## 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.