

## **Chapter XLII - The Morning Of The Trial**

AT one o'clock the next day, Adam was alone in his dull upper room; his watch lay before him on the table, as if he were counting the long minutes. He had no knowledge of what was likely to be said by the witnesses on the trial, for he had shrunk from all the particulars connected with Hetty's arrest and accusation. This brave active man, who would have hastened towards any danger or toil to rescue Hetty from an apprehended wrong or misfortune, felt himself powerless to contemplate irremediable evil and suffering. The susceptibility which would have been an impelling force where there was any possibility of action became helpless anguish when he was obliged to be passive, or else sought an active outlet in the thought of inflicting justice on Arthur. Energetic natures, strong for all strenuous deeds, will often rush away from a hopeless sufferer, as if they were hard-hearted. It is the overmastering sense of pain that drives them. They shrink by an ungovernable instinct, as they would shrink from laceration. Adam had brought himself to think of seeing Hetty, if she would consent to see him, because he thought the meeting might possibly be a good to her - might help to melt away this terrible hardness they told him of. If she saw he bore her no ill will for what she had done to him, she might open her heart to him. But this resolution had been an immense effort - he trembled at the thought of seeing her changed face, as a timid woman trembles at the thought of the surgeon's knife, and he chose now to bear the long hours of suspense rather than encounter what seemed to him the more intolerable agony of witnessing her trial.

Deep unspeakable suffering may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the initiation into a new state. The yearning memories, the bitter regret, the agonized sympathy, the struggling appeals to the Invisible Right - all the intense emotions which had filled the days and nights of the past week, and were compressing themselves again like an eager crowd into the hours of this single morning, made Adam look back on all the previous years as if they had been a dim sleepy existence, and he had only now awaked to full consciousness. It seemed to him as if he had always before thought it a light thing that men should suffer, as if all that he had himself endured and called sorrow before was only a moment's stroke that had never left a bruise. Doubtless a great anguish may do the work of years, and we may come out from that baptism of fire with a soul full of new awe and new pity.

'O God,' Adam groaned, as he leaned on the table and looked blankly at the face of the watch, 'and men have suffered like this before...and poor helpless young things have suffered like her....Such a little while ago looking so happy and so pretty...kissing 'em all, her grandfather

and all of 'em, and they wishing her luck....O my poor, poor Hetty...dost think on it now?'

Adam started and looked round towards the door. Vixen had begun to whimper, and there was a sound of a stick and a lame walk on the stairs. It was Bartle Massey come back. Could it be all over?

Bartle entered quietly, and, going up to Adam, grasped his hand and said, 'I'm just come to look at you, my boy, for the folks are gone out of court for a bit.'

Adam's heart beat so violently he was unable to speak - he could only return the pressure of his friend's hand - and Bartle, drawing up the other chair, came and sat in front of him, taking off his hat and his spectacles.

'That's a thing never happened to me before,' he observed, 'to go out o' the door with my spectacles on. I clean forgot to take 'em off.'

The old man made this trivial remark, thinking it better not to respond at all to Adam's agitation: he would gather, in an indirect way, that there was nothing decisive to communicate at present.

'And now,' he said, rising again, 'I must see to your having a bit of the loaf, and some of that wine Mr Irwine sent this morning. He'll be angry with me if you don't have it. Come, now,' he went on, bringing forward the bottle and the loaf and pouring some wine into a cup, 'I must have a bit and a sup myself. Drink a drop with me, my lad - drink with me.'

Adam pushed the cup gently away and said, entreatingly, 'Tell me about it, Mr Massey - tell me all about it. Was she there? Have they begun?'

'Yes, my boy, yes - it's taken all the time since I first went; but they're slow, they're slow; and there's the counsel they've got for her puts a spoke in the wheel whenever he can, and makes a deal to do with cross-examining the witnesses and quarrelling with the other lawyers. That's all he can do for the money they give him; and it's a big sum - it's a big sum. But he's a 'cute fellow, with an eye that 'ud pick the needles out of the hay in no time. If a man had got no feelings, it 'ud be as good as a demonstration to listen to what goes on in court; but a tender heart makes one stupid. I'd have given up figures for ever only to have had some good news to bring to you, my poor lad.'

'But does it seem to be going against her?' said Adam. 'Tell me what they've said. I must know it now - I must know what they have to bring against her.'

'Why, the chief evidence yet has been the doctors; all but Martin Poyser - poor Martin. Everybody in court felt for him - it was like one sob, the sound they made when he came down again. The worst was when they told him to look at the prisoner at the bar. It was hard work, poor fellow - it was hard work. Adam, my boy, the blow falls heavily on him as well as you; you must help poor Martin; you must show courage. Drink some wine now, and show me you mean to bear it like a man.'

Bartle had made the right sort of appeal. Adam, with an air of quiet obedience, took up the cup and drank a little.

'Tell me how SHE looked,' he said presently.

'Frightened, very frightened, when they first brought her in; it was the first sight of the crowd and the judge, poor creatur. And there's a lot o' foolish women in fine clothes, with gewgaws all up their arms and feathers on their heads, sitting near the judge: they've dressed themselves out in that way, one 'ud think, to be scarecrows and warnings against any man ever meddling with a woman again. They put up their glasses, and stared and whispered. But after that she stood like a white image, staring down at her hands and seeming neither to hear nor see anything. And she's as white as a sheet. She didn't speak when they asked her if she'd plead 'guilty' or 'not guilty,' and they pleaded 'not guilty' for her. But when she heard her uncle's name, there seemed to go a shiver right through her; and when they told him to look at her, she hung her head down, and cowered, and hid her face in her hands. He'd much ado to speak poor man, his voice trembled so. And the counsellors - who look as hard as nails mostly - I saw, spared him as much as they could. Mr Irwine put himself near him and went with him out o' court. Ah, it's a great thing in a man's life to be able to stand by a neighbour and uphold him in such trouble as that.'

'God bless him, and you too, Mr Massey,' said Adam, in a low voice, laying his hand on Bartle's arm.

'Aye, aye, he's good metal; he gives the right ring when you try him, our parson does. A man o' sense - says no more than's needful. He's not one of those that think they can comfort you with chattering, as if folks who stand by and look on knew a deal better what the trouble was than those who have to bear it. I've had to do with such folks in my time - in the south, when I was in trouble myself. Mr Irwine is to be a witness himself, by and by, on her side, you know, to speak to her character and bringing up.'

'But the other evidence...does it go hard against her!' said Adam. 'What do you think, Mr Massey? Tell me the truth.'

'Yes, my lad, yes. The truth is the best thing to tell. It must come at last. The doctors' evidence is heavy on her - is heavy. But she's gone on denying she's had a child from first to last. These poor silly women-things - they've not the sense to know it's no use denying what's proved. It'll make against her with the jury, I doubt, her being so obstinate: they may be less for recommending her to mercy, if the verdict's against her. But Mr Irwine 'ull leave no stone unturned with the judge - you may rely upon that, Adam.'

'Is there nobody to stand by her and seem to care for her in the court?' said Adam.

'There's the chaplain o' the jail sits near her, but he's a sharp ferrety-faced man - another sort o' flesh and blood to Mr Irwine. They say the jail chaplains are mostly the fag-end o' the clergy.'

'There's one man as ought to be there,' said Adam bitterly. Presently he drew himself up and looked fixedly out of the window, apparently turning over some new idea in his mind.

'Mr Massey,' he said at last, pushing the hair off his forehead, 'I'll go back with you. I'll go into court. It's cowardly of me to keep away. I'll stand by her - I'll own her - for all she's been deceitful. They oughtn't to cast her off - her own flesh and blood. We hand folks over to God's mercy, and show none ourselves. I used to be hard sometimes: I'll never be hard again. I'll go, Mr Massey - I'll go with you.'

There was a decision in Adam's manner which would have prevented Bartle from opposing him, even if he had wished to do so. He only said, 'Take a bit, then, and another sup, Adam, for the love of me. See, I must stop and eat a morsel. Now, you take some.'

Nerved by an active resolution, Adam took a morsel of bread and drank some wine. He was haggard and unshaven, as he had been yesterday, but he stood upright again, and looked more like the Adam Bede of former days.