

SECOND PERIOD

THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUTH (1848-1849)

The events related in several narratives.

FIRST NARRATIVE

Contributed by MISS CLACK; niece of the late SIR JOHN VERINDER

CHAPTER I

I am indebted to my dear parents (both now in heaven) for having had habits of order and regularity instilled into me at a very early age.

In that happy bygone time, I was taught to keep my hair tidy at all hours of the day and night, and to fold up every article of my clothing carefully, in the same order, on the same chair, in the same place at the foot of the bed, before retiring to rest. An entry of the day's events in my little diary invariably preceded the folding up. The "Evening Hymn" (repeated in bed) invariably followed the folding up. And the sweet sleep of childhood invariably followed the "Evening Hymn."

In later life (alas!) the Hymn has been succeeded by sad and bitter meditations; and the sweet sleep has been but ill exchanged for the broken slumbers which haunt the uneasy pillow of care. On the other hand, I have continued to fold my clothes, and to keep my little diary. The former habit links me to my happy childhood--before papa was ruined. The latter habit--hitherto mainly useful in helping me to discipline the fallen nature which we all inherit from Adam--has unexpectedly proved important to my humble interests in quite another way. It has enabled poor Me to serve the caprice of a wealthy member of the family into which my late uncle married. I am fortunate enough to be useful to Mr. Franklin Blake.

I have been cut off from all news of my relatives by marriage for some time