

## Chapter LI - Sunday Morning

LISBETH'S touch of rheumatism could not be made to appear serious enough to detain Dinah another night from the Hall Farm, now she had made up her mind to leave her aunt so soon, and at evening the friends must part. 'For a long while,' Dinah had said, for she had told Lisbeth of her resolve.

'Then it'll be for all my life, an' I shall ne'er see thee again,' said Lisbeth. 'Long while! I'n got no long while t' live. An' I shall be took bad an' die, an' thee canst ne'er come a-nigh me, an' I shall die a-longing for thee.'

That had been the key-note of her wailing talk all day; for Adam was not in the house, and so she put no restraint on her complaining. She had tried poor Dinah by returning again and again to the question, why she must go away; and refusing to accept reasons, which seemed to her nothing but whim and 'contrairiness'; and still more, by regretting that she 'couldna' ha' one o' the lads' and be her daughter.

'Thee couldstna put up wi' Seth,' she said. 'He isna cliver enough for thee, happen, but he'd ha' been very good t' thee - he's as handy as can be at doin' things for me when I'm bad, an' he's as fond o' the Bible an' chappellin' as thee art thysen. But happen, thee'dst like a husband better as isna just the cut o' thysen: the runnin' brook isna athirst for th' rain. Adam 'ud ha' done for thee - I know he would - an' he might come t' like thee well enough, if thee'dst stop. But he's as stubborn as th' iron bar - there's no bending him no way but's own. But he'd be a fine husband for anybody, be they who they will, so looked-on an' so cliver as he is. And he'd be rare an' lovin': it does me good on'y a look o' the lad's eye when he means kind tow'rt me.'

Dinah tried to escape from Lisbeth's closest looks and questions by finding little tasks of housework that kept her moving about, and as soon as Seth came home in the evening she put on her bonnet to go. It touched Dinah keenly to say the last good-bye, and still more to look round on her way across the fields and see the old woman still standing at the door, gazing after her till she must have been the faintest speck in the dim aged eyes. 'The God of love and peace be with them,' Dinah prayed, as she looked back from the last stile. 'Make them glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted them, and the years wherein they have seen evil. It is thy will that I should part from them; let me have no will but thine.'

Lisbeth turned into the house at last and sat down in the workshop near Seth, who was busying himself there with fitting some bits of turned wood he had brought from the village into a small work-box, which he meant to give to Dinah before she went away.

'Thee't see her again o' Sunday afore she goes,' were her first words. 'If thee wast good for anything, thee'dst make her come in again o' Sunday night wi' thee, and see me once more.'

'Nay, Mother,' said Seth. 'Dinah 'ud be sure to come again if she saw right to come. I should have no need to persuade her. She only thinks it 'ud be troubling thee for nought, just to come in to say good-bye over again.' 'She'd ne'er go away, I know, if Adam 'ud be fond on her an' marry her, but everything's so contrary,' said Lisbeth, with a burst of vexation.

Seth paused a moment and looked up, with a slight blush, at his mother's face. 'What! Has she said anything o' that sort to thee, Mother?' he said, in a lower tone.

'Said? Nay, she'll say nothin'. It's on'y the men as have to wait till folks say things afore they find 'em out.'

'Well, but what makes thee think so, Mother? What's put it into thy head?'

'It's no matter what's put it into my head. My head's none so hollow as it must get in, an' nought to put it there. I know she's fond on him, as I know th' wind's comin' in at the door, an' that's anoof. An' he might be willin' to marry her if he know'd she's fond on him, but he'll ne'er think on't if somebody doesna put it into's head.'

His mother's suggestion about Dinah's feeling towards Adam was not quite a new thought to Seth, but her last words alarmed him, lest she should herself undertake to open Adam's eyes. He was not sure about Dinah's feeling, and he thought he was sure about Adam's.

'Nay, Mother, nay,' he said, earnestly, 'thee mustna think o' speaking o' such things to Adam. Thee'st no right to say what Dinah's feelings are if she hasna told thee, and it 'ud do nothing but mischief to say such things to Adam. He feels very grateful and affectionate toward Dinah, but he's no thoughts towards her that 'ud incline him to make her his wife, and I don't believe Dinah 'ud marry him either. I don't think she'll marry at all.'

'Eh,' said Lisbeth, impatiently. 'Thee think'st so 'cause she wouldna ha' thee. She'll ne'er marry thee; thee mightst as well like her t' ha' thy brother.'

Seth was hurt. 'Mother,' he said, in a remonstrating tone, 'don't think that of me. I should be as thankful t' have her for a sister as thee wouldst t' have her for a daughter. I've no more thoughts about myself in that thing, and I shall take it hard if ever thee say'st it again.'

'Well, well, then thee shouldstna cross me wi' sayin' things arena as I say they are.'

'But, Mother,' said Seth, 'thee'dst be doing Dinah a wrong by telling Adam what thee think'st about her. It 'ud do nothing but mischief, for it 'ud make Adam uneasy if he doesna feel the same to her. And I'm pretty sure he feels nothing o' the sort.'

'Eh, donna tell me what thee't sure on; thee know'st nought about it. What's he allays goin' to the Poysers' for, if he didna want t' see her? He goes twice where he used t' go once. Happen he knowsna as he wants t' see her; he knowsna as I put salt in's broth, but he'd miss it pretty quick if it warna there. He'll ne'er think o' marrying if it isna put into's head, an' if thee'dst any love for thy mother, thee'dst put him up to't an' not let her go away out o' my sight, when I might ha' her to make a bit o' comfort for me afore I go to bed to my old man under the white thorn.'

'Nay, Mother,' said Seth, 'thee mustna think me unkind, but I should be going against my conscience if I took upon me to say what Dinah's feelings are. And besides that, I think I should give offence to Adam by speaking to him at all about marrying; and I counsel thee not to do't. Thee may'st be quite deceived about Dinah. Nay, I'm pretty sure, by words she said to me last Sabbath, as she's no mind to marry.'

'Eh, thee't as contrairy as the rest on 'em. If it war summat I didna want, it 'ud be done fast enough.'

Lisbeth rose from the bench at this, and went out of the workshop, leaving Seth in much anxiety lest she should disturb Adam's mind about Dinah. He consoled himself after a time with reflecting that, since Adam's trouble, Lisbeth had been very timid about speaking to him on matters of feeling, and that she would hardly dare to approach this tenderest of all subjects. Even if she did, he hoped Adam would not take much notice of what she said.

Seth was right in believing that Lisbeth would be held in restraint by timidity, and during the next three days, the intervals in which she had an opportunity of speaking to Adam were too rare and short to cause her any strong temptation. But in her long solitary hours she brooded over her regretful thoughts about Dinah, till they had grown very near that point of unmanageable strength when thoughts are apt to take wing out of their secret nest in a startling manner. And on Sunday morning, when Seth went away to chapel at Treddleston, the dangerous opportunity came.

Sunday morning was the happiest time in all the week to Lisbeth, for as there was no service at Hayslope church till the afternoon, Adam

was always at home, doing nothing but reading, an occupation in which she could venture to interrupt him. Moreover, she had always a better dinner than usual to prepare for her sons - very frequently for Adam and herself alone, Seth being often away the entire day - and the smell of the roast meat before the clear fire in the clean kitchen, the clock ticking in a peaceful Sunday manner, her darling Adam seated near her in his best clothes, doing nothing very important, so that she could go and stroke her hand across his hair if she liked, and see him look up at her and smile, while Gyp, rather jealous, poked his muzzle up between them - all these things made poor Lisbeth's earthly paradise.

The book Adam most often read on a Sunday morning was his large pictured Bible, and this morning it lay open before him on the round white deal table in the kitchen; for he sat there in spite of the fire, because he knew his mother liked to have him with her, and it was the only day in the week when he could indulge her in that way. You would have liked to see Adam reading his Bible. He never opened it on a weekday, and so he came to it as a holiday book, serving him for history, biography, and poetry. He held one hand thrust between his waistcoat buttons, and the other ready to turn the pages, and in the course of the morning you would have seen many changes in his face. Sometimes his lips moved in semi-articulation - it was when he came to a speech that he could fancy himself uttering, such as Samuel's dying speech to the people; then his eyebrows would be raised, and the corners of his mouth would quiver a little with sad sympathy - something, perhaps old Isaac's meeting with his son, touched him closely; at other times, over the New Testament, a very solemn look would come upon his face, and he would every now and then shake his head in serious assent, or just lift up his hand and let it fall again. And on some mornings, when he read in the Apocrypha, of which he was very fond, the son of Sirach's keen-edged words would bring a delighted smile, though he also enjoyed the freedom of occasionally differing from an Apocryphal writer. For Adam knew the Articles quite well, as became a good churchman.

Lisbeth, in the pauses of attending to her dinner, always sat opposite to him and watched him, till she could rest no longer without going up to him and giving him a caress, to call his attention to her. This morning he was reading the Gospel according to St. Matthew, and Lisbeth had been standing close by him for some minutes, stroking his hair, which was smoother than usual this morning, and looking down at the large page with silent wonderment at the mystery of letters. She was encouraged to continue this caress, because when she first went up to him, he had thrown himself back in his chair to look at her affectionately and say, 'Why, Mother, thee look'st rare and hearty this morning. Eh, Gyp wants me t' look at him. He can't abide to think I love thee the best.' Lisbeth said nothing, because she

wanted to say so many things. And now there was a new leaf to be turned over, and it was a picture - that of the angel seated on the great stone that has been rolled away from the sepulchre. This picture had one strong association in Lisbeth's memory, for she had been reminded of it when she first saw Dinah, and Adam had no sooner turned the page, and lifted the book sideways that they might look at the angel, than she said, 'That's her - that's Dinah.'

Adam smiled, and, looking more intently at the angel's face, said, 'It is a bit like her; but Dinah's prettier, I think.'

'Well, then, if thee think'st her so pretty, why arn't fond on her?'

Adam looked up in surprise. 'Why, Mother, dost think I don't set store by Dinah?'

'Nay,' said Lisbeth, frightened at her own courage, yet feeling that she had broken the ice, and the waters must flow, whatever mischief they might do. 'What's th' use o' settin' store by things as are thirty mile off? If thee wast fond enough on her, thee wouldstna let her go away.'

'But I've no right t' hinder her, if she thinks well,' said Adam, looking at his book as if he wanted to go on reading. He foresaw a series of complaints tending to nothing. Lisbeth sat down again in the chair opposite to him, as she said:

'But she wouldna think well if thee wastna so contrary.' Lisbeth dared not venture beyond a vague phrase yet.

'Contrary, mother?' Adam said, looking up again in some anxiety. 'What have I done? What dost mean?'

'Why, thee't never look at nothin', nor think o' nothin', but thy figurin, an' thy work,' said Lisbeth, half-crying. 'An' dost think thee canst go on so all thy life, as if thee wast a man cut out o' timber? An' what wut do when thy mother's gone, an' nobody to take care on thee as thee gett'st a bit o' victual comfortable i' the mornin'?'

'What hast got i' thy mind, Mother?' said Adam, vexed at this whimpering. 'I canna see what thee't driving at. Is there anything I could do for thee as I don't do?'

'Aye, an' that there is. Thee might'st do as I should ha' somebody wi' me to comfort me a bit, an' wait on me when I'm bad, an' be good to me.'

'Well, Mother, whose fault is it there isna some tidy body i' th' house t' help thee? It isna by my wish as thee hast a stroke o' work to do. We

can afford it - I've told thee often enough. It 'ud be a deal better for us.'

'Eh, what's the use o' talking o' tidy bodies, when thee mean'st one o' th' wenches out o' th' village, or somebody from Treddles'on as I ne'er set eyes on i' my life? I'd sooner make a shift an' get into my own coffin afore I die, nor ha' them folks to put me in.'

Adam was silent, and tried to go on reading. That was the utmost severity he could show towards his mother on a Sunday morning. But Lisbeth had gone too far now to check herself, and after scarcely a minute's quietness she began again.

'Thee mightst know well enough who 'tis I'd like t' ha' wi' me. It isna many folks I send for t' come an' see me. I reckon. An' thee'st had the fetchin' on her times enow.'

'Thee mean'st Dinah, Mother, I know,' said Adam. 'But it's no use setting thy mind on what can't be. If Dinah 'ud be willing to stay at Hayslope, it isn't likely she can come away from her aunt's house, where they hold her like a daughter, and where she's more bound than she is to us. If it had been so that she could ha' married Seth, that 'ud ha' been a great blessing to us, but we can't have things just as we like in this life. Thee must try and make up thy mind to do without her.'

'Nay, but I canna ma' up my mind, when she's just cut out for thee; an' nought shall ma' me believe as God didna make her an' send her there o' purpose for thee. What's it sinnify about her bein' a Methody! It 'ud happen wear out on her wi' marryin'.'

Adam threw himself back in his chair and looked at his mother. He understood now what she had been aiming at from the beginning of the conversation. It was as unreasonable, impracticable a wish as she had ever urged, but he could not help being moved by so entirely new an idea. The chief point, however, was to chase away the notion from his mother's mind as quickly as possible.

'Mother,' he said, gravely, 'thee't talking wild. Don't let me hear thee say such things again. It's no good talking o' what can never be. Dinah's not for marrying; she's fixed her heart on a different sort o' life.'

'Very like,' said Lisbeth, impatiently, 'very like she's none for marr'ing, when them as she'd be willin' t' marry wanna ax her. I shouldna ha' been for marr'ing thy feyther if he'd ne'er axed me; an' she's as fond o' thee as e'er I war o' Thias, poor fellow.'

The blood rushed to Adam's face, and for a few moments he was not quite conscious where he was. His mother and the kitchen had vanished for him, and he saw nothing but Dinah's face turned up towards his. It seemed as if there were a resurrection of his dead joy. But he woke up very speedily from that dream (the waking was chill and sad), for it would have been very foolish in him to believe his mother's words - she could have no ground for them. He was prompted to express his disbelief very strongly - perhaps that he might call forth the proofs, if there were any to be offered.

'What dost say such things for, Mother, when thee'st got no foundation for 'em? Thee know'st nothing as gives thee a right to say that.'

'Then I knowna nought as gi'es me a right to say as the year's turned, for all I feel it fust thing when I get up i' th' morning. She isna fond o' Seth, I reckon, is she? She doesna want to marry HIM? But I can see as she doesna behave tow'rt thee as she daes tow'rt Seth. She makes no more o' Seth's coming a-nigh her nor if he war Gyp, but she's all of a tremble when thee't a-sittin' down by her at breakfast an' a-looking at her. Thee think'st thy mother knows nought, but she war alive afore thee wast born.'

'But thee canstna be sure as the trembling means love?' said Adam anxiously.

'Eh, what else should it mane? It isna hate, I reckon. An' what should she do but love thee? Thee't made to be loved - for where's there a straighter cliverer man? An' what's it sinnify her bein' a Methody? It's on'y the marigold i' th' parridge.'

Adam had thrust his hands in his pockets, and was looking down at the book on the table, without seeing any of the letters. He was trembling like a gold-seeker who sees the strong promise of gold but sees in the same moment a sickening vision of disappointment. He could not trust his mother's insight; she had seen what she wished to see. And yet - and yet, now the suggestion had been made to him, he remembered so many things, very slight things, like the stirring of the water by an imperceptible breeze, which seemed to him some confirmation of his mother's words.

Lisbeth noticed that he was moved. She went on, 'An' thee't find out as thee't poorly aff when she's gone. Thee't fonder on her nor thee know'st. Thy eyes follow her about, welly as Gyp's follow thee.'

Adam could sit still no longer. He rose, took down his hat, and went out into the fields.

The sunshine was on them: that early autumn sunshine which we should know was not summer's, even if there were not the touches of yellow on the lime and chestnut; the Sunday sunshine too, which has more than autumnal calmness for the working man; the morning sunshine, which still leaves the dew-crystals on the fine gossamer webs in the shadow of the bushy hedgerows.

Adam needed the calm influence; he was amazed at the way in which this new thought of Dinah's love had taken possession of him, with an overmastering power that made all other feelings give way before the impetuous desire to know that the thought was true. Strange, that till that moment the possibility of their ever being lovers had never crossed his mind, and yet now, all his longing suddenly went out towards that possibility. He had no more doubt or hesitation as to his own wishes than the bird that flies towards the opening through which the daylight gleams and the breath of heaven enters.

The autumnal Sunday sunshine soothed him, but not by preparing him with resignation to the disappointment if his mother - if he himself - proved to be mistaken about Dinah. It soothed him by gentle encouragement of his hopes. Her love was so like that calm sunshine that they seemed to make one presence to him, and he believed in them both alike. And Dinah was so bound up with the sad memories of his first passion that he was not forsaking them, but rather giving them a new sacredness by loving her. Nay, his love for her had grown out of that past: it was the noon of that morning.

But Seth? Would the lad be hurt? Hardly; for he had seemed quite contented of late, and there was no selfish jealousy in him; he had never been jealous of his mother's fondness for Adam. But had he seen anything of what their mother talked about? Adam longed to know this, for he thought he could trust Seth's observation better than his mother's. He must talk to Seth before he went to see Dinah, and, with this intention in his mind, he walked back to the cottage and said to his mother, 'Did Seth say anything to thee about when he was coming home? Will he be back to dinner?'

'Aye, lad, he'll be back for a wonder. He isna gone to Treddles'on. He's gone somewhere else a-preachin' and a-prayin'.'

'Hast any notion which way he's gone?' said Adam.

'Nay, but he aften goes to th' Common. Thee know'st more o's goings nor I do.'

Adam wanted to go and meet Seth, but he must content himself with walking about the near fields and getting sight of him as soon as possible. That would not be for more than an hour to come, for Seth



would scarcely be at home much before their dinner-time, which was twelve o'clock. But Adam could not sit down to his reading again, and he sauntered along by the brook and stood leaning against the stiles, with eager intense eyes, which looked as if they saw something very vividly; but it was not the brook or the willows, not the fields or the sky. Again and again his vision was interrupted by wonder at the strength of his own feeling, at the strength and sweetness of this new love - almost like the wonder a man feels at the added power he finds in himself for an art which he had laid aside for a space. How is it that the poets have said so many fine things about our first love, so few about our later love? Are their first poems their best? Or are not those the best which come from their fuller thought, their larger experience, their deeper-rooted affections? The boy's flutelike voice has its own spring charm; but the man should yield a richer deeper music.

At last, there was Seth, visible at the farthest stile, and Adam hastened to meet him. Seth was surprised, and thought something unusual must have happened, but when Adam came up, his face said plainly enough that it was nothing alarming.

'Where hast been?' said Adam, when they were side by side.

'I've been to the Common,' said Seth. 'Dinah's been speaking the Word to a little company of hearers at Brimstone's, as they call him. They're folks as never go to church hardly - them on the Common - but they'll go and hear Dinah a bit. She's been speaking with power this forenoon from the words, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' And there was a little thing happened as was pretty to see. The women mostly bring their children with 'em, but to-day there was one stout curly headed fellow about three or four year old, that I never saw there before. He was as naughty as could be at the beginning while I was praying, and while we was singing, but when we all sat down and Dinah began to speak, th' young un stood stock still all at once, and began to look at her with's mouth open, and presently he ran away from's mother and went to Dinah, and pulled at her, like a little dog, for her to take notice of him. So Dinah lifted him up and held th' lad on her lap, while she went on speaking; and he was as good as could be till he went to sleep - and the mother cried to see him.'

'It's a pity she shouldna be a mother herself,' said Adam, 'so fond as the children are of her. Dost think she's quite fixed against marrying, Seth? Dost think nothing 'ud turn her?'

There was something peculiar in his brother's tone, which made Seth steal a glance at his face before he answered.

'It 'ud be wrong of me to say nothing 'ud turn her,' he answered. 'But if thee mean'st it about myself, I've given up all thoughts as she can ever be my wife. She calls me her brother, and that's enough.'

'But dost think she might ever get fond enough of anybody else to be willing to marry 'em?' said Adam rather shyly.

'Well,' said Seth, after some hesitation, 'it's crossed my mind sometimes o' late as she might; but Dinah 'ud let no fondness for the creature draw her out o' the path as she believed God had marked out for her. If she thought the leading was not from Him, she's not one to be brought under the power of it. And she's allays seemed clear about that - as her work was to minister t' others, and make no home for herself i' this world.'

'But suppose,' said Adam, earnestly, 'suppose there was a man as 'ud let her do just the same and not interfere with her - she might do a good deal o' what she does now, just as well when she was married as when she was single. Other women of her sort have married - that's to say, not just like her, but women as preached and attended on the sick and needy. There's Mrs. Fletcher as she talks of.'

A new light had broken in on Seth. He turned round, and laying his hand on Adam's shoulder, said, 'Why, wouldst like her to marry THEE, Brother?'

Adam looked doubtfully at Seth's inquiring eyes and said, 'Wouldst be hurt if she was to be fonder o' me than o' thee?'

'Nay,' said Seth warmly, 'how canst think it? Have I felt thy trouble so little that I shouldna feel thy joy?'

There was silence a few moments as they walked on, and then Seth said, 'I'd no notion as thee'dst ever think of her for a wife.'

'But is it o' any use to think of her?' said Adam. 'What dost say? Mother's made me as I hardly know where I am, with what she's been saying to me this forenoon. She says she's sure Dinah feels for me more than common, and 'ud be willing t' have me. But I'm afraid she speaks without book. I want to know if thee'st seen anything.'

'It's a nice point to speak about,' said Seth, 'and I'm afraid o' being wrong; besides, we've no right t' intermeddle with people's feelings when they wouldn't tell 'em themselves.'

Seth paused.

'But thee mightst ask her,' he said presently. 'She took no offence at me for asking, and thee'st more right than I had, only thee't not in the Society. But Dinah doesn't hold wi' them as are for keeping the Society so strict to themselves. She doesn't mind about making folks enter the Society, so as they're fit t' enter the kingdom o' God. Some o' the brethren at Treddles'on are displeased with her for that.'

'Where will she be the rest o' the day?' said Adam.

'She said she shouldn't leave the farm again to-day,' said Seth, 'because it's her last Sabbath there, and she's going t' read out o' the big Bible wi' the children.'

Adam thought - but did not say - 'Then I'll go this afternoon; for if I go to church, my thoughts 'ull be with her all the while. They must sing th' anthem without me to-day.'