob, grasping the skin of Mumps's

neck; "if there's anything I can do for you, I should look upon it as

a day's earnings."

"I want you to go to Dr. Kenn's, and ask to speak to him, and tell him

that I am here, and should be very grateful if he would come to me

while my mother is away. She will not come back till evening."

"Eh, Miss, I'd do it in a minute,--it is but a step,--but Dr. Kenn's

wife lies dead; she's to be buried to-morrow; died the day I come from

Mudport. It's all the more pity she should ha' died just now, if you

want him. I hardly like to go a-nigh him yet."

"Oh no, Bob," said Maggie, "we must let it be,--till after a few days,

perhaps, when you hear that he is going about again. But perhaps he

may be going out of town--to a distance," she added, with a new sense

of despondency at this idea.

"Not he, Miss," said Bob. "\_He'll\_ none go away. He isn't one o' them

gentlefolks as go to cry at waterin'-places when their wives die; he's

got summat else to do. He looks fine and sharp after the parish, he

does. He christened the little un; an' he was \_at\_ me to know what I

did of a Sunday, as I didn't come to church. But I told him I was upo'

the travel three parts o' the Sundays,--an' then I'm so used to bein'

on my legs, I can't sit so long on end,--'an' lors, sir,' says I, 'a

packman can do wi' a small 'lowance o' church; it tastes strong,' says

I; 'there's no call to lay it on thick.' Eh, Miss, how good the little

un is wi' you! It's like as if it knowed you; it partly does, I'll be

bound,--like the birds know the mornin'."

Bob's tongue was now evidently loosed from its unwonted bondage, and

might even be in danger of doing more work than was required of it.

But the subjects on which he longed to be informed were so steep and

difficult of approach, that his tongue was likely to run on along the

level rather than to carry him on that unbeaten road. He felt this,

and was silent again for a little while, ruminating much on the

possible forms in which he might put a question. At last he said, in a

more timid voice than usual,--

"Will you give me leave to ask you only one thing, Miss?"

Maggie was rather startled, but she answered, "Yes, Bob, if it is

about myself--not about any one else."

"Well, Miss, it's this. \_Do\_ you owe anybody a grudge?"

"No, not any one," said Maggie, looking up at him inquiringly. "Why?"

"Oh, lors, Miss," said Bob, pinching Mumps's neck harder than ever. "I

wish you did, an' tell me; I'd leather him till I couldn't see--I

would--an' the Justice might do what he liked to me arter."

"Oh, Bob," said Maggie, smiling faintly, "you're a very good friend to

me. But I shouldn't like to punish any one, even if they'd done me

wrong; I've done wrong myself too often."

This view of things was puzzling to Bob, and threw more obscurity than

ever over what could possibly have happened between Stephen and

Maggie. But further questions would have been too intrusive, even if

he could have framed them suitably, and he was obliged to carry baby

away again to an expectant mother.

"Happen you'd like Mumps for company, Miss," he said when he had taken

the baby again. "He's rare company, Mumps is; he knows iverything, an'

makes no bother about it. If I tell him, he'll lie before you an'

watch you, as still,--just as he watches my pack. You'd better let me

leave him a bit; he'll get fond on you. Lors, it's a fine thing to hev

a dumb brute fond on you; it'll stick to you, an' make no jaw."

"Yes, do leave him, please," said Maggie. "I think I should like to

have Mumps for a friend."

"Mumps, lie down there," said Bob, pointing to a place in front of

Maggie, "and niver do you stir till you're spoke to."

Mumps lay down at once, and made no sign of restlessness when his

master left the room.

Chapter II

St. Ogg's Passes Judgment

It was soon known throughout St. Ogg's that Miss Tulliver was come

back; she had not, then, eloped in order to be married to Mr. Stephen

Guest,--at all events, Mr. Stephen Guest had not married her; which

came to the same thing, so far as her culpability was concerned. We

judge others according to results; how else?--not knowing the process

by which results are arrived at. If Miss Tulliver, after a few months

of well-chosen travel, had returned as Mrs. Stephen Guest, with a

post-marital \_trousseau\_, and all the advantages possessed even by the

most unwelcome wife of an only son, public opinion, which at St.

Ogg's, as else where, always knew what to think, would have judged in

strict consistency with those results. Public opinion, in these cases,

is always of the feminine gender,--not the world, but the world's

wife; and she would have seen that two handsome young people--the

gentleman of quite the first family in St. Ogg's--having found

themselves in a false position, had been led into a course which, to

say the least of it, was highly injudicious, and productive of sad

pain and disappointment, especially to that sweet young thing, Miss

Deane. Mr. Stephen Guest had certainly not behaved well; but then,

young men were liable to those sudden infatuated attachments; and bad

as it might seem in Mrs. Stephen Guest to admit the faintest advances

from her cousin's lover (indeed it \_had\_ been said that she was

actually engaged to young Wakem,--old Wakem himself had mentioned it),

still, she was very young,--"and a deformed young man, you know!--and

young Guest so very fascinating; and, they say, he positively worships

her (to be sure, that can't last!), and he ran away with her in the

boat quite against her will, and what could she do? She couldn't come

back then; no one would have spoken to her; and how very well that

maize-colored satinette becomes her complexion! It seems as if the

folds in front were quite come in; several of her dresses are made

so,--they say he thinks nothing too handsome to buy for her. Poor Miss

Deane! She is very pitiable; but then there was no positive

engagement; and the air at the coast will do her good. After all, if

young Guest felt no more for her than \_that\_ it was better for her not

to marry him. What a wonderful marriage for a girl like Miss

Tulliver,--quite romantic? Why, young Guest will put up for the

borough at the next election. Nothing like commerce nowadays! That

young Wakem nearly went out of his mind; he always \_was\_ rather queer;

but he's gone abroad again to be out of the way,--quite the best thing

for a deformed young man. Miss Unit declares she will never visit Mr.

and Mrs. Stephen Guest,--such nonsense! pretending to be better than

other people. Society couldn't be carried on if we inquired into

private conduct in that way,--and Christianity tells us to think no

evil,--and my belief is, that Miss Unit had no cards sent her."

But the results, we know, were not of a kind to warrant this

extenuation of the past. Maggie had returned without a \_trousseau\_,

without a husband,--in that degraded and outcast condition to which

error is well known to lead; and the world's wife, with that fine

instinct which is given her for the preservation of Society, saw at

once that Miss Tulliver's conduct had been of the most aggravated

kind. Could anything be more detestable? A girl so much indebted to

her friends--whose mother as well as herself had received so much

kindness from the Deanes--to lay the design of winning a young man's

affections away from her own cousin, who had behaved like a sister to

her! Winning his affections? That was not the phrase for such a girl

as Miss Tulliver; it would have been more correct to say that she had

been actuated by mere unwomanly boldness and unbridled passion. There

was always something questionable about her. That connection with

young Wakem, which, they said, had been carried on for years, looked

very ill,--disgusting, in fact! But with a girl of that disposition!

To the world's wife there had always been something in Miss Tulliver's

very \_physique\_ that a refined instinct felt to be prophetic of harm.

As for poor Mr. Stephen Guest, he was rather pitiable than otherwise;

a young man of five-and-twenty is not to be too severely judged in

these cases,--he is really very much at the mercy of a designing, bold

girl. And it was clear that he had given way in spite of himself: he

had shaken her off as soon as he could; indeed, their having parted so

soon looked very black indeed--\_for her\_. To be sure, he had written a

letter, laying all the blame on himself, and telling the story in a

romantic fashion so as to try and make her appear quite innocent; of

course he would do that! But the refined instinct of the world's wife

was not to be deceived; providentially!--else what would become of

Society? Why, her own brother had turned her from his door; he had

seen enough, you might be sure, before he would do that. A truly

respectable young man, Mr. Tom Tulliver; quite likely to rise in the

world! His sister's disgrace was naturally a heavy blow to him. It was

to be hoped that she would go out of the neighborhood,--to America, or

anywhere,--so as to purify the air of St. Ogg's from the stain of her

presence, extremely dangerous to daughters there! No good could happen

to her; it was only to be hoped she would repent, and that God would

have mercy on her: He had not the care of society on His hands, as the

world's wife had.

It required nearly a fortnight for fine instinct to assure itself of

these inspirations; indeed, it was a whole week before Stephen's

letter came, telling his father the facts, and adding that he was gone

across to Holland,--had drawn upon the agent at Mudport for

money,--was incapable of any resolution at present.

Maggie, all this while, was too entirely filled with a more agonizing

anxiety to spend any thought on the view that was being taken of her

conduct by the world of St. Ogg's; anxiety about Stephen, Lucy,

Philip, beat on her poor heart in a hard, driving, ceaseless storm of

mingled love, remorse, and pity. If she had thought of rejection and

injustice at all, it would have seemed to her that they had done their

worst; that she could hardly feel any stroke from them intolerable

since the words she had heard from her brother's lips. Across all her

anxiety for the loved and the injured, those words shot again and

again, like a horrible pang that would have brought misery and dread

even into a heaven of delights. The idea of ever recovering happiness

never glimmered in her mind for a moment; it seemed as if every

sensitive fibre in her were too entirely preoccupied by pain ever to

vibrate again to another influence. Life stretched before her as one

act of penitence; and all she craved, as she dwelt on her future lot,

was something to guarantee her from more falling; her own weakness

haunted her like a vision of hideous possibilities, that made no peace

conceivable except such as lay in the sense of a sure refuge.

But she was not without practical intentions; the love of independence

was too strong an inheritance and a habit for her not to remember that

she must get her bread; and when other projects looked vague, she fell

back on that of returning to her plain sewing, and so getting enough

to pay for her lodging at Bob's. She meant to persuade her mother to

return to the Mill by and by, and live with Tom again; and somehow or

other she would maintain herself at St. Ogg's. Dr. Kenn would perhaps

help her and advise her. She remembered his parting words at the

bazaar. She remembered the momentary feeling of reliance that had

sprung in her when he was talking with her, and she waited with

yearning expectation for the opportunity of confiding everything to

him. Her mother called every day at Mr. Deane's to learn how Lucy was;

the report was always sad,--nothing had yet roused her from the feeble

passivity which had come on with the first shock. But of Philip, Mrs.

Tulliver had learned nothing; naturally, no one whom she met would

speak to her about what related to her daughter. But at last she

summoned courage to go and see sister Glegg, who of course would know

everything, and had been even to see Tom at the Mill in Mrs.

Tulliver's absence, though he had said nothing of what had passed on

the occasion.

As soon as her mother was gone, Maggie put on her bonnet. She had

resolved on walking to the Rectory and asking to see Dr. Kenn; he was

in deep grief, but the grief of another does not jar upon us in such

circumstances. It was the first time she had been beyond the door

since her return; nevertheless her mind was so bent on the purpose of

her walk, that the unpleasantness of meeting people on the way, and

being stared at, did not occur to her. But she had no sooner passed

beyond the narrower streets which she had to thread from Bob's

dwelling, than she became aware of unusual glances cast at her; and

this consciousness made her hurry along nervously, afraid to look to

right or left. Presently, however, she came full on Mrs. and Miss

Turnbull, old acquaintances of her family; they both looked at her

strangely, and turned a little aside without speaking. All hard looks

were pain to Maggie, but her self-reproach was too strong for

resentment. No wonder they will not speak to me, she thought; they are

very fond of Lucy. But now she knew that she was about to pass a group

of gentlemen, who were standing at the door of the billiard-rooms, and

she could not help seeing young Torry step out a little with his glass

at his eye, and bow to her with that air of \_nonchalance\_ which he

might have bestowed on a friendly barmaid.

Maggie's pride was too intense for her not to feel that sting, even in

the midst of her sorrow; and for the first time the thought took

strong hold of her that she would have other obloquy cast on her

besides that which was felt to be due to her breach of faith toward

Lucy. But she was at the Rectory now; there, perhaps, she would find

something else than retribution. Retribution may come from any voice;

the hardest, cruelest, most imbruted urchin at the street-corner can

inflict it; surely help and pity are rarer things, more needful for

the righteous to bestow.

She was shown up at once, after being announced, into Dr. Kenn's

study, where he sat amongst piled-up books, for which he had little

appetite, leaning his cheek against the head of his youngest child, a

girl of three. The child was sent away with the servant, and when the

door was closed, Dr. Kenn said, placing a chair for Maggie,--

"I was coming to see you, Miss Tulliver; you have anticipated me; I am

glad you did."

Maggie looked at him with her childlike directness as she had done at

the bazaar, and said, "I want to tell you everything." But her eyes

filled fast with tears as she said it, and all the pent-up excitement

of her humiliating walk would have its vent before she could say more.

"Do tell me everything," Dr. Kenn said, with quiet kindness in his

grave, firm voice. "Think of me as one to whom a long experience has

been granted, which may enable him to help you."

In rather broken sentences, and with some effort at first, but soon

with the greater ease that came from a sense of relief in the

confidence, Maggie told the brief story of a struggle that must be the

beginning of a long sorrow. Only the day before, Dr. Kenn had been

made acquainted with the contents of Stephen's letter, and he had

believed them at once, without the confirmation of Maggie's statement.

That involuntary plaint of hers, "\_Oh, I must go\_," had remained with

him as the sign that she was undergoing some inward conflict.

Maggie dwelt the longest on the feeling which had made her come back

to her mother and brother, which made her cling to all the memories of

the past. When she had ended, Dr. Kenn was silent for some minutes;

there was a difficulty on his mind. He rose, and walked up and down

the hearth with his hands behind him. At last he seated himself again,

and said, looking at Maggie,--

"Your prompting to go to your nearest friends,--to remain where all

the ties of your life have been formed,--is a true prompting, to which

the Church in its original constitution and discipline responds,

opening its arms to the penitent, watching over its children to the

last; never abandoning them until they are hopelessly reprobate. And

the Church ought to represent the feeling of the community, so that

every parish should be a family knit together by Christian brotherhood

under a spiritual father. But the ideas of discipline and Christian

fraternity are entirely relaxed,--they can hardly be said to exist in

the public mind; they hardly survive except in the partial,

contradictory form they have taken in the narrow communities of

schismatics; and if I were not supported by the firm faith that the

Church must ultimately recover the full force of that constitution

which is alone fitted to human needs, I should often lose heart at

observing the want of fellowship and sense of mutual responsibility

among my own flock. At present everything seems tending toward the

relaxation of ties,--toward the substitution of wayward choice for the

adherence to obligation, which has its roots in the past. Your

conscience and your heart have given you true light on this point,

Miss Tulliver; and I have said all this that you may know what my wish

about you--what my advice to you--would be, if they sprang from my own

feeling and opinion unmodified by counteracting circumstances."

Dr. Kenn paused a little while. There was an entire absence of

effusive benevolence in his manner; there was something almost cold in

the gravity of his look and voice. If Maggie had not known that his

benevolence was persevering in proportion to its reserve, she might

have been chilled and frightened. As it was, she listened expectantly,

quite sure that there would be some effective help in his words. He

went on.

"Your inexperience of the world, Miss Tulliver, prevents you from

anticipating fully the very unjust conceptions that will probably be

formed concerning your conduct,--conceptions which will have a baneful

effect, even in spite of known evidence to disprove them."

"Oh, I do,--I begin to see," said Maggie, unable to repress this

utterance of her recent pain. "I know I shall be insulted. I shall be

thought worse than I am."

"You perhaps do not yet know," said Dr. Kenn, with a touch of more

personal pity, "that a letter is come which ought to satisfy every one

who has known anything of you, that you chose the steep and difficult

path of a return to the right, at the moment when that return was most

of all difficult."

"Oh, where is he?" said poor Maggie, with a flush and tremor that no

presence could have hindered.

"He is gone abroad; he has written of all that passed to his father.

He has vindicated you to the utmost; and I hope the communication of

that letter to your cousin will have a beneficial effect on her."

Dr. Kenn waited for her to get calm again before he went on.

"That letter, as I said, ought to suffice to prevent false impressions

concerning you. But I am bound to tell you, Miss Tulliver, that not

only the experience of my whole life, but my observation within the

last three days, makes me fear that there is hardly any evidence which

will save you from the painful effect of false imputations. The

persons who are the most incapable of a conscientious struggle such as

yours are precisely those who will be likely to shrink from you,

because they will not believe in your struggle. I fear your life here

will be attended not only with much pain, but with many obstructions.

For this reason--and for this only--I ask you to consider whether it

will not perhaps be better for you to take a situation at a distance,

according to your former intention. I will exert myself at once to

obtain one for you."

"Oh, if I could but stop here!" said Maggie. "I have no heart to begin

a strange life again. I should have no stay. I should feel like a

lonely wanderer, cut off from the past. I have written to the lady who

offered me a situation to excuse myself. If I remained here, I could

perhaps atone in some way to Lucy--to others; I could convince them

that I'm sorry. And," she added, with some of the old proud fire

flashing out, "I will not go away because people say false things of

me. They shall learn to retract them. If I must go away at last,

because--because others wish it, I will not go now."

"Well," said Dr. Kenn, after some consideration, "if you determine on

that, Miss Tulliver, you may rely on all the influence my position

gives me. I am bound to aid and countenance you by the very duties of

my office as a parish priest. I will add, that personally I have a

deep interest in your peace of mind and welfare."

"The only thing I want is some occupation that will enable me to get

my bread and be independent," said Maggie. "I shall not want much. I

can go on lodging where I am."

"I must think over the subject maturely," said Dr. Kenn, "and in a few

days I shall be better able to ascertain the general feeling. I shall

come to see you; I shall bear you constantly in mind."

When Maggie had left him, Dr. Kenn stood ruminating with his hands

behind him, and his eyes fixed on the carpet, under a painful sense of

doubt and difficulty. The tone of Stephen's letter, which he had read,

and the actual relations of all the persons concerned, forced upon him

powerfully the idea of an ultimate marriage between Stephen and Maggie

as the least evil; and the impossibility of their proximity in St.

Ogg's on any other supposition, until after years of separation, threw

an insurmountable prospective difficulty over Maggie's stay there. On

the other hand, he entered with all the comprehension of a man who had

known spiritual conflict, and lived through years of devoted service

to his fellow-men, into that state of Maggie's heart and conscience

which made the consent to the marriage a desecration to her; her

conscience must not be tampered with; the principle on which she had

acted was a safer guide than any balancing of consequences. His

experience told him that intervention was too dubious a responsibility

to be lightly incurred; the possible issue either of an endeavor to

restore the former relations with Lucy and Philip, or of counselling

submission to this irruption of a new feeling, was hidden in a

darkness all the more impenetrable because each immediate step was

clogged with evil.

The great problem of the shifting relation between passion and duty is

clear to no man who is capable of apprehending it; the question

whether the moment has come in which a man has fallen below the

possibility of a renunciation that will carry any efficacy, and must

accept the sway of a passion against which he had struggled as a

trespass, is one for which we have no master-key that will fit all

cases. The casuists have become a byword of reproach; but their

perverted spirit of minute discrimination was the shadow of a truth to

which eyes and hearts are too often fatally sealed,--the truth, that

moral judgments must remain false and hollow, unless they are checked

and enlightened by a perpetual reference to the special circumstances

that mark the individual lot.

All people of broad, strong sense have an instinctive repugnance to

the men of maxims; because such people early discern that the

mysterious complexity of our life is not to be embraced by maxims, and

that to lace ourselves up in formulas of that sort is to repress all

the divine promptings and inspirations that spring from growing

insight and sympathy. And the man of maxims is the popular

representative of the minds that are guided in their moral judgment

solely by general rules, thinking that these will lead them to justice

by a ready-made patent method, without the trouble of exerting

patience, discrimination, impartiality,--without any care to assure

themselves whether they have the insight that comes from a hardly

earned estimate of temptation, or from a life vivid and intense enough

to have created a wide fellow-feeling with all that is human.

Chapter III

Showing That Old Acquaintances Are Capable of Surprising Us

When Maggie was at home again, her mother brought her news of an

unexpected line of conduct in aunt Glegg. As long as Maggie had not

been heard of, Mrs. Glegg had half closed her shutters and drawn down

her blinds. She felt assured that Maggie was drowned; that was far

more probable than that her niece and legatee should have done

anything to wound the family honor in the tenderest point. When at

last she learned from Tom that Maggie had come home, and gathered from

him what was her explanation of her absence, she burst forth in severe

reproof of Tom for admitting the worst of his sister until he was

compelled. If you were not to stand by your "kin" as long as there was

a shred of honor attributable to them, pray what were you to stand by?

Lightly to admit conduct in one of your own family that would force

you to alter your will, had never been the way of the Dodsons; and

though Mrs. Glegg had always augured ill of Maggie's future at a time

when other people were perhaps less clear-sighted, yet fair play was a

jewel, and it was not for her own friends to help to rob the girl of

her fair fame, and to cast her out from family shelter to the scorn of

the outer world, until she had become unequivocally a family disgrace.

The circumstances were unprecedented in Mrs. Glegg's experience;

nothing of that kind had happened among the Dodsons before; but it was

a case in which her hereditary rectitude and personal strength of

character found a common channel along with her fundamental ideas of

clanship, as they did in her lifelong regard to equity in money

matters. She quarrelled with Mr. Glegg, whose kindness, flowing

entirely into compassion for Lucy, made him as hard in his judgment of

Maggie as Mr. Deane himself was; and fuming against her sister

Tulliver because she did not at once come to her for advice and help,

shut herself up in her own room with Baxter's "Saints' Rest" from

morning till night, denying herself to all visitors, till Mr. Glegg

brought from Mr. Deane the news of Stephen's letter. Then Mrs. Glegg

felt that she had adequate fighting-ground; then she laid aside

Baxter, and was ready to meet all comers. While Mrs. Pullet could do

nothing but shake her head and cry, and wish that cousin Abbot had

died, or any number of funerals had happened rather than this, which

had never happened before, so that there was no knowing how to act,

and Mrs. Pullet could never enter St. Ogg's again, because

"acquaintances" knew of it all, Mrs. Glegg only hoped that Mrs. Wooll,

or any one else, would come to her with their false tales about her

own niece, and she would know what to say to that ill-advised person!

Again she had a scene of remonstrance with Tom, all the more severe in

proportion to the greater strength of her present position. But Tom,

like other immovable things, seemed only the more rigidly fixed under

that attempt to shake him. Poor Tom! he judged by what he had been

able to see; and the judgment was painful enough to himself. He

thought he had the demonstration of facts observed through years by

his own eyes, which gave no warning of their imperfection, that

Maggie's nature was utterly untrustworthy, and too strongly marked

with evil tendencies to be safely treated with leniency. He would act

on that demonstration at any cost; but the thought of it made his days

bitter to him. Tom, like every one of us, was imprisoned within the

limits of his own nature, and his education had simply glided over

him, leaving a slight deposit of polish; if you are inclined to be

severe on his severity, remember that the responsibility of tolerance

lies with those who have the wider vision. There had arisen in Tom a

repulsion toward Maggie that derived its very intensity from their

early childish love in the time when they had clasped tiny fingers

together, and their later sense of nearness in a common duty and a

common sorrow; the sight of her, as he had told her, was hateful to

him. In this branch of the Dodson family aunt Glegg found a stronger

nature than her own; a nature in which family feeling had lost the

character of clanship by taking on a doubly deep dye of personal

pride.

Mrs. Glegg allowed that Maggie ought to be punished,--she was not a

woman to deny that; she knew what conduct was,--but punished in

proportion to the misdeeds proved against her, not to those which were

cast upon her by people outside her own family who might wish to show

that their own kin were better.

"Your aunt Glegg scolded me so as niver was, my dear," said poor Mrs.

Tulliver, when she came back to Maggie, "as I didn't go to her before;

she said it wasn't for her to come to me first. But she spoke like a

sister, too; \_having\_ she allays was, and hard to please,--oh

dear!--but she's said the kindest word as has ever been spoke by you

yet, my child. For she says, for all she's been so set again' having

one extry in the house, and making extry spoons and things, and

putting her about in her ways, you shall have a shelter in her house,

if you'll go to her dutiful, and she'll uphold you against folks as

say harm of you when they've no call. And I told her I thought you

couldn't bear to see anybody but me, you were so beat down with

trouble; but she said, '\_I\_ won't throw ill words at her; there's them

out o' th' family 'ull be ready enough to do that. But I'll give her

good advice; an' she must be humble.' It's wonderful o' Jane; for I'm

sure she used to throw everything I did wrong at me,--if it was the

raisin-wine as turned out bad, or the pies too hot, or whativer it

was."

"Oh, mother," said poor Maggie, shrinking from the thought of all the

contact her bruised mind would have to bear, "tell her I'm very

grateful; I'll go to see her as soon as I can; but I can't see any one

just yet, except Dr. Kenn. I've been to him,--he will advise me, and

help me to get some occupation. I can't live with any one, or be

dependent on them, tell aunt Glegg; I must get my own bread. But did

you hear nothing of Philip--Philip Wakem? Have you never seen any one

that has mentioned him?"

"No, my dear; but I've been to Lucy's, and I saw your uncle, and he

says they got her to listen to the letter, and she took notice o' Miss

Guest, and asked questions, and the doctor thinks she's on the turn to

be better. What a world this is,--what trouble, oh dear! The law was

the first beginning, and it's gone from bad to worse, all of a sudden,

just when the luck seemed on the turn?" This was the first lamentation

that Mrs. Tulliver had let slip to Maggie, but old habit had been

revived by the interview with sister Glegg.

"My poor, poor mother!" Maggie burst out, cut to the heart with pity

and compunction, and throwing her arms round her mother's neck; "I was

always naughty and troublesome to you. And now you might have been

happy if it hadn't been for me."

"Eh, my dear," said Mrs. Tulliver, leaning toward the warm young

cheek; "I must put up wi' my children,--I shall never have no more;

and if they bring me bad luck, I must be fond on it. There's nothing

else much to be fond on, for my furnitur' went long ago. And you'd got

to be very good once; I can't think how it's turned out the wrong way

so!"

Still two or three more days passed, and Maggie heard nothing of

Philip; anxiety about him was becoming her predominant trouble, and

she summoned courage at last to inquire about him of Dr. Kenn, on his

next visit to her. He did not even know if Philip was at home. The

elder Wakem was made moody by an accumulation of annoyance; the

disappointment in this young Jetsome, to whom, apparently, he was a

good deal attached, had been followed close by the catastrophe to his

son's hopes after he had done violence to his own strong feeling by

conceding to them, and had incautiously mentioned this concession in

St. Ogg's; and he was almost fierce in his brusqueness when any one

asked him a question about his son.

But Philip could hardly have been ill, or it would have been known

through the calling in of the medical man; it was probable that he was

gone out of the town for a little while. Maggie sickened under this

suspense, and her imagination began to live more and more persistently

in what Philip was enduring. What did he believe about her?

At last Bob brought her a letter, without a postmark, directed in a

hand which she knew familiarly in the letters of her own name,--a hand

in which her name had been written long ago, in a pocket Shakespeare

which she possessed. Her mother was in the room, and Maggie, in

violent agitation, hurried upstairs that she might read the letter in

solitude. She read it with a throbbing brow.

"Maggie,--I believe in you; I know you never meant to deceive me; I

know you tried to keep faith to me and to all. I believed this

before I had any other evidence of it than your own nature. The

night after I last parted from you I suffered torments. I had seen

what convinced me that you were not free; that there was another

whose presence had a power over you which mine never possessed; but

through all the suggestions--almost murderous suggestions--of rage

and jealousy, my mind made its way to believe in your truthfulness.

I was sure that you meant to cleave to me, as you had said; that

you had rejected him; that you struggled to renounce him, for

Lucy's sake and for mine. But I could see no issue that was not

fatal for \_you;\_ and that dread shut out the very thought of

resignation. I foresaw that he would not relinquish you, and I

believed then, as I believe now, that the strong attraction which

drew you together proceeded only from one side of your characters,

and belonged to that partial, divided action of our nature which

makes half the tragedy of the human lot. I have felt the vibration

of chords in your nature that I have continually felt the want of

in his. But perhaps I am wrong; perhaps I feel about you as the

artist does about the scene over which his soul has brooded with

love; he would tremble to see it confided to other hands; he would

never believe that it could bear for another all the meaning and

the beauty it bears for him.

"I dared not trust myself to see you that morning; I was filled

with selfish passion; I was shattered by a night of conscious

delirium. I told you long ago that I had never been resigned even

to the mediocrity of my powers; how could I be resigned to the loss

of the one thing which had ever come to me on earth with the

promise of such deep joy as would give a new and blessed meaning to

the foregoing pain,--the promise of another self that would lift my

aching affection into the divine rapture of an ever-springing,

ever-satisfied want?

"But the miseries of that night had prepared me for what came

before the next. It was no surprise to me. I was certain that he

had prevailed on you to sacrifice everything to him, and I waited

with equal certainty to hear of your marriage. I measured your love

and his by my own. But I was wrong, Maggie. There is something

stronger in you than your love for him.

"I will not tell you what I went through in that interval. But even

in its utmost agony--even in those terrible throes that love must

suffer before it can be disembodied of selfish desire--my love for

you sufficed to withhold me from suicide, without the aid of any

other motive. In the midst of my egoism, I yet could not bear to

come like a death-shadow across the feast of your joy. I could not

bear to forsake the world in which you still lived and might need

me; it was part of the faith I had vowed to you,--to wait and

endure. Maggie, that is a proof of what I write now to assure you

of,--that no anguish I have had to bear on your account has been

too heavy a price to pay for the new life into which I have entered

in loving you. I want you to put aside all grief because of the

grief you have caused me. I was nurtured in the sense of privation;

I never expected happiness; and in knowing you, in loving you, I

have had, and still have, what reconciles me to life. You have been

to my affections what light, what color is to my eyes, what music

is to the inward ear, you have raised a dim unrest into a vivid

consciousness. The new life I have found in caring for your joy and

sorrow more than for what is directly my own, has transformed the

spirit of rebellious murmuring into that willing endurance which is

the birth of strong sympathy. I think nothing but such complete and

intense love could have initiated me into that enlarged life which

grows and grows by appropriating the life of others; for before, I

was always dragged back from it by ever-present painful

self-consciousness. I even think sometimes that this gift of

transferred life which has come to me in loving you, may be a new

power to me.

"Then, dear one, in spite of all, you have been the blessing of my

life. Let no self-reproach weigh on you because of me. It is I who

should rather reproach myself for having urged my feelings upon

you, and hurried you into words that you have felt as fetters. You

meant to be true to those words; you \_have\_ been true. I can

measure your sacrifice by what I have known in only one half-hour

of your presence with me, when I dreamed that you might love me

best. But, Maggie, I have no just claim on you for more than

affectionate remembrance.

"For some time I have shrunk from writing to you, because I have

shrunk even from the appearance of wishing to thrust myself before

you, and so repeating my original error. But you will not

misconstrue me. I know that we must keep apart for a long while;

cruel tongues would force us apart, if nothing else did. But I

shall not go away. The place where you are is the one where my mind

must live, wherever I might travel. And remember that I am

unchangeably yours,--yours not with selfish wishes, but with a

devotion that excludes such wishes.

"God comfort you, my loving, large-souled Maggie. If every one else

has misconceived you, remember that you have never been doubted by

him whose heart recognized you ten years ago.

"Do not believe any one who says I am ill, because I am not seen

out of doors. I have only had nervous headaches,--no worse than I

have sometimes had them before. But the overpowering heat inclines

me to be perfectly quiescent in the daytime. I am strong enough to

obey any word which shall tell me that I can serve you by word or

deed.

"Yours to the last,

"\_Philip Wakem\_."

As Maggie knelt by the bed sobbing, with that letter pressed under

her, her feelings again and again gathered themselves in a whispered

cry, always in the same words,--

"O God, is there any happiness in love that could make me forget

\_their\_ pain?"

Chapter IV

Maggie and Lucy

By the end of the week Dr. Kenn had made up his mind that there was

only one way in which he could secure to Maggie a suitable living at

St. Ogg's. Even with his twenty years' experience as a parish priest,

he was aghast at the obstinate continuance of imputations against her

in the face of evidence. Hitherto he had been rather more adored and

appealed to than was quite agreeable to him; but now, in attempting to

open the ears of women to reason, and their consciences to justice, on

behalf of Maggie Tulliver, he suddenly found himself as powerless as

he was aware he would have been if he had attempted to influence the

shape of bonnets. Dr. Kenn could not be contradicted; he was listened

to in silence; but when he left the room, a comparison of opinions

among his hearers yielded much the same result as before. Miss

Tulliver had undeniably acted in a blamable manner, even Dr. Kenn did

not deny that; how, then, could he think so lightly of her as to put

that favorable interpretation on everything she had done? Even on the

supposition that required the utmost stretch of belief,--namely, that

none of the things said about Miss Tulliver were true,--still, since

they \_had\_ been said about her, they had cast an odor round her which

must cause her to be shrunk from by every woman who had to take care

of her own reputation--and of Society. To have taken Maggie by the

hand and said, "I will not believe unproved evil of you; my lips shall

not utter it; my ears shall be closed against it; I, too, am an erring

mortal, liable to stumble, apt to come short of my most earnest

efforts; your lot has been harder than mine, your temptation greater;

let us help each other to stand and walk without more falling,"--to

have done this would have demanded courage, deep pity, self-knowledge,

generous trust; would have demanded a mind that tasted no piquancy in

evil-speaking, that felt no self-exaltation in condemning, that

cheated itself with no large words into the belief that life can have

any moral end, any high religion, which excludes the striving after

perfect truth, justice, and love toward the individual men and women

who come across our own path. The ladies of St. Ogg's were not

beguiled by any wide speculative conceptions; but they had their

favorite abstraction, called Society, which served to make their

consciences perfectly easy in doing what satisfied their own

egoism,--thinking and speaking the worst of Maggie Tulliver, and

turning their backs upon her. It was naturally disappointing to Dr.

Kenn, after two years of superfluous incense from his feminine

parishioners, to find them suddenly maintaining their views in

opposition to his; but then they maintained them in opposition to a

higher Authority, which they had venerated longer. That Authority had

furnished a very explicit answer to persons who might inquire where

their social duties began, and might be inclined to take wide views as

to the starting-point. The answer had not turned on the ultimate good

of Society, but on "a certain man" who was found in trouble by the

wayside.

Not that St. Ogg's was empty of women with some tenderness of heart

and conscience; probably it had as fair a proportion of human goodness

in it as any other small trading town of that day. But until every

good man is brave, we must expect to find many good women timid,--too

timid even to believe in the correctness of their own best promptings,

when these would place them in a minority. And the men at St. Ogg's

were not all brave, by any means; some of them were even fond of

scandal, and to an extent that might have given their conversation an

effeminate character, if it had not been distinguished by masculine

jokes, and by an occasional shrug of the shoulders at the mutual

hatred of women. It was the general feeling of the masculine mind at

St. Ogg's that women were not to be interfered with in their treatment

of each other.

And thus every direction in which Dr. Kenn had turned, in the hope of

procuring some kind recognition and some employment for Maggie, proved

a disappointment to him. Mrs. James Torry could not think of taking

Maggie as a nursery governess, even temporarily,--a young woman about

whom "such things had been said," and about whom "gentlemen joked";

and Miss Kirke, who had a spinal complaint, and wanted a reader and

companion, felt quite sure that Maggie's mind must be of a quality

with which she, for her part, could not risk \_any\_ contact. Why did

not Miss Tulliver accept the shelter offered her by her aunt Glegg? It

did not become a girl like her to refuse it. Or else, why did she not

go out of the neighborhood, and get a situation where she was not

known? (It was not, apparently, of so much importance that she should

carry her dangerous tendencies into strange families unknown at St.

Ogg's.) She must be very bold and hardened to wish to stay in a parish

where she was so much stared at and whispered about.

Dr. Kenn, having great natural firmness, began, in the presence of

this opposition, as every firm man would have done, to contract a

certain strength of determination over and above what would have been

called forth by the end in view. He himself wanted a daily governess

for his younger children; and though he had hesitated in the first

instance to offer this position to Maggie, the resolution to protest

with the utmost force of his personal and priestly character against

her being crushed and driven away by slander, was now decisive. Maggie

gratefully accepted an employment that gave her duties as well as a

support; her days would be filled now, and solitary evenings would be

a welcome rest. She no longer needed the sacrifice her mother made in

staying with her, and Mrs. Tulliver was persuaded to go back to the

Mill.

But now it began to be discovered that Dr. Kenn, exemplary as he had

hitherto appeared, had his crotchets, possibly his weaknesses. The

masculine mind of St. Ogg's smiled pleasantly, and did not wonder that

Kenn liked to see a fine pair of eyes daily, or that he was inclined

to take so lenient a view of the past; the feminine mind, regarded at

that period as less powerful, took a more melancholy view of the case.

If Dr. Kenn should be beguiled into marrying that Miss Tulliver! It

was not safe to be too confident, even about the best of men; an

apostle had fallen, and wept bitterly afterwards; and though Peter's

denial was not a close precedent, his repentance was likely to be.

Maggie had not taken her daily walks to the Rectory for many weeks,

before the dreadful possibility of her some time or other becoming the

Rector's wife had been talked of so often in confidence, that ladies

were beginning to discuss how they should behave to her in that

position. For Dr. Kenn, it had been understood, had sat in the

schoolroom half an hour one morning, when Miss Tulliver was giving her

lessons,--nay, he had sat there every morning; he had once walked home

with her,--he almost \_always\_ walked home with her,--and if not, he

went to see her in the evening. What an artful creature she was! What

a \_mother\_ for those children! It was enough to make poor Mrs. Kenn

turn in her grave, that they should be put under the care of this girl

only a few weeks after her death. Would he be so lost to propriety as

to marry her before the year was out? The masculine mind was

sarcastic, and thought \_not\_.

The Miss Guests saw an alleviation to the sorrow of witnessing a folly

in their Rector; at least their brother would be safe; and their

knowledge of Stephen's tenacity was a constant ground of alarm to

them, lest he should come back and marry Maggie. They were not among

those who disbelieved their brother's letter; but they had no

confidence in Maggie's adherence to her renunciation of him; they

suspected that she had shrunk rather from the elopement than from the

marriage, and that she lingered in St. Ogg's, relying on his return to

her. They had always thought her disagreeable; they now thought her

artful and proud; having quite as good grounds for that judgment as

you and I probably have for many strong opinions of the same kind.

Formerly they had not altogether delighted in the contemplated match

with Lucy, but now their dread of a marriage between Stephen and

Maggie added its momentum to their genuine pity and indignation on

behalf of the gentle forsaken girl, in making them desire that he

should return to her. As soon as Lucy was able to leave home, she was

to seek relief from the oppressive heat of this August by going to the

coast with the Miss Guests; and it was in their plans that Stephen

should be induced to join them. On the very first hint of gossip

concerning Maggie and Dr. Kenn, the report was conveyed in Miss

Guest's letter to her brother.

Maggie had frequent tidings through her mother, or aunt Glegg, or Dr.

Kenn, of Lucy's gradual progress toward recovery, and her thoughts

tended continually toward her uncle Deane's house; she hungered for an

interview with Lucy, if it were only for five minutes, to utter a word

of penitence, to be assured by Lucy's own eyes and lips that she did

not believe in the willing treachery of those whom she had loved and

trusted. But she knew that even if her uncle's indignation had not

closed his house against her, the agitation of such an interview would

have been forbidden to Lucy. Only to have seen her without speaking

would have been some relief; for Maggie was haunted by a face cruel in

its very gentleness; a face that had been turned on hers with glad,

sweet looks of trust and love from the twilight time of memory;

changed now to a sad and weary face by a first heart-stroke. And as

the days passed on, that pale image became more and more distinct; the

picture grew and grew into more speaking definiteness under the

avenging hand of remorse; the soft hazel eyes, in their look of pain,

were bent forever on Maggie, and pierced her the more because she

could see no anger in them. But Lucy was not yet able to go to church,

or any place where Maggie could see her; and even the hope of that

departed, when the news was told her by aunt Glegg, that Lucy was

really going away in a few days to Scarborough with the Miss Guests,

who had been heard to say that they expected their brother to meet

them there.

Only those who have known what hardest inward conflict is, can know

what Maggie felt as she sat in her loneliness the evening after

hearing that news from Mrs. Glegg,--only those who have known what it

is to dread their own selfish desires as the watching mother would

dread the sleeping-potion that was to still her own pain.

She sat without candle in the twilight, with the window wide open

toward the river; the sense of oppressive heat adding itself

undistinguishably to the burthen of her lot. Seated on a chair against

the window, with her arm on the windowsill she was looking blankly at

the flowing river, swift with the backward-rushing tide, struggling to

see still the sweet face in its unreproaching sadness, that seemed now

from moment to moment to sink away and be hidden behind a form that

thrust itself between, and made darkness. Hearing the door open, she

thought Mrs. Jakin was coming in with her supper, as usual; and with

that repugnance to trivial speech which comes with languor and

wretchedness, she shrank from turning round and saying she wanted

nothing; good little Mrs. Jakin would be sure to make some well-meant

remarks. But the next moment, without her having discerned the sound

of a footstep, she felt a light hand on her shoulder, and heard a

voice close to her saying, "Maggie!"

The face was there,--changed, but all the sweeter; the hazel eyes were

there, with their heart-piercing tenderness.

"Maggie!" the soft voice said. "Lucy!" answered a voice with a sharp

ring of anguish in it; and Lucy threw her arms round Maggie's neck,

and leaned her pale cheek against the burning brow.

"I stole out," said Lucy, almost in a whisper, while she sat down

close to Maggie and held her hand, "when papa and the rest were away.

Alice is come with me. I asked her to help me. But I must only stay a

little while, because it is so late."

It was easier to say that at first than to say anything else. They sat

looking at each other. It seemed as if the interview must end without

more speech, for speech was very difficult. Each felt that there would

be something scorching in the words that would recall the

irretrievable wrong. But soon, as Maggie looked, every distinct

thought began to be overflowed by a wave of loving penitence, and

words burst forth with a sob.

"God bless you for coming, Lucy."

The sobs came thick on each other after that.

"Maggie, dear, be comforted," said Lucy now, putting her cheek against

Maggie's again. "Don't grieve." And she sat still, hoping to soothe

Maggie with that gentle caress.

"I didn't mean to deceive you, Lucy," said Maggie, as soon as she

could speak. "It always made me wretched that I felt what I didn't

like you to know. It was because I thought it would all be conquered,

and you might never see anything to wound you."

"I know, dear," said Lucy. "I know you never meant to make me unhappy.

It is a trouble that has come on us all; you have more to bear than I

have--and you gave him up, when--you did what it must have been very

hard to do."

They were silent again a little while, sitting with clasped hands, and

cheeks leaned together.

"Lucy," Maggie began again, "\_he\_ struggled too. He wanted to be true

to you. He will come back to you. Forgive him--he will be happy

then----"

These words were wrung forth from Maggie's deepest soul, with an

effort like the convulsed clutch of a drowning man. Lucy trembled and

was silent.

A gentle knock came at the door. It was Alice, the maid, who entered

and said,--

"I daren't stay any longer, Miss Deane. They'll find it out, and

there'll be such anger at your coming out so late."

Lucy rose and said, "Very well, Alice,--in a minute."

"I'm to go away on Friday, Maggie," she added, when Alice had closed

the door again. "When I come back, and am strong, they will let me do

as I like. I shall come to you when I please then."

"Lucy," said Maggie, with another great effort, "I pray to God

continually that I may never be the cause of sorrow to you any more."

She pressed the little hand that she held between hers, and looked up

into the face that was bent over hers. Lucy never forgot that look.

"Maggie," she said, in a low voice, that had the solemnity of

confession in it, "you are better than I am. I can't----"

She broke off there, and said no more. But they clasped each other

again in a last embrace.

Chapter V

The Last Conflict

In the second week of September, Maggie was again sitting in her

lonely room, battling with the old shadowy enemies that were forever

slain and rising again. It was past midnight, and the rain was beating

heavily against the window, driven with fitful force by the rushing,

loud-moaning wind. For the day after Lucy's visit there had been a

sudden change in the weather; the heat and drought had given way to

cold variable winds, and heavy falls of rain at intervals; and she had

been forbidden to risk the contemplated journey until the weather

should become more settled. In the counties higher up the Floss the

rains had been continuous, and the completion of the harvest had been

arrested. And now, for the last two days, the rains on this lower

course of the river had been incessant, so that the old men had shaken

their heads and talked of sixty years ago, when the same sort of

weather, happening about the equinox, brought on the great floods,

which swept the bridge away, and reduced the town to great misery. But

the younger generation, who had seen several small floods, thought

lightly of these sombre recollections and forebodings; and Bob Jakin,

naturally prone to take a hopeful view of his own luck, laughed at his

mother when she regretted their having taken a house by the riverside,

observing that but for that they would have had no boats, which were

the most lucky of possessions in case of a flood that obliged them to

go to a distance for food.

But the careless and the fearful were alike sleeping in their beds

now. There was hope that the rain would abate by the morrow;

threatenings of a worse kind, from sudden thaws after falls of snow,

had often passed off, in the experience of the younger ones; and at

the very worst, the banks would be sure to break lower down the river

when the tide came in with violence, and so the waters would be

carried off, without causing more than temporary inconvenience, and

losses that would be felt only by the poorer sort, whom charity would

relieve.

All were in their beds now, for it was past midnight; all except some

solitary watchers such as Maggie. She was seated in her little parlor

toward the river, with one candle, that left everything dim in the

room except a letter which lay before her on the table. That letter,

which had come to her to-day, was one of the causes that had kept her

up far on into the night, unconscious how the hours were going,

careless of seeking rest, with no image of rest coming across her

mind, except of that far, far off rest from which there would be no

more waking for her into this struggling earthly life.

Two days before Maggie received that letter, she had been to the

Rectory for the last time. The heavy rain would have prevented her

from going since; but there was another reason. Dr. Kenn, at first

enlightened only by a few hints as to the new turn which gossip and

slander had taken in relation to Maggie, had recently been made more

fully aware of it by an earnest remonstrance from one of his male

parishioners against the indiscretion of persisting in the attempt to

overcome the prevalent feeling in the parish by a course of

resistance. Dr. Kenn, having a conscience void of offence in the

matter, was still inclined to persevere,--was still averse to give way

before a public sentiment that was odious and contemptible; but he was

finally wrought upon by the consideration of the peculiar

responsibility attached to his office, of avoiding the appearance of

evil,--an "appearance" that is always dependent on the average quality

of surrounding minds. Where these minds are low and gross, the area of

that "appearance" is proportionately widened. Perhaps he was in danger

of acting from obstinacy; perhaps it was his duty to succumb.

Conscientious people are apt to see their duty in that which is the

most painful course; and to recede was always painful to Dr. Kenn. He

made up his mind that he must advise Maggie to go away from St. Ogg's

for a time; and he performed that difficult task with as much delicacy

as he could, only stating in vague terms that he found his attempt to

countenance her stay was a source of discord between himself and his

parishioners, that was likely to obstruct his usefulness as a

clergyman. He begged her to allow him to write to a clerical friend of

his, who might possibly take her into his own family as governess;

and, if not, would probably know of some other available position for

a young woman in whose welfare Dr. Kenn felt a strong interest.

Poor Maggie listened with a trembling lip; she could say nothing but a

faint "Thank you, I shall be grateful"; and she walked back to her

lodgings, through the driving rain, with a new sense of desolation.

She must be a lonely wanderer; she must go out among fresh faces, that

would look at her wonderingly, because the days did not seem joyful to

her; she must begin a new life, in which she would have to rouse

herself to receive new impressions; and she was so unspeakably,

sickeningly weary! There was no home, no help for the erring; even

those who pitied were constrained to hardness. But ought she to

complain? Ought she to shrink in this way from the long penance of

life, which was all the possibility she had of lightening the load to

some other sufferers, and so changing that passionate error into a new

force of unselfish human love? All the next day she sat in her lonely

room, with a window darkened by the cloud and the driving rain,

thinking of that future, and wrestling for patience; for what repose

could poor Maggie ever win except by wrestling?

And on the third day--this day of which she had just sat out the

close--the letter had come which was lying on the table before her.

The letter was from Stephen. He was come back from Holland; he was at

Mudport again, unknown to any of his friends, and had written to her

from that place, enclosing the letter to a person whom he trusted in

St. Ogg's. From beginning to end it was a passionate cry of reproach;

an appeal against her useless sacrifice of him, of herself, against

that perverted notion of right which led her to crush all his hopes,

for the sake of a mere idea, and not any substantial good,--\_his\_

hopes, whom she loved, and who loved her with that single overpowering

passion, that worship, which a man never gives to a woman more than

once in his life.

"They have written to me that you are to marry Kenn. As if I should

believe that! Perhaps they have told you some such fables about me.

Perhaps they tell you I've been 'travelling.' My body has been dragged

about somewhere; but \_I\_ have never travelled from the hideous place

where you left me; where I started up from the stupor of helpless rage

to find you gone.

"Maggie! whose pain can have been like mine? Whose injury is like

mine? Who besides me has met that long look of love that has burnt

itself into my soul, so that no other image can come there? Maggie,

call me back to you! Call me back to life and goodness! I am banished

from both now. I have no motives; I am indifferent to everything. Two

months have only deepened the certainty that I can never care for life

without you. Write me one word; say 'Come!' In two days I should be

with you. Maggie, have you forgotten what it was to be together,--to

be within reach of a look, to be within hearing of each other's

voice?"

When Maggie first read this letter she felt as if her real temptation

had only just begun. At the entrance of the chill dark cavern, we turn

with unworn courage from the warm light; but how, when we have trodden

far in the damp darkness, and have begun to be faint and weary; how,

if there is a sudden opening above us, and we are invited back again

to the life-nourishing day? The leap of natural longing from under the

pressure of pain is so strong, that all less immediate motives are

likely to be forgotten--till the pain has been escaped from.

For hours Maggie felt as if her struggle had been in vain. For hours

every other thought that she strove to summon was thrust aside by the

image of Stephen waiting for the single word that would bring him to

her. She did not \_read\_ the letter: she heard him uttering it, and the

voice shook her with its old strange power. All the day before she had

been filled with the vision of a lonely future through which she must

carry the burthen of regret, upheld only by clinging faith. And here,

close within her reach, urging itself upon her even as a claim, was

another future, in which hard endurance and effort were to be

exchanged for easy, delicious leaning on another's loving strength!

And yet that promise of joy in the place of sadness did not make the

dire force of the temptation to Maggie.

It was Stephen's tone of misery, it was the doubt in the justice of

her own resolve, that made the balance tremble, and made her once

start from her seat to reach the pen and paper, and write "Come!"

But close upon that decisive act, her mind recoiled; and the sense of

contradiction with her past self in her moments of strength and

clearness came upon her like a pang of conscious degradation. No, she

must wait; she must pray; the light that had forsaken her would come

again; she should feel again what she had felt when she had fled away,

under an inspiration strong enough to conquer agony,--to conquer love;

she should feel again what she had felt when Lucy stood by her, when

Philip's letter had stirred all the fibres that bound her to the

calmer past.

She sat quite still, far on into the night, with no impulse to change

her attitude, without active force enough even for the mental act of

prayer; only waiting for the light that would surely come again. It

came with the memories that no passion could long quench; the long

past came back to her, and with it the fountains of self-renouncing

pity and affection, of faithfulness and resolve. The words that were

marked by the quiet hand in the little old book that she had long ago

learned by heart, rushed even to her lips, and found a vent for

themselves in a low murmur that was quite lost in the loud driving of

the rain against the window and the loud moan and roar of the wind. "I

have received the Cross, I have received it from Thy hand; I will bear

it, and bear it till death, as Thou hast laid it upon me."

But soon other words rose that could find no utterance but in a

sob,--"Forgive me, Stephen! It will pass away. You will come back to

her."

She took up the letter, held it to the candle, and let it burn slowly

on the hearth. To-morrow she would write to him the last word of

parting.

"I will bear it, and bear it till death. But how long it will be

before death comes! I am so young, so healthy. How shall I have

patience and strength? Am I to struggle and fall and repent again? Has

life other trials as hard for me still?"

With that cry of self-despair, Maggie fell on her knees against the

table, and buried her sorrow-stricken face. Her soul went out to the

Unseen Pity that would be with her to the end. Surely there was

something being taught her by this experience of great need; and she

must be learning a secret of human tenderness and long-suffering, that

the less erring could hardly know? "O God, if my life is to be long,

let me live to bless and comfort----"

At that moment Maggie felt a startling sensation of sudden cold about

her knees and feet; it was water flowing under her. She started up;

the stream was flowing under the door that led into the passage. She

was not bewildered for an instant; she knew it was the flood!

The tumult of emotion she had been enduring for the last twelve hours

seemed to have left a great calm in her; without screaming, she

hurried with the candle upstairs to Bob Jakin's bedroom. The door was

ajar; she went in and shook him by the shoulder.

"Bob, the flood is come! it is in the house; let us see if we can make

the boats safe."

She lighted his candle, while the poor wife, snatching up her baby,

burst into screams; and then she hurried down again to see if the

waters were rising fast. There was a step down into the room at the

door leading from the staircase; she saw that the water was already on

a level with the step. While she was looking, something came with a

tremendous crash against the window, and sent the leaded panes and the

old wooden framework inward in shivers, the water pouring in after it.

"It is the boat!" cried Maggie. "Bob, come down to get the boats!"

And without a moment's shudder of fear, she plunged through the water,

which was rising fast to her knees, and by the glimmering light of the

candle she had left on the stairs, she mounted on to the window-sill,

and crept into the boat, which was left with the prow lodging and

protruding through the window. Bob was not long after her, hurrying

without shoes or stockings, but with the lanthorn in his hand.

"Why, they're both here,--both the boats," said Bob, as he got into

the one where Maggie was. "It's wonderful this fastening isn't broke

too, as well as the mooring."

In the excitement of getting into the other boat, unfastening it, and

mastering an oar, Bob was not struck with the danger Maggie incurred.

We are not apt to fear for the fearless, when we are companions in

their danger, and Bob's mind was absorbed in possible expedients for

the safety of the helpless indoors. The fact that Maggie had been up,

had waked him, and had taken the lead in activity, gave Bob a vague

impression of her as one who would help to protect, not need to be

protected. She too had got possession of an oar, and had pushed off,

so as to release the boat from the overhanging window-frame.

"The water's rising so fast," said Bob, "I doubt it'll be in at the

chambers before long,--th' house is so low. I've more mind to get

Prissy and the child and the mother into the boat, if I could, and

trusten to the water,--for th' old house is none so safe. And if I let

go the boat--but \_you\_," he exclaimed, suddenly lifting the light of

his lanthorn on Maggie, as she stood in the rain with the oar in her

hand and her black hair streaming.

Maggie had no time to answer, for a new tidal current swept along the

line of the houses, and drove both the boats out on to the wide water,

with a force that carried them far past the meeting current of the

river.

In the first moments Maggie felt nothing, thought of nothing, but that

she had suddenly passed away from that life which she had been

dreading; it was the transition of death, without its agony,--and she

was alone in the darkness with God.

The whole thing had been so rapid, so dreamlike, that the threads of

ordinary association were broken; she sank down on the seat clutching

the oar mechanically, and for a long while had no distinct conception

of her position. The first thing that waked her to fuller

consciousness was the cessation of the rain, and a perception that the

darkness was divided by the faintest light, which parted the

overhanging gloom from the immeasurable watery level below. She was

driven out upon the flood,--that awful visitation of God which her

father used to talk of; which had made the nightmare of her childish

dreams. And with that thought there rushed in the vision of the old

home, and Tom, and her mother,--they had all listened together.

"O God, where am I? Which is the way home?" she cried out, in the dim

loneliness.

What was happening to them at the Mill? The flood had once nearly

destroyed it. They might be in danger, in distress,--her mother and

her brother, alone there, beyond reach of help! Her whole soul was

strained now on that thought; and she saw the long-loved faces looking

for help into the darkness, and finding none.

She was floating in smooth water now,--perhaps far on the overflooded

fields. There was no sense of present danger to check the outgoing of

her mind to the old home; and she strained her eyes against the

curtain of gloom that she might seize the first sight of her

whereabout,--that she might catch some faint suggestion of the spot

toward which all her anxieties tended.

Oh, how welcome, the widening of that dismal watery level, the gradual

uplifting of the cloudy firmament, the slowly defining blackness of

objects above the glassy dark! Yes, she must be out on the fields;

those were the tops of hedgerow trees. Which way did the river lie?

Looking behind her, she saw the lines of black trees; looking before

her, there were none; then the river lay before her. She seized an oar

and began to paddle the boat forward with the energy of wakening hope;

the dawning seemed to advance more swiftly, now she was in action; and

she could soon see the poor dumb beasts crowding piteously on a mound

where they had taken refuge. Onward she paddled and rowed by turns in

the growing twilight; her wet clothes clung round her, and her

streaming hair was dashed about by the wind, but she was hardly

conscious of any bodily sensations,--except a sensation of strength,

inspired by mighty emotion. Along with the sense of danger and

possible rescue for those long-remembered beings at the old home,

there was an undefined sense of reconcilement with her brother; what

quarrel, what harshness, what unbelief in each other can subsist in

the presence of a great calamity, when all the artificial vesture of

our life is gone, and we are all one with each other in primitive

mortal needs? Vaguely Maggie felt this, in the strong resurgent love

toward her brother that swept away all the later impressions of hard,

cruel offence and misunderstanding, and left only the deep,

underlying, unshakable memories of early union.

But now there was a large dark mass in the distance, and near to her

Maggie could discern the current of the river. The dark mass must

be--yes, it was--St. Ogg's. Ah, now she knew which way to look for the

first glimpse of the well-known trees--the gray willows, the now

yellowing chestnuts--and above them the old roof! But there was no

color, no shape yet; all was faint and dim. More and more strongly the

energies seemed to come and put themselves forth, as if her life were

a stored-up force that was being spent in this hour, unneeded for any

future.

She must get her boat into the current of the Floss, else she would

never be able to pass the Ripple and approach the house; this was the

thought that occurred to her, as she imagined with more and more

vividness the state of things round the old home. But then she might

be carried very far down, and be unable to guide her boat out of the

current again. For the first time distinct ideas of danger began to

press upon her; but there was no choice of courses, no room for

hesitation, and she floated into the current. Swiftly she went now

without effort; more and more clearly in the lessening distance and

the growing light she began to discern the objects that she knew must

be the well-known trees and roofs; nay, she was not far off a rushing,

muddy current that must be the strangely altered Ripple.

Great God! there were floating masses in it, that might dash against

her boat as she passed, and cause her to perish too soon. What were

those masses?

For the first time Maggie's heart began to beat in an agony of dread.

She sat helpless, dimly conscious that she was being floated along,

more intensely conscious of the anticipated clash. But the horror was

transient; it passed away before the oncoming warehouses of St. Ogg's.

She had passed the mouth of the Ripple, then; \_now\_, she must use all

her skill and power to manage the boat and get it if possible out of

the current. She could see now that the bridge was broken down; she

could see the masts of a stranded vessel far out over the watery

field. But no boats were to be seen moving on the river,--such as had

been laid hands on were employed in the flooded streets.

With new resolution, Maggie seized her oar, and stood up again to

paddle; but the now ebbing tide added to the swiftness of the river,

and she was carried along beyond the bridge. She could hear shouts

from the windows overlooking the river, as if the people there were

calling to her. It was not till she had passed on nearly to Tofton

that she could get the boat clear of the current. Then with one

yearning look toward her uncle Deane's house that lay farther down the

river, she took to both her oars and rowed with all her might across

the watery fields, back toward the Mill. Color was beginning to awake

now, and as she approached the Dorlcote fields, she could discern the

tints of the trees, could see the old Scotch firs far to the right,

and the home chestnuts,--oh, how deep they lay in the water,--deeper

than the trees on this side the hill! And the roof of the Mill--where

was it? Those heavy fragments hurrying down the Ripple,--what had they

meant? But it was not the house,--the house stood firm; drowned up to

the first story, but still firm,--or was it broken in at the end

toward the Mill?

With panting joy that she was there at last,--joy that overcame all

distress,--Maggie neared the front of the house. At first she heard no

sound; she saw no object moving. Her boat was on a level with the

upstairs window. She called out in a loud, piercing voice,--

"Tom, where are you? Mother, where are you? Here is Maggie!"

Soon, from the window of the attic in the central gable, she heard

Tom's voice,--

"Who is it? Have you brought a boat?"

"It is I, Tom,--Maggie. Where is mother?"

"She is not here; she went to Garum the day before yesterday. I'll

come down to the lower window."

"Alone, Maggie?" said Tom, in a voice of deep astonishment, as he

opened the middle window, on a level with the boat.

"Yes, Tom; God has taken care of me, to bring me to you. Get in

quickly. Is there no one else?"

"No," said Tom, stepping into the boat; "I fear the man is drowned; he

was carried down the Ripple, I think, when part of the Mill fell with

the crash of trees and stones against it; I've shouted again and

again, and there has been no answer. Give me the oars, Maggie."

It was not till Tom had pushed off and they were on the wide

water,--he face to face with Maggie,--that the full meaning of what

had happened rushed upon his mind. It came with so overpowering a

force,--it was such a new revelation to his spirit, of the depths in

life that had lain beyond his vision, which he had fancied so keen and

clear,--that he was unable to ask a question. They sat mutely gazing

at each other,--Maggie with eyes of intense life looking out from a

weary, beaten face; Tom pale, with a certain awe and humiliation.

Thought was busy though the lips were silent; and though he could ask

no question, he guessed a story of almost miraculous, divinely

protected effort. But at last a mist gathered over the blue-gray eyes,

and the lips found a word they could utter,--the old childish

"Magsie!"

Maggie could make no answer but a long, deep sob of that mysterious,

wondrous happiness that is one with pain.

As soon as she could speak, she said, "We will go to Lucy, Tom; we'll

go and see if she is safe, and then we can help the rest."

Tom rowed with untired vigor, and with a different speed from poor

Maggie's. The boat was soon in the current of the river again, and

soon they would be at Tofton.

"Park House stands high up out of the flood," said Maggie. "Perhaps

they have got Lucy there."

Nothing else was said; a new danger was being carried toward them by

the river. Some wooden machinery had just given way on one of the

wharves, and huge fragments were being floated along. The sun was

rising now, and the wide area of watery desolation was spread out in

dreadful clearness around them; in dreadful clearness floated onward

the hurrying, threatening masses. A large company in a boat that was

working its way along under the Tofton houses observed their danger,

and shouted, "Get out of the current!"

But that could not be done at once; and Tom, looking before him, saw

death rushing on them. Huge fragments, clinging together in fatal

fellowship, made one wide mass across the stream.

"It is coming, Maggie!" Tom said, in a deep, hoarse voice, loosing the

oars, and clasping her.

The next instant the boat was no longer seen upon the water, and the

huge mass was hurrying on in hideous triumph.

But soon the keel of the boat reappeared, a black speck on the golden

water.

The boat reappeared, but brother and sister had gone down in an

embrace never to be parted; living through again in one supreme moment

the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed

the daisied fields together.

Conclusion

Nature repairs her ravages,--repairs them with her sunshine, and with

human labor. The desolation wrought by that flood had left little

visible trace on the face of the earth, five years after. The fifth

autumn was rich in golden cornstacks, rising in thick clusters among

the distant hedgerows; the wharves and warehouses on the Floss were

busy again, with echoes of eager voices, with hopeful lading and

unlading.

And every man and woman mentioned in this history was still living,

except those whose end we know.

Nature repairs her ravages, but not all. The uptorn trees are not

rooted again; the parted hills are left scarred; if there is a new

growth, the trees are not the same as the old, and the hills

underneath their green vesture bear the marks of the past rending. To

the eyes that have dwelt on the past, there is no thorough repair.

Dorlcote Mill was rebuilt. And Dorlcote churchyard--where the brick

grave that held a father whom we know, was found with the stone laid

prostrate upon it after the flood--had recovered all its grassy order

and decent quiet.

Near that brick grave there was a tomb erected, very soon after the

flood, for two bodies that were found in close embrace; and it was

visited at different moments by two men who both felt that their

keenest joy and keenest sorrow were forever buried there.

One of them visited the tomb again with a sweet face beside him; but

that was years after.

The other was always solitary. His great companionship was among the

trees of the Red Deeps, where the buried joy seemed still to hover,

like a revisiting spirit.

The tomb bore the names of Tom and Maggie Tulliver, and below the

names it was written,--

"In their death they were not divided."