

Part Sixth

AT CHRISTMINSTER AGAIN

"... And she humbled her body greatly, and all the places  
of her joy she filled with her torn hair."--ESTHER (Apoc.).

"There are two who decline, a woman and I,  
And enjoy our death in the darkness here."

--R. BROWNING.

I

On their arrival the station was lively with straw-hatted young men,  
welcoming young girls who bore a remarkable family likeness to their  
welcomers, and who were dressed up in the brightest and lightest of  
raiment.

"The place seems gay," said Sue. "Why--it is Remembrance  
Day!--Jude--how sly of you--you came to-day on purpose!"

"Yes," said Jude quietly, as he took charge of the small child, and told Arabella's boy to keep close to them, Sue attending to their own eldest. "I thought we might as well come to-day as on any other."

"But I am afraid it will depress you!" she said, looking anxiously at him up and down.

"Oh, I mustn't let it interfere with our business; and we have a good deal to do before we shall be settled here. The first thing is lodgings."

Having left their luggage and his tools at the station they proceeded on foot up the familiar street, the holiday people all drifting in the same direction. Reaching the Fourways they were about to turn off to where accommodation was likely to be found when, looking at the clock and the hurrying crowd, Jude said: "Let us go and see the procession, and never mind the lodgings just now? We can get them afterwards."

"Oughtn't we to get a house over our heads first?" she asked.

But his soul seemed full of the anniversary, and together they went down Chief Street, their smallest child in Jude's arms, Sue leading her little girl, and Arabella's boy walking thoughtfully and silently beside them. Crowds of pretty sisters in airy costumes, and meekly

ignorant parents who had known no college in their youth, were under convoy in the same direction by brothers and sons bearing the opinion written large on them that no properly qualified human beings had lived on earth till they came to grace it here and now.

"My failure is reflected on me by every one of those young fellows," said Jude. "A lesson on presumption is awaiting me to-day!--Humiliation Day for me! ... If you, my dear darling, hadn't come to my rescue, I should have gone to the dogs with despair!"

She saw from his face that he was getting into one of his tempestuous, self-harrowing moods. "It would have been better if we had gone at once about our own affairs, dear," she answered. "I am sure this sight will awaken old sorrows in you, and do no good!"

"Well--we are near; we will see it now," said he.

They turned in on the left by the church with the Italian porch, whose helical columns were heavily draped with creepers, and pursued the lane till there arose on Jude's sight the circular theatre with that well-known lantern above it, which stood in his mind as the sad symbol of his abandoned hopes, for it was from that outlook that he had finally surveyed the City of Colleges on the afternoon of his great meditation, which convinced him at last of the futility of his attempt to be a son of the university.

To-day, in the open space stretching between this building and the nearest college, stood a crowd of expectant people. A passage was kept clear through their midst by two barriers of timber, extending from the door of the college to the door of the large building between it and the theatre.

"Here is the place--they are just going to pass!" cried Jude in sudden excitement. And pushing his way to the front he took up a position close to the barrier, still hugging the youngest child in his arms, while Sue and the others kept immediately behind him. The crowd filled in at their back, and fell to talking, joking, and laughing as carriage after carriage drew up at the lower door of the college, and solemn stately figures in blood-red robes began to alight. The sky had grown overcast and livid, and thunder rumbled now and then.

Father Time shuddered. "It do seem like the Judgment Day!" he whispered.

"They are only learned doctors," said Sue.

While they waited big drops of rain fell on their heads and shoulders, and the delay grew tedious. Sue again wished not to stay.

"They won't be long now," said Jude, without turning his head.

But the procession did not come forth, and somebody in the crowd, to pass the time, looked at the façade of the nearest college, and said he wondered what was meant by the Latin inscription in its midst. Jude, who stood near the inquirer, explained it, and finding that the people all round him were listening with interest, went on to describe the carving of the frieze (which he had studied years before), and to criticize some details of masonry in other college fronts about the city.

The idle crowd, including the two policemen at the doors, stared like the Lycaonians at Paul, for Jude was apt to get too enthusiastic over any subject in hand, and they seemed to wonder how the stranger should know more about the buildings of their town than they themselves did; till one of them said: "Why, I know that man; he used to work here years ago--Jude Fawley, that's his name! Don't you mind he used to be nicknamed Tutor of St. Slums, d'ye mind?--because he aimed at that line o' business? He's married, I suppose, then, and that's his child he's carrying. Taylor would know him, as he knows everybody."

The speaker was a man named Jack Stagg, with whom Jude had formerly worked in repairing the college masonries; Tinker Taylor was seen to be standing near. Having his attention called the latter cried across the barriers to Jude: "You've honoured us by coming back again, my friend!"

Jude nodded.

"An' you don't seem to have done any great things for yourself by going away?"

Jude assented to this also.

"Except found more mouths to fill!" This came in a new voice, and Jude recognized its owner to be Uncle Joe, another mason whom he had known.

Jude replied good-humouredly that he could not dispute it; and from remark to remark something like a general conversation arose between him and the crowd of idlers, during which Tinker Taylor asked Jude if he remembered the Apostles' Creed in Latin still, and the night of the challenge in the public house.

"But Fortune didn't lie that way?" threw in Joe. "Yer powers wasn't enough to carry 'ee through?"

"Don't answer them any more!" entreated Sue.

"I don't think I like Christminster!" murmured little Time mournfully, as he stood submerged and invisible in the crowd.

But finding himself the centre of curiosity, quizzing, and comment,

Jude was not inclined to shrink from open declarations of what he had no great reason to be ashamed of; and in a little while was stimulated to say in a loud voice to the listening throng generally:

"It is a difficult question, my friends, for any young man--that question I had to grapple with, and which thousands are weighing at the present moment in these uprising times--whether to follow uncritically the track he finds himself in, without considering his aptness for it, or to consider what his aptness or bent may be, and re-shape his course accordingly. I tried to do the latter, and I failed. But I don't admit that my failure proved my view to be a wrong one, or that my success would have made it a right one; though that's how we appraise such attempts nowadays--I mean, not by their essential soundness, but by their accidental outcomes. If I had ended by becoming like one of these gentlemen in red and black that we saw dropping in here by now, everybody would have said: 'See how wise that young man was, to follow the bent of his nature!' But having ended no better than I began they say: 'See what a fool that fellow was in following a freak of his fancy!'

"However it was my poverty and not my will that consented to be beaten. It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one; and my impulses--affections--vices perhaps they should be called--were too strong not to hamper a man without advantages; who should be as cold-blooded as a fish and as selfish as a pig to have a really good chance of being one of his country's worthies. You may

ridicule me--I am quite willing that you should--I am a fit subject, no doubt. But I think if you knew what I have gone through these last few years you would rather pity me. And if they knew"--he nodded towards the college at which the dons were severally arriving--"it is just possible they would do the same."

"He do look ill and worn-out, it is true!" said a woman.

Sue's face grew more emotional; but though she stood close to Jude she was screened.

"I may do some good before I am dead--be a sort of success as a frightful example of what not to do; and so illustrate a moral story," continued Jude, beginning to grow bitter, though he had opened serenely enough. "I was, perhaps, after all, a paltry victim to the spirit of mental and social restlessness that makes so many unhappy in these days!"

"Don't tell them that!" whispered Sue with tears, at perceiving Jude's state of mind. "You weren't that. You struggled nobly to acquire knowledge, and only the meanest souls in the world would blame you!"

Jude shifted the child into a more easy position on his arm, and concluded: "And what I appear, a sick and poor man, is not the worst of me. I am in a chaos of principles--groping in the dark--acting by



instinct and not after example. Eight or nine years ago when I came here first, I had a neat stock of fixed opinions, but they dropped away one by one; and the further I get the less sure I am. I doubt if I have anything more for my present rule of life than following inclinations which do me and nobody else any harm, and actually give pleasure to those I love best. There, gentlemen, since you wanted to know how I was getting on, I have told you. Much good may it do you! I cannot explain further here. I perceive there is something wrong somewhere in our social formulas: what it is can only be discovered by men or women with greater insight than mine--if, indeed, they ever discover it--at least in our time. 'For who knoweth what is good for man in this life?--and who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?'"

"Hear, hear," said the populace.

"Well preached!" said Tinker Taylor. And privately to his neighbours: "Why, one of them jobbing pa'sons swarming about here, that takes the services when our head reverends want a holiday, wouldn't ha' discoursed such doctrine for less than a guinea down? Hey? I'll take my oath not one o' 'em would! And then he must have had it wrote down for 'n. And this only a working-man!"

As a sort of objective commentary on Jude's remarks there drove up at this moment with a belated doctor, robed and panting, a cab whose horse failed to stop at the exact point required for setting down the

hirer, who jumped out and entered the door. The driver, alighting, began to kick the animal in the belly.

"If that can be done," said Jude, "at college gates in the most religious and educational city in the world, what shall we say as to how far we've got?"

"Order!" said one of the policemen, who had been engaged with a comrade in opening the large doors opposite the college. "Keep yer tongue quiet, my man, while the procession passes." The rain came on more heavily, and all who had umbrellas opened them. Jude was not one of these, and Sue only possessed a small one, half sunshade. She had grown pale, though Jude did not notice it then.

"Let us go on, dear," she whispered, endeavouring to shelter him.

"We haven't any lodgings yet, remember, and all our things are at the station; and you are by no means well yet. I am afraid this wet will hurt you!"

"They are coming now. Just a moment, and I'll go!" said he.

A peal of six bells struck out, human faces began to crowd the windows around, and the procession of heads of houses and new doctors emerged, their red and black gowned forms passing across the field of Jude's vision like inaccessible planets across an object glass.

As they went their names were called by knowing informants, and when they reached the old round theatre of Wren a cheer rose high.

"Let's go that way!" cried Jude, and though it now rained steadily he seemed not to know it, and took them round to the theatre. Here they stood upon the straw that was laid to drown the discordant noise of wheels, where the quaint and frost-eaten stone busts encircling the building looked with pallid grimness on the proceedings, and in particular at the bedraggled Jude, Sue, and their children, as at ludicrous persons who had no business there.

"I wish I could get in!" he said to her fervidly. "Listen--I may catch a few words of the Latin speech by staying here; the windows are open."

However, beyond the peals of the organ, and the shouts and hurrahs between each piece of oratory, Jude's standing in the wet did not bring much Latin to his intelligence more than, now and then, a sonorous word in um or ibus.

"Well--I'm an outsider to the end of my days!" he sighed after a while. "Now I'll go, my patient Sue. How good of you to wait in the rain all this time--to gratify my infatuation! I'll never care any more about the infernal cursed place, upon my soul I won't! But what made you tremble so when we were at the barrier? And how pale you are, Sue!"

"I saw Richard amongst the people on the other side."

"Ah--did you!"

"He is evidently come up to Jerusalem to see the festival like the rest of us: and on that account is probably living not so very far away. He had the same hankering for the university that you had, in a milder form. I don't think he saw me, though he must have heard you speaking to the crowd. But he seemed not to notice."

"Well--suppose he did. Your mind is free from worries about him now, my Sue?"

"Yes, I suppose so. But I am weak. Although I know it is all right with our plans, I felt a curious dread of him; an awe, or terror, of conventions I don't believe in. It comes over me at times like a sort of creeping paralysis, and makes me so sad!"

"You are getting tired, Sue. Oh--I forgot, darling! Yes, we'll go on at once."

They started in quest of the lodging, and at last found something that seemed to promise well, in Mildew Lane--a spot which to Jude was irresistible--though to Sue it was not so fascinating--a narrow lane close to the back of a college, but having no communication with

it. The little houses were darkened to gloom by the high collegiate buildings, within which life was so far removed from that of the people in the lane as if it had been on opposite sides of the globe; yet only a thickness of wall divided them. Two or three of the houses had notices of rooms to let, and the newcomers knocked at the door of one, which a woman opened.

"Ah--listen!" said Jude suddenly, instead of addressing her.

"What?"

"Why the bells--what church can that be? The tones are familiar."

Another peal of bells had begun to sound out at some distance off.

"I don't know!" said the landlady tartly. "Did you knock to ask that?"

"No; for lodgings," said Jude, coming to himself.

The householder scrutinized Sue's figure a moment. "We haven't any to let," said she, shutting the door.

Jude looked discomfited, and the boy distressed. "Now, Jude," said Sue, "let me try. You don't know the way."

They found a second place hard by; but here the occupier, observing not only Sue, but the boy and the small children, said civilly, "I am sorry to say we don't let where there are children"; and also closed the door.

The small child squared its mouth and cried silently, with an instinct that trouble loomed. The boy sighed. "I don't like Christminster!" he said. "Are the great old houses gaols?"

"No; colleges," said Jude; "which perhaps you'll study in some day."

"I'd rather not!" the boy rejoined.

"Now we'll try again," said Sue. "I'll pull my cloak more round me... Leaving Kennetbridge for this place is like coming from Caiaphas to Pilate! ... How do I look now, dear?"

"Nobody would notice it now," said Jude.

There was one other house, and they tried a third time. The woman here was more amiable; but she had little room to spare, and could only agree to take in Sue and the children if her husband could go elsewhere. This arrangement they perforce adopted, in the stress from delaying their search till so late. They came to terms with her, though her price was rather high for their pockets. But they could not afford to be critical till Jude had time to get a more

permanent abode; and in this house Sue took possession of a back room on the second floor with an inner closet-room for the children. Jude stayed and had a cup of tea; and was pleased to find that the window commanded the back of another of the colleges. Kissing all four he went to get a few necessaries and look for lodgings for himself.

When he was gone the landlady came up to talk a little with Sue, and gather something of the circumstances of the family she had taken in. Sue had not the art of prevarication, and, after admitting several facts as to their late difficulties and wanderings, she was startled by the landlady saying suddenly:

"Are you really a married woman?"

Sue hesitated; and then impulsively told the woman that her husband and herself had each been unhappy in their first marriages, after which, terrified at the thought of a second irrevocable union, and lest the conditions of the contract should kill their love, yet wishing to be together, they had literally not found the courage to repeat it, though they had attempted it two or three times. Therefore, though in her own sense of the words she was a married woman, in the landlady's sense she was not.

The housewife looked embarrassed, and went downstairs. Sue sat by the window in a reverie, watching the rain. Her quiet was broken by the noise of someone entering the house, and then the voices of a

man and woman in conversation in the passage below. The landlady's husband had arrived, and she was explaining to him the incoming of the lodgers during his absence.

His voice rose in sudden anger. "Now who wants such a woman here? and perhaps a confinement! ... Besides, didn't I say I wouldn't have children? The hall and stairs fresh painted, to be kicked about by them! You must have known all was not straight with 'em--coming like that. Taking in a family when I said a single man."

The wife expostulated, but, as it seemed, the husband insisted on his point; for presently a tap came to Sue's door, and the woman appeared.

"I am sorry to tell you, ma'am," she said, "that I can't let you have the room for the week after all. My husband objects; and therefore I must ask you to go. I don't mind your staying over to-night, as it is getting late in the afternoon; but I shall be glad if you can leave early in the morning."

Though she knew that she was entitled to the lodging for a week, Sue did not wish to create a disturbance between the wife and husband, and she said she would leave as requested. When the landlady had gone Sue looked out of the window again. Finding that the rain had ceased she proposed to the boy that, after putting the little ones to bed, they should go out and search about for another place, and



bespeak it for the morrow, so as not to be so hard-driven then as they had been that day.

Therefore, instead of unpacking her boxes, which had just been sent on from the station by Jude, they sallied out into the damp though not unpleasant streets, Sue resolving not to disturb her husband with the news of her notice to quit while he was perhaps worried in obtaining a lodging for himself. In the company of the boy she wandered into this street and into that; but though she tried a dozen different houses she fared far worse alone than she had fared in Jude's company, and could get nobody to promise her a room for the following day. Every householder looked askance at such a woman and child inquiring for accommodation in the gloom.

"I ought not to be born, ought I?" said the boy with misgiving.

Thoroughly tired at last Sue returned to the place where she was not welcome, but where at least she had temporary shelter. In her absence Jude had left his address; but knowing how weak he still was she adhered to her determination not to disturb him till the next day.

Sue sat looking at the bare floor of the room, the house being little more than an old intramural cottage, and then she regarded the scene outside the uncurtained window. At some distance opposite, the outer walls of Sarcophagus College--silent, black, and windowless--threw their four centuries of gloom, bigotry, and decay into the little room she occupied, shutting out the moonlight by night and the sun by day. The outlines of Rubric College also were discernible beyond the other, and the tower of a third farther off still. She thought of the strange operation of a simple-minded man's ruling passion, that it should have led Jude, who loved her and the children so tenderly, to place them here in this depressing purlieu, because he was still haunted by his dream. Even now he did not distinctly hear the freezing negative that those scholared walls had echoed to his desire.

The failure to find another lodging, and the lack of room in this house for his father, had made a deep impression on the boy--a brooding undemonstrative horror seemed to have seized him. The silence was broken by his saying: "Mother, WHAT shall we do to-morrow!"

"I don't know!" said Sue despondently. "I am afraid this will trouble your father."

"I wish Father was quite well, and there had been room for him!"

Then it wouldn't matter so much! Poor Father!"

"It wouldn't!"

"Can I do anything?"

"No! All is trouble, adversity, and suffering!"

"Father went away to give us children room, didn't he?"

"Partly."

"It would be better to be out o' the world than in it, wouldn't it?"

"It would almost, dear."

"'Tis because of us children, too, isn't it, that you can't get a good lodging?"

"Well--people do object to children sometimes."

"Then if children make so much trouble, why do people have 'em?"

"Oh--because it is a law of nature."

"But we don't ask to be born?"

"No indeed."

"And what makes it worse with me is that you are not my real mother, and you needn't have had me unless you liked. I oughtn't to have come to 'ee--that's the real truth! I troubled 'em in Australia, and I trouble folk here. I wish I hadn't been born!"

"You couldn't help it, my dear."

"I think that whenever children be born that are not wanted they should be killed directly, before their souls come to 'em, and not allowed to grow big and walk about!"

Sue did not reply. She was doubtfully pondering how to treat this too reflective child.

She at last concluded that, so far as circumstances permitted, she would be honest and candid with one who entered into her difficulties like an aged friend.

"There is going to be another in our family soon," she hesitatingly remarked.

"How?"

"There is going to be another baby."

"What!" The boy jumped up wildly. "Oh God, Mother, you've never a-sent for another; and such trouble with what you've got!"

"Yes, I have, I am sorry to say!" murmured Sue, her eyes glistening with suspended tears.

The boy burst out weeping. "Oh you don't care, you don't care!" he cried in bitter reproach. "How EVER could you, Mother, be so wicked and cruel as this, when you needn't have done it till we was better off, and Father well! To bring us all into MORE trouble! No room for us, and Father a-forced to go away, and we turned out to-morrow; and yet you be going to have another of us soon! ... 'Tis done o' purpose!--'tis--'tis!" He walked up and down sobbing.

"Y-you must forgive me, little Jude!" she pleaded, her bosom heaving now as much as the boy's. "I can't explain--I will when you are older. It does seem--as if I had done it on purpose, now we are in these difficulties! I can't explain, dear! But it--is not quite on purpose--I can't help it!"

"Yes it is--it must be! For nobody would interfere with us, like that, unless you agreed! I won't forgive you, ever, ever! I'll never believe you care for me, or Father, or any of us any more!"

He got up, and went away into the closet adjoining her room, in which a bed had been spread on the floor. There she heard him say: "If we children was gone there'd be no trouble at all!"

"Don't think that, dear," she cried, rather peremptorily. "But go to sleep!"

The following morning she awoke at a little past six, and decided to get up and run across before breakfast to the inn which Jude had informed her to be his quarters, to tell him what had happened before he went out. She arose softly, to avoid disturbing the children, who, as she knew, must be fatigued by their exertions of yesterday.

She found Jude at breakfast in the obscure tavern he had chosen as a counterpoise to the expense of her lodging: and she explained to him her homelessness. He had been so anxious about her all night, he said. Somehow, now it was morning, the request to leave the lodgings did not seem such a depressing incident as it had seemed the night before, nor did even her failure to find another place affect her so deeply as at first. Jude agreed with her that it would not be worth while to insist upon her right to stay a week, but to take immediate steps for removal.

"You must all come to this inn for a day or two," he said. "It is a rough place, and it will not be so nice for the children, but we shall have more time to look round. There are plenty of lodgings in

the suburbs--in my old quarter of Beersheba. Have breakfast with me now you are here, my bird. You are sure you are well? There will be plenty of time to get back and prepare the children's meal before they wake. In fact, I'll go with you."

She joined Jude in a hasty meal, and in a quarter of an hour they started together, resolving to clear out from Sue's too respectable lodging immediately. On reaching the place and going upstairs she found that all was quiet in the children's room, and called to the landlady in timorous tones to please bring up the tea-kettle and something for their breakfast. This was perfunctorily done, and producing a couple of eggs which she had brought with her she put them into the boiling kettle, and summoned Jude to watch them for the youngsters, while she went to call them, it being now about half-past eight o'clock.

Jude stood bending over the kettle, with his watch in his hand, timing the eggs, so that his back was turned to the little inner chamber where the children lay. A shriek from Sue suddenly caused him to start round. He saw that the door of the room, or rather closet--which had seemed to go heavily upon its hinges as she pushed it back--was open, and that Sue had sunk to the floor just within it. Hastening forward to pick her up he turned his eyes to the little bed spread on the boards; no children were there. He looked in bewilderment round the room. At the back of the door were fixed two hooks for hanging garments, and from these the forms of the two

youngest children were suspended, by a piece of box-cord round each of their necks, while from a nail a few yards off the body of little Jude was hanging in a similar manner. An overturned chair was near the elder boy, and his glazed eyes were slanted into the room; but those of the girl and the baby boy were closed.

Half-paralyzed by the strange and consummate horror of the scene he let Sue lie, cut the cords with his pocket-knife and threw the three children on the bed; but the feel of their bodies in the momentary handling seemed to say that they were dead. He caught up Sue, who was in fainting fits, and put her on the bed in the other room, after which he breathlessly summoned the landlady and ran out for a doctor.

When he got back Sue had come to herself, and the two helpless women, bending over the children in wild efforts to restore them, and the triplet of little corpses, formed a sight which overthrew his self-command. The nearest surgeon came in, but, as Jude had inferred, his presence was superfluous. The children were past saving, for though their bodies were still barely cold it was conjectured that they had been hanging more than an hour. The probability held by the parents later on, when they were able to reason on the case, was that the elder boy, on waking, looked into the outer room for Sue, and, finding her absent, was thrown into a fit of aggravated despondency that the events and information of the evening before had induced in his morbid temperament. Moreover a piece of paper was found upon the floor, on which was written, in



the boy's hand, with the bit of lead pencil that he carried:

Done because we are too menny.

At sight of this Sue's nerves utterly gave way, an awful conviction that her discourse with the boy had been the main cause of the tragedy, throwing her into a convulsive agony which knew no abatement. They carried her away against her wish to a room on the lower floor; and there she lay, her slight figure shaken with her gasps, and her eyes staring at the ceiling, the woman of the house vainly trying to soothe her.

They could hear from this chamber the people moving about above, and she implored to be allowed to go back, and was only kept from doing so by the assurance that, if there were any hope, her presence might do harm, and the reminder that it was necessary to take care of herself lest she should endanger a coming life. Her inquiries were incessant, and at last Jude came down and told her there was no hope. As soon as she could speak she informed him what she had said to the boy, and how she thought herself the cause of this.

"No," said Jude. "It was in his nature to do it. The doctor says there are such boys springing up amongst us--boys of a sort unknown in the last generation--the outcome of new views of life. They seem

to see all its terrors before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them. He says it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live. He's an advanced man, the doctor: but he can give no consolation to--"

Jude had kept back his own grief on account of her; but he now broke down; and this stimulated Sue to efforts of sympathy which in some degree distracted her from her poignant self-reproach. When everybody was gone, she was allowed to see the children.

The boy's face expressed the whole tale of their situation. On that little shape had converged all the inauspiciousness and shadow which had darkened the first union of Jude, and all the accidents, mistakes, fears, errors of the last. He was their nodal point, their focus, their expression in a single term. For the rashness of those parents he had groaned, for their ill assortment he had quaked, and for the misfortunes of these he had died.

When the house was silent, and they could do nothing but await the coroner's inquest, a subdued, large, low voice spread into the air of the room from behind the heavy walls at the back.

"What is it?" said Sue, her spasmodic breathing suspended.

"The organ of the college chapel. The organist practising I suppose. It's the anthem from the seventy-third Psalm; 'Truly God is loving

unto Israel."

She sobbed again. "Oh, oh my babies! They had done no harm! Why should they have been taken away, and not I!"

There was another stillness--broken at last by two persons in conversation somewhere without.

"They are talking about us, no doubt!" moaned Sue. "'We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men!'"

Jude listened--"No--they are not talking of us," he said. "They are two clergymen of different views, arguing about the eastward position. Good God--the eastward position, and all creation groaning!"

Then another silence, till she was seized with another uncontrollable fit of grief. "There is something external to us which says, 'You shan't!' First it said, 'You shan't learn!' Then it said, 'You shan't labour!' Now it says, 'You shan't love!'"

He tried to soothe her by saying, "That's bitter of you, darling."

"But it's true!"

Thus they waited, and she went back again to her room. The baby's

frock, shoes, and socks, which had been lying on a chair at the time of his death, she would not now have removed, though Jude would fain have got them out of her sight. But whenever he touched them she implored him to let them lie, and burst out almost savagely at the woman of the house when she also attempted to put them away.

Jude dreaded her dull apathetic silences almost more than her paroxysms. "Why don't you speak to me, Jude?" she cried out, after one of these. "Don't turn away from me! I can't BEAR the loneliness of being out of your looks!"

"There, dear; here I am," he said, putting his face close to hers.

"Yes... Oh, my comrade, our perfect union--our two-in-oneness--is now stained with blood!"

"Shadowed by death--that's all."

"Ah; but it was I who incited him really, though I didn't know I was doing it! I talked to the child as one should only talk to people of mature age. I said the world was against us, that it was better to be out of life than in it at this price; and he took it literally. And I told him I was going to have another child. It upset him. Oh how bitterly he upbraided me!"

"Why did you do it, Sue?"

"I can't tell. It was that I wanted to be truthful. I couldn't bear deceiving him as to the facts of life. And yet I wasn't truthful, for with a false delicacy I told him too obscurely.--Why was I half-wiser than my fellow-women? And not entirely wiser! Why didn't I tell him pleasant untruths, instead of half-realities? It was my want of self-control, so that I could neither conceal things nor reveal them!"

"Your plan might have been a good one for the majority of cases; only in our peculiar case it chanced to work badly perhaps. He must have known sooner or later."

"And I was just making my baby darling a new frock; and now I shall never see him in it, and never talk to him any more! ... My eyes are so swollen that I can scarcely see; and yet little more than a year ago I called myself happy! We went about loving each other too much--indulging ourselves to utter selfishness with each other! We said--do you remember?--that we would make a virtue of joy. I said it was Nature's intention, Nature's law and *raison d'être* that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us--instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart. What dreadful things I said! And now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word!"

She sank into a quiet contemplation, till she said, "It is best,

perhaps, that they should be gone.--Yes--I see it is! Better that they should be plucked fresh than stay to wither away miserably!"

"Yes," replied Jude. "Some say that the elders should rejoice when their children die in infancy."

"But they don't know! ... Oh my babies, my babies, could you be alive now! You may say the boy wished to be out of life, or he wouldn't have done it. It was not unreasonable for him to die: it was part of his incurably sad nature, poor little fellow! But then the others--my OWN children and yours!"

Again Sue looked at the hanging little frock and at the socks and shoes; and her figure quivered like a string. "I am a pitiable creature," she said, "good neither for earth nor heaven any more! I am driven out of my mind by things! What ought to be done?" She stared at Jude, and tightly held his hand.

"Nothing can be done," he replied. "Things are as they are, and will be brought to their destined issue."

She paused. "Yes! Who said that?" she asked heavily.

"It comes in the chorus of the Agamemnon. It has been in my mind continually since this happened."

"My poor Jude--how you've missed everything!--you more than I, for I did get you! To think you should know that by your unassisted reading, and yet be in poverty and despair!"

After such momentary diversions her grief would return in a wave.

The jury duly came and viewed the bodies, the inquest was held; and next arrived the melancholy morning of the funeral. Accounts in the newspapers had brought to the spot curious idlers, who stood apparently counting the window-panes and the stones of the walls. Doubt of the real relations of the couple added zest to their curiosity. Sue had declared that she would follow the two little ones to the grave, but at the last moment she gave way, and the coffins were quietly carried out of the house while she was lying down. Jude got into the vehicle, and it drove away, much to the relief of the landlord, who now had only Sue and her luggage remaining on his hands, which he hoped to be also clear of later on in the day, and so to have freed his house from the exasperating notoriety it had acquired during the week through his wife's unlucky admission of these strangers. In the afternoon he privately consulted with the owner of the house, and they agreed that if any objection to it arose from the tragedy which had occurred there they would try to get its number changed.

When Jude had seen the two little boxes--one containing little Jude, and the other the two smallest--deposited in the earth he hastened

back to Sue, who was still in her room, and he therefore did not disturb her just then. Feeling anxious, however, he went again about four o'clock. The woman thought she was still lying down, but returned to him to say that she was not in her bedroom after all. Her hat and jacket, too, were missing: she had gone out. Jude hurried off to the public house where he was sleeping. She had not been there. Then bethinking himself of possibilities he went along the road to the cemetery, which he entered, and crossed to where the interments had recently taken place. The idlers who had followed to the spot by reason of the tragedy were all gone now. A man with a shovel in his hands was attempting to earth in the common grave of the three children, but his arm was held back by an expostulating woman who stood in the half-filled hole. It was Sue, whose coloured clothing, which she had never thought of changing for the mourning he had bought, suggested to the eye a deeper grief than the conventional garb of bereavement could express.

"He's filling them in, and he shan't till I've seen my little ones again!" she cried wildly when she saw Jude. "I want to see them once more. Oh Jude--please Jude--I want to see them! I didn't know you would let them be taken away while I was asleep! You said perhaps I should see them once more before they were screwed down; and then you didn't, but took them away! Oh Jude, you are cruel to me too!"

"She's been wanting me to dig out the grave again, and let her get to the coffins," said the man with the spade. "She ought to be took



home, by the look o' her. She is hardly responsible, poor thing, seemingly. Can't dig 'em up again now, ma'am. Do ye go home with your husband, and take it quiet, and thank God that there'll be another soon to swage yer grief."

But Sue kept asking piteously: "Can't I see them once more--just once! Can't I? Only just one little minute, Jude? It would not take long! And I should be so glad, Jude! I will be so good, and not disobey you ever any more, Jude, if you will let me? I would go home quietly afterwards, and not want to see them any more! Can't I? Why can't I?"

Thus she went on. Jude was thrown into such acute sorrow that he almost felt he would try to get the man to accede. But it could do no good, and might make her still worse; and he saw that it was imperative to get her home at once. So he coaxed her, and whispered tenderly, and put his arm round her to support her; till she helplessly gave in, and was induced to leave the cemetery.

He wished to obtain a fly to take her back in, but economy being so imperative she deprecated his doing so, and they walked along slowly, Jude in black crape, she in brown and red clothing. They were to have gone to a new lodging that afternoon, but Jude saw that it was not practicable, and in course of time they entered the now hated house. Sue was at once got to bed, and the doctor sent for.

Jude waited all the evening downstairs. At a very late hour the intelligence was brought to him that a child had been prematurely born, and that it, like the others, was a corpse.

### III

Sue was convalescent, though she had hoped for death, and Jude had again obtained work at his old trade. They were in other lodgings now, in the direction of Beersheba, and not far from the Church of Ceremonies--Saint Silas.

They would sit silent, more bodeful of the direct antagonism of things than of their insensate and stolid obstructiveness. Vague and quaint imaginings had haunted Sue in the days when her intellect scintillated like a star, that the world resembled a stanza or melody composed in a dream; it was wonderfully excellent to the half-aroused intelligence, but hopelessly absurd at the full waking; that the first cause worked automatically like a somnambulist, and not reflectively like a sage; that at the framing of the terrestrial conditions there seemed never to have been contemplated such a development of emotional perceptiveness among the creatures subject to those conditions as that reached by thinking and educated humanity. But affliction makes opposing forces loom

anthropomorphous; and those ideas were now exchanged for a sense of Jude and herself fleeing from a persecutor.

"We must conform!" she said mournfully. "All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!"

"It is only against man and senseless circumstance," said Jude.

"True!" she murmured. "What have I been thinking of! I am getting as superstitious as a savage! ... But whoever or whatever our foe may be, I am cowed into submission. I have no more fighting strength left; no more enterprise. I am beaten, beaten! ... 'We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men!' I am always saying that now."

"I feel the same!"

"What shall we do? You are in work now; but remember, it may only be because our history and relations are not absolutely known... Possibly, if they knew our marriage had not been formalized they would turn you out of your job as they did at Aldbrickham!"

"I hardly know. Perhaps they would hardly do that. However, I think that we ought to make it legal now--as soon as you are able to go

out."

"You think we ought?"

"Certainly."

And Jude fell into thought. "I have seemed to myself lately," he said, "to belong to that vast band of men shunned by the virtuous--the men called seducers. It amazes me when I think of it! I have not been conscious of it, or of any wrongdoing towards you, whom I love more than myself. Yet I am one of those men! I wonder if any other of them are the same purblind, simple creatures as I? ... Yes, Sue--that's what I am. I seduced you... You were a distinct type--a refined creature, intended by Nature to be left intact. But I couldn't leave you alone!"

"No, no, Jude!" she said quickly. "Don't reproach yourself with being what you are not. If anybody is to blame it is I."

"I supported you in your resolve to leave Phillotson; and without me perhaps you wouldn't have urged him to let you go."

"I should have, just the same. As to ourselves, the fact of our not having entered into a legal contract is the saving feature in our union. We have thereby avoided insulting, as it were, the solemnity of our first marriages."

"Solemnity?" Jude looked at her with some surprise, and grew conscious that she was not the Sue of their earlier time.

"Yes," she said, with a little quiver in her words, "I have had dreadful fears, a dreadful sense of my own insolence of action. I have thought--that I am still his wife!"

"Whose?"

"Richard's."

"Good God, dearest!--why?"

"Oh I can't explain! Only the thought comes to me."

"It is your weakness--a sick fancy, without reason or meaning! Don't let it trouble you."

Sue sighed uneasily.

As a set-off against such discussions as these there had come an improvement in their pecuniary position, which earlier in their experience would have made them cheerful. Jude had quite unexpectedly found good employment at his old trade almost directly he arrived, the summer weather suiting his fragile constitution; and

outwardly his days went on with that monotonous uniformity which is in itself so grateful after vicissitude. People seemed to have forgotten that he had ever shown any awkward aberrancies: and he daily mounted to the parapets and copings of colleges he could never enter, and renewed the crumbling freestones of mullioned windows he would never look from, as if he had known no wish to do otherwise.

There was this change in him; that he did not often go to any service at the churches now. One thing troubled him more than any other; that Sue and himself had mentally travelled in opposite directions since the tragedy: events which had enlarged his own views of life, laws, customs, and dogmas, had not operated in the same manner on Sue's. She was no longer the same as in the independent days, when her intellect played like lambent lightning over conventions and formalities which he at that time respected, though he did not now.

On a particular Sunday evening he came in rather late. She was not at home, but she soon returned, when he found her silent and meditative.

"What are you thinking of, little woman?" he asked curiously.

"Oh I can't tell clearly! I have thought that we have been selfish, careless, even impious, in our courses, you and I. Our life has been a vain attempt at self-delight. But self-abnegation is the higher road. We should mortify the flesh--the terrible flesh--the curse of

Adam!"

"Sue!" he murmured. "What has come over you?"

"We ought to be continually sacrificing ourselves on the altar of duty! But I have always striven to do what has pleased me. I well deserved the scourging I have got! I wish something would take the evil right out of me, and all my monstrous errors, and all my sinful ways!"

"Sue--my own too suffering dear!--there's no evil woman in you. Your natural instincts are perfectly healthy; not quite so impassioned, perhaps, as I could wish; but good, and dear, and pure. And as I have often said, you are absolutely the most ethereal, least sensual woman I ever knew to exist without inhuman sexlessness. Why do you talk in such a changed way? We have not been selfish, except when no one could profit by our being otherwise. You used to say that human nature was noble and long-suffering, not vile and corrupt, and at last I thought you spoke truly. And now you seem to take such a much lower view!"

"I want a humble heart; and a chastened mind; and I have never had them yet!"

"You have been fearless, both as a thinker and as a feeler, and you deserved more admiration than I gave. I was too full of narrow

dogmas at that time to see it."

"Don't say that, Jude! I wish my every fearless word and thought could be rooted out of my history. Self-renunciation--that's everything! I cannot humiliate myself too much. I should like to prick myself all over with pins and bleed out the badness that's in me!"

"Hush!" he said, pressing her little face against his breast as if she were an infant. "It is bereavement that has brought you to this! Such remorse is not for you, my sensitive plant, but for the wicked ones of the earth--who never feel it!"

"I ought not to stay like this," she murmured, when she had remained in the position a long while.

"Why not?"

"It is indulgence."

"Still on the same tack! But is there anything better on earth than that we should love one another?"

"Yes. It depends on the sort of love; and yours--ours--is the wrong."



"I won't have it, Sue! Come, when do you wish our marriage to be signed in a vestry?"

She paused, and looked up uneasily. "Never," she whispered.

Not knowing the whole of her meaning he took the objection serenely, and said nothing. Several minutes elapsed, and he thought she had fallen asleep; but he spoke softly, and found that she was wide awake all the time. She sat upright and sighed.

"There is a strange, indescribable perfume or atmosphere about you to-night, Sue," he said. "I mean not only mentally, but about your clothes, also. A sort of vegetable scent, which I seem to know, yet cannot remember."

"It is incense."

"Incense?"

"I have been to the service at St. Silas', and I was in the fumes of it."

"Oh--St. Silas."

"Yes. I go there sometimes."

"Indeed. You go there!"

"You see, Jude, it is lonely here in the weekday mornings, when you are at work, and I think and think of--of my--" She stopped till she could control the lumpiness of her throat. "And I have taken to go in there, as it is so near."

"Oh well--of course, I say nothing against it. Only it is odd, for you. They little think what sort of chiel is amang them!"

"What do you mean, Jude?"

"Well--a sceptic, to be plain."

"How can you pain me so, dear Jude, in my trouble! Yet I know you didn't mean it. But you ought not to say that."

"I won't. But I am much surprised!"

"Well--I want to tell you something else, Jude. You won't be angry, will you? I have thought of it a good deal since my babies died. I don't think I ought to be your wife--or as your wife--any longer."

"What? ... But you ARE!"

"From your point of view; but--"

"Of course we were afraid of the ceremony, and a good many others would have been in our places, with such strong reasons for fears. But experience has proved how we misjudged ourselves, and overrated our infirmities; and if you are beginning to respect rites and ceremonies, as you seem to be, I wonder you don't say it shall be carried out instantly? You certainly ARE my wife, Sue, in all but law. What do you mean by what you said?"

"I don't think I am!"

"Not? But suppose we HAD gone through the ceremony? Would you feel that you were then?"

"No. I should not feel even then that I was. I should feel worse than I do now."

"Why so--in the name of all that's perverse, my dear?"

"Because I am Richard's."

"Ah--you hinted that absurd fancy to me before!"

"It was only an impression with me then; I feel more and more convinced as time goes on that--I belong to him, or to nobody."

"My good heavens--how we are changing places!"

"Yes. Perhaps so."

Some few days later, in the dusk of the summer evening, they were sitting in the same small room downstairs, when a knock came to the front door of the carpenter's house where they were lodging, and in a few moments there was a tap at the door of their room. Before they could open it the comer did so, and a woman's form appeared.

"Is Mr. Fawley here?"

Jude and Sue started as he mechanically replied in the affirmative, for the voice was Arabella's.

He formally requested her to come in, and she sat down in the window bench, where they could distinctly see her outline against the light; but no characteristic that enabled them to estimate her general aspect and air. Yet something seemed to denote that she was not quite so comfortably circumstanced, nor so bouncingly attired, as she had been during Cartlett's lifetime.

The three attempted an awkward conversation about the tragedy, of which Jude had felt it to be his duty to inform her immediately, though she had never replied to his letter.

"I have just come from the cemetery," she said. "I inquired and found the child's grave. I couldn't come to the funeral--thank you for inviting me all the same. I read all about it in the papers, and I felt I wasn't wanted... No--I couldn't come to the funeral," repeated Arabella, who, seeming utterly unable to reach the ideal of a catastrophic manner, fumbled with iterations. "But I am glad I found the grave. As 'tis your trade, Jude, you'll be able to put up a handsome stone to 'em."

"I shall put up a headstone," said Jude drearily.

"He was my child, and naturally I feel for him."

"I hope so. We all did."

"The others that weren't mine I didn't feel so much for, as was natural."

"Of course."

A sigh came from the dark corner where Sue sat.

"I had often wished I had mine with me," continued Mrs. Cartlett.

"Perhaps 'twouldn't have happened then! But of course I didn't wish to take him away from your wife."

"I am not his wife," came from Sue.

The unexpectedness of her words struck Jude silent.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, I'm sure," said Arabella. "I thought you were!"

Jude had known from the quality of Sue's tone that her new and transcendental views lurked in her words; but all except their obvious meaning was, naturally, missed by Arabella. The latter, after evincing that she was struck by Sue's avowal, recovered herself, and went on to talk with placid bluntness about "her" boy, for whom, though in his lifetime she had shown no care at all, she now exhibited a ceremonial mournfulness that was apparently sustaining to the conscience. She alluded to the past, and in making some remark appealed again to Sue. There was no answer: Sue had invisibly left the room.

"She said she was not your wife?" resumed Arabella in another voice.

"Why should she do that?"

"I cannot inform you," said Jude shortly.

"She is, isn't she? She once told me so."

"I don't criticize what she says."

"Ah--I see! Well, my time is up. I am staying here to-night, and thought I could do no less than call, after our mutual affliction. I am sleeping at the place where I used to be barmaid, and to-morrow I go back to Alfredston. Father is come home again, and I am living with him."

"He has returned from Australia?" said Jude with languid curiosity.

"Yes. Couldn't get on there. Had a rough time of it. Mother died of dys--what do you call it--in the hot weather, and Father and two of the young ones have just got back. He has got a cottage near the old place, and for the present I am keeping house for him."

Jude's former wife had maintained a stereotyped manner of strict good breeding even now that Sue was gone, and limited her stay to a number of minutes that should accord with the highest respectability. When she had departed Jude, much relieved, went to the stairs and called Sue--feeling anxious as to what had become of her.

There was no answer, and the carpenter who kept the lodgings said she had not come in. Jude was puzzled, and became quite alarmed at her absence, for the hour was growing late. The carpenter called his wife, who conjectured that Sue might have gone to St. Silas' church, as she often went there.

"Surely not at this time o' night?" said Jude. "It is shut."

"She knows somebody who keeps the key, and she has it whenever she wants it."

"How long has she been going on with this?"

"Oh, some few weeks, I think."

Jude went vaguely in the direction of the church, which he had never once approached since he lived out that way years before, when his young opinions were more mystical than they were now. The spot was deserted, but the door was certainly unfastened; he lifted the latch without noise, and pushing to the door behind him, stood absolutely still inside. The prevalent silence seemed to contain a faint sound, explicable as a breathing, or a sobbing, which came from the other end of the building. The floor-cloth deadened his footsteps as he moved in that direction through the obscurity, which was broken only by the faintest reflected night-light from without.

High overhead, above the chancel steps, Jude could discern a huge, solidly constructed Latin cross--as large, probably, as the original it was designed to commemorate. It seemed to be suspended in the air by invisible wires; it was set with large jewels, which faintly glimmered in some weak ray caught from outside, as the cross swayed to and fro in a silent and scarcely perceptible motion. Underneath,



upon the floor, lay what appeared to be a heap of black clothes, and from this was repeated the sobbing that he had heard before. It was his Sue's form, prostrate on the paving.

"Sue!" he whispered.

Something white disclosed itself; she had turned up her face.

"What--do you want with me here, Jude?" she said almost sharply.

"You shouldn't come! I wanted to be alone! Why did you intrude here?"

"How can you ask!" he retorted in quick reproach, for his full heart was wounded to its centre at this attitude of hers towards him.

"Why do I come? Who has a right to come, I should like to know, if I have not! I, who love you better than my own self--better--far better--than you have loved me! What made you leave me to come here alone?"

"Don't criticize me, Jude--I can't bear it!--I have often told you so. You must take me as I am. I am a wretch--broken by my distractions! I couldn't BEAR it when Arabella came--I felt so utterly miserable I had to come away. She seems to be your wife still, and Richard to be my husband!"

"But they are nothing to us!"

"Yes, dear friend, they are. I see marriage differently now. My babies have been taken from me to show me this! Arabella's child killing mine was a judgement--the right slaying the wrong. What, WHAT shall I do! I am such a vile creature--too worthless to mix with ordinary human beings!"

"This is terrible!" said Jude, verging on tears. "It is monstrous and unnatural for you to be so remorseful when you have done no wrong!"

"Ah--you don't know my badness!"

He returned vehemently: "I do! Every atom and dreg of it! You make me hate Christianity, or mysticism, or Sacerdotalism, or whatever it may be called, if it's that which has caused this deterioration in you. That a woman-poet, a woman-seer, a woman whose soul shone like a diamond--whom all the wise of the world would have been proud of, if they could have known you--should degrade herself like this! I am glad I had nothing to do with Divinity--damn glad--if it's going to ruin you in this way!"

"You are angry, Jude, and unkind to me, and don't see how things are."

"Then come along home with me, dearest, and perhaps I shall. I am

overburdened--and you, too, are unhinged just now." He put his arm round her and lifted her; but though she came, she preferred to walk without his support.

"I don't dislike you, Jude," she said in a sweet and imploring voice.

"I love you as much as ever! Only--I ought not to love you--any more. Oh I must not any more!"

"I can't own it."

"But I have made up my mind that I am not your wife! I belong to him--I sacramentally joined myself to him for life. Nothing can alter it!"

"But surely we are man and wife, if ever two people were in this world? Nature's own marriage it is, unquestionably!"

"But not Heaven's. Another was made for me there, and ratified eternally in the church at Melchester."

"Sue, Sue--affliction has brought you to this unreasonable state! After converting me to your views on so many things, to find you suddenly turn to the right--about like this--for no reason whatever, confounding all you have formerly said through sentiment merely! You root out of me what little affection and reverence I had left in me for the Church as an old acquaintance... What I can't understand

in you is your extraordinary blindness now to your old logic. Is it peculiar to you, or is it common to woman? Is a woman a thinking unit at all, or a fraction always wanting its integer? How you argued that marriage was only a clumsy contract--which it is--how you showed all the objections to it--all the absurdities! If two and two made four when we were happy together, surely they make four now? I can't understand it, I repeat!"

"Ah, dear Jude; that's because you are like a totally deaf man observing people listening to music. You say 'What are they regarding? Nothing is there.' But something is."

"That is a hard saying from you; and not a true parallel! You threw off old husks of prejudices, and taught me to do it; and now you go back upon yourself. I confess I am utterly stultified in my estimate of you."

"Dear friend, my only friend, don't be hard with me! I can't help being as I am, I am convinced I am right--that I see the light at last. But oh, how to profit by it!"

They walked along a few more steps till they were outside the building and she had returned the key. "Can this be the girl," said Jude when she came back, feeling a slight renewal of elasticity now that he was in the open street; "can this be the girl who brought the pagan deities into this most Christian city?--who mimicked Miss

Fontover when she crushed them with her heel?--quoted Gibbon, and Shelley, and Mill? Where are dear Apollo, and dear Venus now!"

"Oh don't, don't be so cruel to me, Jude, and I so unhappy!" she sobbed. "I can't bear it! I was in error--I cannot reason with you. I was wrong--proud in my own conceit! Arabella's coming was the finish. Don't satirize me: it cuts like a knife!"

He flung his arms round her and kissed her passionately there in the silent street, before she could hinder him. They went on till they came to a little coffee-house. "Jude," she said with suppressed tears, "would you mind getting a lodging here?"

"I will--if, if you really wish? But do you? Let me go to our door and understand you."

He went and conducted her in. She said she wanted no supper, and went in the dark upstairs and struck a light. Turning she found that Jude had followed her, and was standing at the chamber door. She went to him, put her hand in his, and said "Good-night."

"But Sue! Don't we live here?"

"You said you would do as I wished!"

"Yes. Very well! ... Perhaps it was wrong of me to argue

distastefully as I have done! Perhaps as we couldn't conscientiously marry at first in the old-fashioned way, we ought to have parted. Perhaps the world is not illuminated enough for such experiments as ours! Who were we, to think we could act as pioneers!"

"I am so glad you see that much, at any rate. I never deliberately meant to do as I did. I slipped into my false position through jealousy and agitation!"

"But surely through love--you loved me?"

"Yes. But I wanted to let it stop there, and go on always as mere lovers; until--"

"But people in love couldn't live for ever like that!"

"Women could: men can't, because they--won't. An average woman is in this superior to an average man--that she never instigates, only responds. We ought to have lived in mental communion, and no more."

"I was the unhappy cause of the change, as I have said before! ... Well, as you will! ... But human nature can't help being itself."

"Oh yes--that's just what it has to learn--self-mastery."

"I repeat--if either were to blame it was not you but I."

"No--it was I. Your wickedness was only the natural man's desire to possess the woman. Mine was not the reciprocal wish till envy stimulated me to oust Arabella. I had thought I ought in charity to let you approach me--that it was damnably selfish to torture you as I did my other friend. But I shouldn't have given way if you hadn't broken me down by making me fear you would go back to her... But don't let us say any more about it! Jude, will you leave me to myself now?"

"Yes... But Sue--my wife, as you are!" he burst out; "my old reproach to you was, after all, a true one. You have never loved me as I love you--never--never! Yours is not a passionate heart--your heart does not burn in a flame! You are, upon the whole, a sort of fay, or sprite--not a woman!"

"At first I did not love you, Jude; that I own. When I first knew you I merely wanted you to love me. I did not exactly flirt with you; but that inborn craving which undermines some women's morals almost more than unbridled passion--the craving to attract and captivate, regardless of the injury it may do the man--was in me; and when I found I had caught you, I was frightened. And then--I don't know how it was--I couldn't bear to let you go--possibly to Arabella again--and so I got to love you, Jude. But you see, however fondly it ended, it began in the selfish and cruel wish to make your heart

ache for me without letting mine ache for you."

"And now you add to your cruelty by leaving me!"

"Ah--yes! The further I flounder, the more harm I do!"

"O Sue!" said he with a sudden sense of his own danger. "Do not do an immoral thing for moral reasons! You have been my social salvation. Stay with me for humanity's sake! You know what a weak fellow I am. My two arch-enemies you know--my weakness for womankind and my impulse to strong liquor. Don't abandon me to them, Sue, to save your own soul only! They have been kept entirely at a distance since you became my guardian-angel! Since I have had you I have been able to go into any temptations of the sort, without risk. Isn't my safety worth a little sacrifice of dogmatic principle? I am in terror lest, if you leave me, it will be with me another case of the pig that was washed turning back to his wallowing in the mire!"

Sue burst out weeping. "Oh, but you must not, Jude! You won't! I'll pray for you night and day!"

"Well--never mind; don't grieve," said Jude generously. "I did suffer, God knows, about you at that time; and now I suffer again. But perhaps not so much as you. The woman mostly gets the worst of it in the long run!"



"She does."

"Unless she is absolutely worthless and contemptible. And this one is not that, anyhow!"

Sue drew a nervous breath or two. "She is--I fear! ... Now Jude--good-night,--please!"

"I mustn't stay?--Not just once more? As it has been so many times--O Sue, my wife, why not!"

"No--no--not wife! ... I am in your hands, Jude--don't tempt me back now I have advanced so far!"

"Very well. I do your bidding. I owe that to you, darling, in penance for how I overruled it at the first time. My God, how selfish I was! Perhaps--perhaps I spoilt one of the highest and purest loves that ever existed between man and woman! ... Then let the veil of our temple be rent in two from this hour!"

He went to the bed, removed one of the pair of pillows thereon, and flung it to the floor.

Sue looked at him, and bending over the bed-rail wept silently.

"You don't see that it is a matter of conscience with me, and not of dislike to you!" she brokenly murmured. "Dislike to you! But I

can't say any more--it breaks my heart--it will be undoing all I have begun! Jude--good-night!"

"Good-night," he said, and turned to go.

"Oh but you shall kiss me!" said she, starting up. "I can't--bear--!"

He clasped her, and kissed her weeping face as he had scarcely ever done before, and they remained in silence till she said, "Good-bye, good-bye!" And then gently pressing him away she got free, trying to mitigate the sadness by saying: "We'll be dear friends just the same, Jude, won't we? And we'll see each other sometimes--yes!--and forget all this, and try to be as we were long ago?"

Jude did not permit himself to speak, but turned and descended the stairs.

#### IV

The man whom Sue, in her mental volte-face, was now regarding as her inseparable husband, lived still at Marygreen.

On the day before the tragedy of the children, Phillotson had seen both her and Jude as they stood in the rain at Christminster watching the procession to the theatre. But he had said nothing of it at the moment to his companion Gillingham, who, being an old friend, was staying with him at the village aforesaid, and had, indeed, suggested the day's trip to Christminster.

"What are you thinking of?" said Gillingham, as they went home. "The university degree you never obtained?"

"No, no," said Phillotson gruffly. "Of somebody I saw to-day." In a moment he added, "Susanna."

"I saw her, too."

"You said nothing."

"I didn't wish to draw your attention to her. But, as you did see her, you should have said: 'How d'ye do, my dear-that-was?'"

"Ah, well. I might have. But what do you think of this: I have good reason for supposing that she was innocent when I divorced her--that I was all wrong. Yes, indeed! Awkward, isn't it?"

"She has taken care to set you right since, anyhow, apparently."

"H'm. That's a cheap sneer. I ought to have waited, unquestionably."

At the end of the week, when Gillingham had gone back to his school near Shaston, Phillotson, as was his custom, went to Alfredston market; ruminating again on Arabella's intelligence as he walked down the long hill which he had known before Jude knew it, though his history had not beaten so intensely upon its incline. Arrived in the town he bought his usual weekly local paper; and when he had sat down in an inn to refresh himself for the five miles' walk back, he pulled the paper from his pocket and read awhile. The account of the "strange suicide of a stone-mason's children" met his eye.

Unimpassioned as he was, it impressed him painfully, and puzzled him not a little, for he could not understand the age of the elder child being what it was stated to be. However, there was no doubt that the newspaper report was in some way true.

"Their cup of sorrow is now full!" he said: and thought and thought of Sue, and what she had gained by leaving him.

Arabella having made her home at Alfredston, and the schoolmaster coming to market there every Saturday, it was not wonderful that in a few weeks they met again--the precise time being just after her return from Christminster, where she had stayed much longer than she had at first intended, keeping an interested eye on Jude, though Jude had seen no more of her. Phillotson was on his way homeward when he

encountered Arabella, and she was approaching the town.

"You like walking out this way, Mrs. Cartlett?" he said.

"I've just begun to again," she replied. "It is where I lived as maid and wife, and all the past things of my life that are interesting to my feelings are mixed up with this road. And they have been stirred up in me too, lately; for I've been visiting at Christminster. Yes; I've seen Jude."

"Ah! How do they bear their terrible affliction?"

"In a ve-ry strange way--ve-ry strange! She don't live with him any longer. I only heard of it as a certainty just before I left; though I had thought things were drifting that way from their manner when I called on them."

"Not live with her husband? Why, I should have thought 'twould have united them more."

"He's not her husband, after all. She has never really married him although they have passed as man and wife so long. And now, instead of this sad event making 'em hurry up, and get the thing done legally, she's took in a queer religious way, just as I was in my affliction at losing Cartlett, only hers is of a more 'sterical sort than mine. And she says, so I was told, that she's your wife in the

eye of Heaven and the Church--yours only; and can't be anybody else's by any act of man."

"Ah--indeed? ... Separated, have they!"

"You see, the eldest boy was mine--"

"Oh--yours!"

"Yes, poor little fellow--born in lawful wedlock, thank God. And perhaps she feels, over and above other things, that I ought to have been in her place. I can't say. However, as for me, I am soon off from here. I've got Father to look after now, and we can't live in such a hum-drum place as this. I hope soon to be in a bar again at Christminster, or some other big town."

They parted. When Phillotson had ascended the hill a few steps he stopped, hastened back, and called her.

"What is, or was, their address?"

Arabella gave it.

"Thank you. Good afternoon."

Arabella smiled grimly as she resumed her way, and practised

dimple-making all along the road from where the pollard willows begin to the old almshouses in the first street of the town.

Meanwhile Phillotson ascended to Marygreen, and for the first time during a lengthened period he lived with a forward eye. On crossing under the large trees of the green to the humble schoolhouse to which he had been reduced he stood a moment, and pictured Sue coming out of the door to meet him. No man had ever suffered more inconvenience from his own charity, Christian or heathen, than Phillotson had done in letting Sue go. He had been knocked about from pillar to post at the hands of the virtuous almost beyond endurance; he had been nearly starved, and was now dependent entirely upon the very small stipend from the school of this village (where the parson had got ill-spoken of for befriending him). He had often thought of Arabella's remarks that he should have been more severe with Sue, that her recalcitrant spirit would soon have been broken. Yet such was his obstinate and illogical disregard of opinion, and of the principles in which he had been trained, that his convictions on the rightness of his course with his wife had not been disturbed.

Principles which could be subverted by feeling in one direction were liable to the same catastrophe in another. The instincts which had allowed him to give Sue her liberty now enabled him to regard her as none the worse for her life with Jude. He wished for her still, in his curious way, if he did not love her, and, apart from policy, soon felt that he would be gratified to have her again as his, always

provided that she came willingly.

But artifice was necessary, he had found, for stemming the cold and inhumane blast of the world's contempt. And here were the materials ready made. By getting Sue back and remarrying her on the respectable plea of having entertained erroneous views of her, and gained his divorce wrongfully, he might acquire some comfort, resume his old courses, perhaps return to the Shaston school, if not even to the Church as a licentiate.

He thought he would write to Gillingham to inquire his views, and what he thought of his, Phillotson's, sending a letter to her.

Gillingham replied, naturally, that now she was gone it were best to let her be, and considered that if she were anybody's wife she was the wife of the man to whom she had borne three children and owed such tragical adventures. Probably, as his attachment to her seemed unusually strong, the singular pair would make their union legal in course of time, and all would be well, and decent, and in order.

"But they won't--Sue won't!" exclaimed Phillotson to himself.

"Gillingham is so matter of fact. She's affected by Christminster sentiment and teaching. I can see her views on the indissolubility of marriage well enough, and I know where she got them. They are not mine; but I shall make use of them to further mine."

He wrote a brief reply to Gillingham. "I know I am entirely wrong,



but I don't agree with you. As to her having lived with and had three children by him, my feeling is (though I can advance no logical or moral defence of it, on the old lines) that it has done little more than finish her education. I shall write to her, and learn whether what that woman said is true or no."

As he had made up his mind to do this before he had written to his friend, there had not been much reason for writing to the latter at all. However, it was Phillotson's way to act thus.

He accordingly addressed a carefully considered epistle to Sue, and, knowing her emotional temperament, threw a Rhadamanthine strictness into the lines here and there, carefully hiding his heterodox feelings, not to frighten her. He stated that, it having come to his knowledge that her views had considerably changed, he felt compelled to say that his own, too, were largely modified by events subsequent to their parting. He would not conceal from her that passionate love had little to do with his communication. It arose from a wish to make their lives, if not a success, at least no such disastrous failure as they threatened to become, through his acting on what he had considered at the time a principle of justice, charity, and reason.

To indulge one's instinctive and uncontrolled sense of justice and right, was not, he had found, permitted with impunity in an old civilization like ours. It was necessary to act under an acquired

and cultivated sense of the same, if you wished to enjoy an average share of comfort and honour; and to let crude loving kindness take care of itself.

He suggested that she should come to him there at Marygreen.

On second thoughts he took out the last paragraph but one; and having rewritten the letter he dispatched it immediately, and in some excitement awaited the issue.

A few days after a figure moved through the white fog which enveloped the Beersheba suburb of Christminster, towards the quarter in which Jude Fawley had taken up his lodging since his division from Sue. A timid knock sounded upon the door of his abode.

It was evening--so he was at home; and by a species of divination he jumped up and rushed to the door himself.

"Will you come out with me? I would rather not come in. I want to--to talk with you--and to go with you to the cemetery."

It had been in the trembling accents of Sue that these words came.

Jude put on his hat. "It is dreary for you to be out," he said.

"But if you prefer not to come in, I don't mind."

"Yes--I do. I shall not keep you long."

Jude was too much affected to go on talking at first; she, too, was now such a mere cluster of nerves that all initiatory power seemed to have left her, and they proceeded through the fog like Acherontic shades for a long while, without sound or gesture.

"I want to tell you," she presently said, her voice now quick, now slow, "so that you may not hear of it by chance. I am going back to Richard. He has--so magnanimously--agreed to forgive all."

"Going back? How can you go--"

"He is going to marry me again. That is for form's sake, and to satisfy the world, which does not see things as they are. But of course I AM his wife already. Nothing has changed that."

He turned upon her with an anguish that was well-nigh fierce.

"But you are MY wife! Yes, you are. You know it. I have always regretted that feint of ours in going away and pretending to come back legally married, to save appearances. I loved you, and you loved me; and we closed with each other; and that made the marriage. We still love--you as well as I--KNOW it, Sue! Therefore our marriage is not cancelled."

"Yes; I know how you see it," she answered with despairing self-suppression. "But I am going to marry him again, as it would be called by you. Strictly speaking you, too--don't mind my saying it, Jude!--you should take back--Arabella."

"I should? Good God--what next! But how if you and I had married legally, as we were on the point of doing?"

"I should have felt just the same--that ours was not a marriage. And I would go back to Richard without repeating the sacrament, if he asked me. But 'the world and its ways have a certain worth' (I suppose): therefore I concede a repetition of the ceremony... Don't crush all the life out of me by satire and argument, I implore you! I was strongest once, I know, and perhaps I treated you cruelly. But Jude, return good for evil! I am the weaker now. Don't retaliate upon me, but be kind. Oh be kind to me--a poor wicked woman who is trying to mend!"

He shook his head hopelessly, his eyes wet. The blow of her bereavement seemed to have destroyed her reasoning faculty. The once keen vision was dimmed. "All wrong, all wrong!" he said huskily. "Error--perversity! It drives me out of my senses. Do you care for him? Do you love him? You know you don't! It will be a fanatic prostitution--God forgive me, yes--that's what it will be!"

"I don't love him--I must, must, own it, in deepest remorse! But I shall try to learn to love him by obeying him."

Jude argued, urged, implored; but her conviction was proof against all. It seemed to be the one thing on earth on which she was firm, and that her firmness in this had left her tottering in every other impulse and wish she possessed.

"I have been considerate enough to let you know the whole truth, and to tell it you myself," she said in cut tones; "that you might not consider yourself slighted by hearing of it at second hand. I have even owned the extreme fact that I do not love him. I did not think you would be so rough with me for doing so! I was going to ask you..."

"To give you away?"

"No. To send--my boxes to me--if you would. But I suppose you won't."

"Why, of course I will. What--isn't he coming to fetch you--to marry you from here? He won't condescend to do that?"

"No--I won't let him. I go to him voluntarily, just as I went away from him. We are to be married at his little church at Marygreen."

She was so sadly sweet in what he called her wrong-headedness that Jude could not help being moved to tears more than once for pity of her. "I never knew such a woman for doing impulsive penances, as you, Sue! No sooner does one expect you to go straight on, as the one rational proceeding, than you double round the corner!"

"Ah, well; let that go! ... Jude, I must say good-bye! But I wanted you to go to the cemetery with me. Let our farewell be there--beside the graves of those who died to bring home to me the error of my views."

They turned in the direction of the place, and the gate was opened to them on application. Sue had been there often, and she knew the way to the spot in the dark. They reached it, and stood still.

"It is here--I should like to part," said she.

"So be it!"

"Don't think me hard because I have acted on conviction. Your generous devotion to me is unparalleled, Jude! Your worldly failure, if you have failed, is to your credit rather than to your blame. Remember that the best and greatest among mankind are those who do themselves no worldly good. Every successful man is more or less a selfish man. The devoted fail... 'Charity seeketh not her own.'"

"In that chapter we are at one, ever beloved darling, and on it we'll part friends. Its verses will stand fast when all the rest that you call religion has passed away!"

"Well--don't discuss it. Good-bye, Jude; my fellow-sinner, and kindest friend!"

"Good-bye, my mistaken wife. Good-bye!"

V

The next afternoon the familiar Christminster fog still hung over all things. Sue's slim shape was only just discernible going towards the station.

Jude had no heart to go to his work that day. Neither could he go anywhere in the direction by which she would be likely to pass. He went in an opposite one, to a dreary, strange, flat scene, where boughs dripped, and coughs and consumption lurked, and where he had never been before.

"Sue's gone from me--gone!" he murmured miserably.

She in the meantime had left by the train, and reached Alfredston Road, where she entered the steam-tram and was conveyed into the town. It had been her request to Phillotson that he should not meet her. She wished, she said, to come to him voluntarily, to his very house and hearthstone.

It was Friday evening, which had been chosen because the schoolmaster was disengaged at four o'clock that day till the Monday morning following. The little car she hired at the Bear to drive her to Marygreen set her down at the end of the lane, half a mile from the village, by her desire, and preceded her to the schoolhouse with such portion of her luggage as she had brought. On its return she encountered it, and asked the driver if he had found the master's house open. The man informed her that he had, and that her things had been taken in by the schoolmaster himself.

She could now enter Marygreen without exciting much observation. She crossed by the well and under the trees to the pretty new school on the other side, and lifted the latch of the dwelling without knocking. Phillotson stood in the middle of the room, awaiting her, as requested.

"I've come, Richard," said she, looking pale and shaken, and sinking into a chair. "I cannot believe--you forgive your--wife!"

"Everything, darling Susanna," said Phillotson.



She started at the endearment, though it had been spoken advisedly without fervour. Then she nerved herself again.

"My children--are dead--and it is right that they should be! I am glad--almost. They were sin-begotten. They were sacrificed to teach me how to live! Their death was the first stage of my purification. That's why they have not died in vain! ... You will take me back?"

He was so stirred by her pitiful words and tone that he did more than he had meant to do. He bent and kissed her cheek.

Sue imperceptibly shrank away, her flesh quivering under the touch of his lips.

Phillotson's heart sank, for desire was renascent in him. "You still have an aversion to me!"

"Oh no, dear--I have been driving through the damp, and I was chilly!" she said, with a hurried smile of apprehension. "When are we going to have the marriage? Soon?"

"To-morrow morning, early, I thought--if you really wish. I am sending round to the vicar to let him know you are come. I have told him all, and he highly approves--he says it will bring our lives to a triumphant and satisfactory issue. But--are you sure of yourself?"

It is not too late to refuse now if--you think you can't bring yourself to it, you know?"

"Yes, yes, I can! I want it done quick. Tell him, tell him at once! My strength is tried by the undertaking--I can't wait long!"

"Have something to eat and drink then, and go over to your room at Mrs. Edlin's. I'll tell the vicar half-past eight to-morrow, before anybody is about--if that's not too soon for you? My friend Gillingham is here to help us in the ceremony. He's been good enough to come all the way from Shaston at great inconvenience to himself."

Unlike a woman in ordinary, whose eye is so keen for material things, Sue seemed to see nothing of the room they were in, or any detail of her environment. But on moving across the parlour to put down her muff she uttered a little "Oh!" and grew paler than before. Her look was that of the condemned criminal who catches sight of his coffin.

"What?" said Phillotson.

The flap of the bureau chanced to be open, and in placing her muff upon it her eye had caught a document which lay there. "Oh--only a--funny surprise!" she said, trying to laugh away her cry as she came back to the table.

"Ah! Yes," said Phillotson. "The licence.... It has just come."

Gillingham now joined them from his room above, and Sue nervously made herself agreeable to him by talking on whatever she thought likely to interest him, except herself, though that interested him most of all. She obediently ate some supper, and prepared to leave for her lodging hard by. Phillotson crossed the green with her, bidding her good-night at Mrs. Edlin's door.

The old woman accompanied Sue to her temporary quarters, and helped her to unpack. Among other things she laid out a night-gown tastefully embroidered.

"Oh--I didn't know THAT was put in!" said Sue quickly. "I didn't mean it to be. Here is a different one." She handed a new and absolutely plain garment, of coarse and unbleached calico.

"But this is the prettiest," said Mrs. Edlin. "That one is no better than very sackcloth o' Scripture!"

"Yes--I meant it to be. Give me the other."

She took it, and began rending it with all her might, the tears resounding through the house like a screech-owl.

"But my dear, dear!--whatever..."

"It is adulterous! It signifies what I don't feel--I bought it long ago--to please Jude. It must be destroyed!"

Mrs. Edlin lifted her hands, and Sue excitedly continued to tear the linen into strips, laying the pieces in the fire.

"You med ha' give it to me!" said the widow. "It do make my heart ache to see such pretty open-work as that a-burned by the flames--not that ornamental night-rails can be much use to a' ould 'ooman like I. My days for such be all past and gone!"

"It is an accursed thing--it reminds me of what I want to forget!" Sue repeated. "It is only fit for the fire."

"Lord, you be too strict! What do ye use such words for, and condemn to hell your dear little innocent children that's lost to 'ee! Upon my life I don't call that religion!"

Sue flung her face upon the bed, sobbing. "Oh, don't, don't! That kills me!" She remained shaken with her grief, and slipped down upon her knees.

"I'll tell 'ee what--you ought not to marry this man again!" said Mrs. Edlin indignantly. "You are in love wi' t' other still!"

"Yes I must--I am his already!"

"Pshoo! You be t' other man's. If you didn't like to commit yourselves to the binding vow again, just at first, 'twas all the more credit to your consciences, considering your reasons, and you med ha' lived on, and made it all right at last. After all, it concerned nobody but your own two selves."

"Richard says he'll have me back, and I'm bound to go! If he had refused, it might not have been so much my duty to--give up Jude. But--" She remained with her face in the bed-clothes, and Mrs. Edlin left the room.

Phillotson in the interval had gone back to his friend Gillingham, who still sat over the supper-table. They soon rose, and walked out on the green to smoke awhile. A light was burning in Sue's room, a shadow moving now and then across the blind.

Gillingham had evidently been impressed with the indefinable charm of Sue, and after a silence he said, "Well: you've all but got her again at last. She can't very well go a second time. The pear has dropped into your hand."

"Yes! ... I suppose I am right in taking her at her word. I confess there seems a touch of selfishness in it. Apart from her being what she is, of course, a luxury for a fogy like me, it will set me right in the eyes of the clergy and orthodox laity, who have never forgiven

me for letting her go. So I may get back in some degree into my old track."

"Well--if you've got any sound reason for marrying her again, do it now in God's name! I was always against your opening the cage-door and letting the bird go in such an obviously suicidal way. You might have been a school inspector by this time, or a reverend, if you hadn't been so weak about her."

"I did myself irreparable damage--I know it."

"Once you've got her housed again, stick to her."

Phillotson was more evasive to-night. He did not care to admit clearly that his taking Sue to him again had at bottom nothing to do with repentance of letting her go, but was, primarily, a human instinct flying in the face of custom and profession. He said, "Yes--I shall do that. I know woman better now. Whatever justice there was in releasing her, there was little logic, for one holding my views on other subjects."

Gillingham looked at him, and wondered whether it would ever happen that the reactionary spirit induced by the world's sneers and his own physical wishes would make Phillotson more orthodoxly cruel to her than he had erstwhile been informally and perversely kind.

"I perceive it won't do to give way to impulse," Phillotson resumed, feeling more and more every minute the necessity of acting up to his position. "I flew in the face of the Church's teaching; but I did it without malice prepense. Women are so strange in their influence that they tempt you to misplaced kindness. However, I know myself better now. A little judicious severity, perhaps..."

"Yes; but you must tighten the reins by degrees only. Don't be too strenuous at first. She'll come to any terms in time."

The caution was unnecessary, though Phillotson did not say so. "I remember what my vicar at Shaston said, when I left after the row that was made about my agreeing to her elopement. 'The only thing you can do to retrieve your position and hers is to admit your error in not restraining her with a wise and strong hand, and to get her back again if she'll come, and be firm in the future.' But I was so headstrong at that time that I paid no heed. And that after the divorce she should have thought of doing so I did not dream."

The gate of Mrs. Edlin's cottage clicked, and somebody began crossing in the direction of the school. Phillotson said "Good-night."

"Oh, is that Mr. Phillotson," said Mrs. Edlin. "I was going over to see 'ee. I've been upstairs with her, helping her to unpack her things; and upon my word, sir, I don't think this ought to be!"

"What--the wedding?"

"Yes. She's forcing herself to it, poor dear little thing; and you've no notion what she's suffering. I was never much for religion nor against it, but it can't be right to let her do this, and you ought to persuade her out of it. Of course everybody will say it was very good and forgiving of 'ee to take her to 'ee again. But for my part I don't."

"It's her wish, and I am willing," said Phillotson with grave reserve, opposition making him illogically tenacious now. "A great piece of laxity will be rectified."

"I don't believe it. She's his wife if anybody's. She's had three children by him, and he loves her dearly; and it's a wicked shame to egg her on to this, poor little quivering thing! She's got nobody on her side. The one man who'd be her friend the obstinate creature won't allow to come near her. What first put her into this mood o' mind, I wonder!"

"I can't tell. Not I certainly. It is all voluntary on her part. Now that's all I have to say." Phillotson spoke stiffly. "You've turned round, Mrs. Edlin. It is unseemly of you!"

"Well. I knowed you'd be affronted at what I had to say; but I don't mind that. The truth's the truth."



"I'm not affronted, Mrs. Edlin. You've been too kind a neighbour for that. But I must be allowed to know what's best for myself and Susanna. I suppose you won't go to church with us, then?"

"No. Be hanged if I can... I don't know what the times be coming to! Matrimony have growed to be that serious in these days that one really do feel afeard to move in it at all. In my time we took it more careless; and I don't know that we was any the worse for it! When I and my poor man were jined in it we kept up the junketing all the week, and drunk the parish dry, and had to borrow half a crown to begin housekeeping!"

When Mrs. Edlin had gone back to her cottage Phillotson spoke moodily. "I don't know whether I ought to do it--at any rate quite so rapidly."

"Why?"

"If she is really compelling herself to this against her instincts--merely from this new sense of duty or religion--I ought perhaps to let her wait a bit."

"Now you've got so far you ought not to back out of it. That's my opinion."

"I can't very well put it off now; that's true. But I had a qualm when she gave that little cry at sight of the licence."

"Now, never you have qualms, old boy. I mean to give her away to-morrow morning, and you mean to take her. It has always been on my conscience that I didn't urge more objections to your letting her go, and now we've got to this stage I shan't be content if I don't help you to set the matter right."

Phillotson nodded, and seeing how staunch his friend was, became more frank. "No doubt when it gets known what I've done I shall be thought a soft fool by many. But they don't know Sue as I do. Though so elusive, hers is such an honest nature at bottom that I don't think she has ever done anything against her conscience. The fact of her having lived with Fawley goes for nothing. At the time she left me for him she thought she was quite within her right. Now she thinks otherwise."

The next morning came, and the self-sacrifice of the woman on the altar of what she was pleased to call her principles was acquiesced in by these two friends, each from his own point of view. Phillotson went across to the Widow Edlin's to fetch Sue a few minutes after eight o'clock. The fog of the previous day or two on the low-lands had travelled up here by now, and the trees on the green caught armfuls, and turned them into showers of big drops. The bride was waiting, ready; bonnet and all on. She had never in her life looked

so much like the lily her name connoted as she did in that pallid morning light. Chastened, world-weary, remorseful, the strain on her nerves had preyed upon her flesh and bones, and she appeared smaller in outline than she had formerly done, though Sue had not been a large woman in her days of rudest health.

"Prompt," said the schoolmaster, magnanimously taking her hand. But he checked his impulse to kiss her, remembering her start of yesterday, which unpleasantly lingered in his mind.

Gillingham joined them, and they left the house, Widow Edlin continuing steadfast in her refusal to assist in the ceremony.

"Where is the church?" said Sue. She had not lived there for any length of time since the old church was pulled down, and in her preoccupation forgot the new one.

"Up here," said Phillotson; and presently the tower loomed large and solemn in the fog. The vicar had already crossed to the building, and when they entered he said pleasantly: "We almost want candles."

"You do--wish me to be yours, Richard?" gasped Sue in a whisper.

"Certainly, dear: above all things in the world."

Sue said no more; and for the second or third time he felt he was not

quite following out the humane instinct which had induced him to let her go.

There they stood, five altogether: the parson, the clerk, the couple, and Gillingham; and the holy ordinance was resolemnized forthwith. In the nave of the edifice were two or three villagers, and when the clergyman came to the words, "What God hath joined," a woman's voice from among these was heard to utter audibly:

"God hath jined indeed!"

It was like a re-enactment by the ghosts of their former selves of the similar scene which had taken place at Melchester years before. When the books were signed the vicar congratulated the husband and wife on having performed a noble, and righteous, and mutually forgiving act. "All's well that ends well," he said smiling.

"May you long be happy together, after thus having been 'saved as by fire.'"

They came down the nearly empty building, and crossed to the schoolhouse. Gillingham wanted to get home that night, and left early. He, too, congratulated the couple. "Now," he said in parting from Phillotson, who walked out a little way, "I shall be able to tell the people in your native place a good round tale; and they'll all say 'Well done,' depend on it."

When the schoolmaster got back Sue was making a pretence of doing some housewifery as if she lived there. But she seemed timid at his approach, and compunction wrought on him at sight of it.

"Of course, my dear, I shan't expect to intrude upon your personal privacy any more than I did before," he said gravely. "It is for our good socially to do this, and that's its justification, if it was not my reason." Sue brightened a little.

## VI

The place was the door of Jude's lodging in the out-skirts of Christminster--far from the precincts of St. Silas' where he had formerly lived, which saddened him to sickness. The rain was coming down. A woman in shabby black stood on the doorstep talking to Jude, who held the door in his hand.

"I am lonely, destitute, and houseless--that's what I am! Father has turned me out of doors after borrowing every penny I'd got, to put it into his business, and then accusing me of laziness when I was only waiting for a situation. I am at the mercy of the world! If you can't take me and help me, Jude, I must go to the workhouse, or to something worse. Only just now two undergraduates winked at me as I

came along. 'Tis hard for a woman to keep virtuous where there's so many young men!"

The woman in the rain who spoke thus was Arabella, the evening being that of the day after Sue's remarriage with Phillotson.

"I am sorry for you, but I am only in lodgings," said Jude coldly.

"Then you turn me away?"

"I'll give you enough to get food and lodging for a few days."

"Oh, but can't you have the kindness to take me in? I cannot endure going to a public house to lodge; and I am so lonely. Please, Jude, for old times' sake!"

"No, no," said Jude hastily. "I don't want to be reminded of those things; and if you talk about them I shall not help you."

"Then I suppose I must go!" said Arabella. She bent her head against the doorpost and began sobbing.

"The house is full," said Jude. "And I have only a little extra room to my own--not much more than a closet--where I keep my tools, and templates, and the few books I have left!"

"That would be a palace for me!"

"There is no bedstead in it."

"A bit of a bed could be made on the floor. It would be good enough for me."

Unable to be harsh with her, and not knowing what to do, Jude called the man who let the lodgings, and said this was an acquaintance of his in great distress for want of temporary shelter.

"You may remember me as barmaid at the Lamb and Flag formerly?" spoke up Arabella. "My father has insulted me this afternoon, and I've left him, though without a penny!"

The householder said he could not recall her features. "But still, if you are a friend of Mr. Fawley's we'll do what we can for a day or two--if he'll make himself answerable?"

"Yes, yes," said Jude. "She has really taken me quite unawares; but I should wish to help her out of her difficulty." And an arrangement was ultimately come to under which a bed was to be thrown down in Jude's lumber-room, to make it comfortable for Arabella till she could get out of the strait she was in--not by her own fault, as she declared--and return to her father's again.

While they were waiting for this to be done Arabella said: "You know the news, I suppose?"

"I guess what you mean; but I know nothing."

"I had a letter from Anny at Alfredston to-day. She had just heard that the wedding was to be yesterday: but she didn't know if it had come off."

"I don't wish to talk of it."

"No, no: of course you don't. Only it shows what kind of woman--"

"Don't speak of her I say! She's a fool! And she's an angel, too, poor dear!"

"If it's done, he'll have a chance of getting back to his old position, by everybody's account, so Anny says. All his well-wishers will be pleased, including the bishop himself."

"Do spare me, Arabella."

Arabella was duly installed in the little attic, and at first she did not come near Jude at all. She went to and fro about her own business, which, when they met for a moment on the stairs or in the passage, she informed him was that of obtaining another place in



the occupation she understood best. When Jude suggested London as affording the most likely opening in the liquor trade, she shook her head. "No--the temptations are too many," she said. "Any humble tavern in the country before that for me."

On the Sunday morning following, when he breakfasted later than on other days, she meekly asked him if she might come in to breakfast with him, as she had broken her teapot, and could not replace it immediately, the shops being shut.

"Yes, if you like," he said indifferently.

While they sat without speaking she suddenly observed: "You seem all in a brood, old man. I'm sorry for you."

"I am all in a brood."

"It is about her, I know. It's no business of mine, but I could find out all about the wedding--if it really did take place--if you wanted to know."

"How could you?"

"I wanted to go to Alfredston to get a few things I left there. And I could see Anny, who'll be sure to have heard all about it, as she has friends at Marygreen."

Jude could not bear to acquiesce in this proposal; but his suspense pitted itself against his discretion, and won in the struggle. "You can ask about it if you like," he said. "I've not heard a sound from there. It must have been very private, if--they have married."

"I am afraid I haven't enough cash to take me there and back, or I should have gone before. I must wait till I have earned some."

"Oh--I can pay the journey for you," he said impatiently. And thus his suspense as to Sue's welfare, and the possible marriage, moved him to dispatch for intelligence the last emissary he would have thought of choosing deliberately.

Arabella went, Jude requesting her to be home not later than by the seven o'clock train. When she had gone he said: "Why should I have charged her to be back by a particular time! She's nothing to me--nor the other neither!"

But having finished work he could not help going to the station to meet Arabella, dragged thither by feverish haste to get the news she might bring, and know the worst. Arabella had made dimples most successfully all the way home, and when she stepped out of the railway carriage she smiled. He merely said "Well?" with the very reverse of a smile.

"They are married."

"Yes--of course they are!" he returned. She observed, however, the hard strain upon his lip as he spoke.

"Anny says she has heard from Belinda, her relation out at Marygreen, that it was very sad, and curious!"

"How do you mean sad? She wanted to marry him again, didn't she? And he her!"

"Yes--that was it. She wanted to in one sense, but not in the other. Mrs. Edlin was much upset by it all, and spoke out her mind at Phillotson. But Sue was that excited about it that she burnt her best embroidery that she'd worn with you, to blot you out entirely. Well--if a woman feels like it, she ought to do it. I commend her for it, though others don't." Arabella sighed. "She felt he was her only husband, and that she belonged to nobody else in the sight of God A'mighty while he lived. Perhaps another woman feels the same about herself, too!" Arabella sighed again.

"I don't want any cant!" exclaimed Jude.

"It isn't cant," said Arabella. "I feel exactly the same as she!"

He closed that issue by remarking abruptly: "Well--now I know all I

wanted to know. Many thanks for your information. I am not going back to my lodgings just yet." And he left her straightway.

In his misery and depression Jude walked to well-nigh every spot in the city that he had visited with Sue; thence he did not know whither, and then thought of going home to his usual evening meal. But having all the vices of his virtues, and some to spare, he turned into a public house, for the first time during many months. Among the possible consequences of her marriage Sue had not dwelt on this.

Arabella, meanwhile, had gone back. The evening passed, and Jude did not return. At half-past nine Arabella herself went out, first proceeding to an outlying district near the river where her father lived, and had opened a small and precarious pork-shop lately.

"Well," she said to him, "for all your rowing me that night, I've called in, for I have something to tell you. I think I shall get married and settled again. Only you must help me: and you can do no less, after what I've stood 'ee."

"I'll do anything to get thee off my hands!"

"Very well. I am now going to look for my young man. He's on the loose I'm afraid, and I must get him home. All I want you to do to-night is not to fasten the door, in case I should want to sleep here, and should be late."

"I thought you'd soon get tired of giving yourself airs and keeping away!"

"Well--don't do the door. That's all I say."

She then sallied out again, and first hastening back to Jude's to make sure that he had not returned, began her search for him. A shrewd guess as to his probable course took her straight to the tavern which Jude had formerly frequented, and where she had been barmaid for a brief term. She had no sooner opened the door of the "Private Bar" than her eyes fell upon him--sitting in the shade at the back of the compartment, with his eyes fixed on the floor in a blank stare. He was drinking nothing stronger than ale just then. He did not observe her, and she entered and sat beside him.

Jude looked up, and said without surprise: "You've come to have something, Arabella? ... I'm trying to forget her: that's all! But I can't; and I am going home." She saw that he was a little way on in liquor, but only a little as yet.

"I've come entirely to look for you, dear boy. You are not well. Now you must have something better than that." Arabella held up her finger to the barmaid. "You shall have a liqueur--that's better fit for a man of education than beer. You shall have maraschino, or curaçao dry or sweet, or cherry brandy. I'll treat you, poor chap!"

"I don't care which! Say cherry brandy... Sue has served me badly, very badly. I didn't expect it of Sue! I stuck to her, and she ought to have stuck to me. I'd have sold my soul for her sake, but she wouldn't risk hers a jot for me. To save her own soul she lets mine go damn! ... But it isn't her fault, poor little girl--I am sure it isn't!"

How Arabella had obtained money did not appear, but she ordered a liqueur each, and paid for them. When they had drunk these Arabella suggested another; and Jude had the pleasure of being, as it were, personally conducted through the varieties of spirituous delectation by one who knew the landmarks well. Arabella kept very considerably in the rear of Jude; but though she only sipped where he drank, she took as much as she could safely take without losing her head--which was not a little, as the crimson upon her countenance showed.

Her tone towards him to-night was uniformly soothing and cajoling; and whenever he said "I don't care what happens to me," a thing he did continually, she replied, "But I do very much!" The closing hour came, and they were compelled to turn out; whereupon Arabella put her arm round his waist, and guided his unsteady footsteps.

When they were in the streets she said: "I don't know what our landlord will say to my bringing you home in this state. I expect we are fastened out, so that he'll have to come down and let us in."

"I don't know--I don't know."

"That's the worst of not having a home of your own. I tell you, Jude, what we had best do. Come round to my father's--I made it up with him a bit to-day. I can let you in, and nobody will see you at all; and by to-morrow morning you'll be all right."

"Anything--anywhere," replied Jude. "What the devil does it matter to me?"

They went along together, like any other fuddling couple, her arm still round his waist, and his, at last, round hers; though with no amatory intent; but merely because he was weary, unstable, and in need of support.

"This--is th' Martyrs'--burning-place," he stammered as they dragged across a broad street. "I remember--in old Fuller's Holy State--and I am reminded of it--by our passing by here--old Fuller in his Holy State says, that at the burning of Ridley, Doctor Smith--preached sermon, and took as his text 'Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.'--Often think of it as I pass here. Ridley was a--"

"Yes. Exactly. Very thoughtful of you, deary, even though it hasn't much to do with our present business."

"Why, yes it has! I'm giving my body to be burned! But--ah you don't understand!--it wants Sue to understand such things! And I was her seducer--poor little girl! And she's gone--and I don't care about myself! Do what you like with me! ... And yet she did it for conscience' sake, poor little Sue!"

"Hang her!--I mean, I think she was right," hiccuped Arabella. "I've my feelings too, like her; and I feel I belong to you in Heaven's eye, and to nobody else, till death us do part! It is--hic--never too late--hic to mend!"

They had reached her father's house, and she softly unfastened the door, groping about for a light within.

The circumstances were not altogether unlike those of their entry into the cottage at Cresscombe, such a long time before. Nor were perhaps Arabella's motives. But Jude did not think of that, though she did.

"I can't find the matches, dear," she said when she had fastened up the door. "But never mind--this way. As quiet as you can, please."

"It is as dark as pitch," said Jude.

"Give me your hand, and I'll lead you. That's it. Just sit down



here, and I'll pull off your boots. I don't want to wake him."

"Who?"

"Father. He'd make a row, perhaps."

She pulled off his boots. "Now," she whispered, "take hold of me--never mind your weight. Now--first stair, second stair--"

"But--are we out in our old house by Marygreen?" asked the stupefied Jude. "I haven't been inside it for years till now! Hey? And where are my books? That's what I want to know?"

"We are at my house, dear, where there's nobody to spy out how ill you are. Now--third stair, fourth stair--that's it. Now we shall get on."

## VII

Arabella was preparing breakfast in the downstairs back room of this small, recently hired tenement of her father's. She put her head into the little pork-shop in front, and told Mr. Donn it was ready. Donn, endeavouring to look like a master pork-butcher, in a greasy

blue blouse, and with a strap round his waist from which a steel dangled, came in promptly.

"You must mind the shop this morning," he said casually. "I've to go and get some inwards and half a pig from Lumsdon, and to call elsewhere. If you live here you must put your shoulder to the wheel, at least till I get the business started!"

"Well, for to-day I can't say." She looked deedly into his face.

"I've got a prize upstairs."

"Oh? What's that?"

"A husband--almost."

"No!"

"Yes. It's Jude. He's come back to me."

"Your old original one? Well, I'm damned!"

"Well, I always did like him, that I will say."

"But how does he come to be up there?" said Donn, humour-struck, and nodding to the ceiling.

"Don't ask inconvenient questions, Father. What we've to do is to keep him here till he and I are--as we were."

"How was that?"

"Married."

"Ah... Well it is the rummest thing I ever heard of--marrying an old husband again, and so much new blood in the world! He's no catch, to my thinking. I'd have had a new one while I was about it."

"It isn't rum for a woman to want her old husband back for respectability, though for a man to want his old wife back--well, perhaps it is funny, rather!" And Arabella was suddenly seized with a fit of loud laughter, in which her father joined more moderately.

"Be civil to him, and I'll do the rest," she said when she had recovered seriousness. "He told me this morning that his head ached fit to burst, and he hardly seemed to know where he was. And no wonder, considering how he mixed his drink last night. We must keep him jolly and cheerful here for a day or two, and not let him go back to his lodging. Whatever you advance I'll pay back to you again. But I must go up and see how he is now, poor deary."

Arabella ascended the stairs, softly opened the door of the first bedroom, and peeped in. Finding that her shorn Samson was asleep

she entered to the bedside and stood regarding him. The fevered flush on his face from the debauch of the previous evening lessened the fragility of his ordinary appearance, and his long lashes, dark brows, and curly back hair and beard against the white pillow completed the physiognomy of one whom Arabella, as a woman of rank and passions, still felt it worth while to recapture, highly important to recapture as a woman straitened both in means and in reputation. Her ardent gaze seemed to affect him; his quick breathing became suspended, and he opened his eyes.

"How are you now, dear?" said she. "It is I--Arabella."

"Ah!--where--oh yes, I remember! You gave me shelter... I am stranded--ill--demoralized--damn bad! That's what I am!"

"Then do stay here. There's nobody in the house but father and me, and you can rest till you are thoroughly well. I'll tell them at the stoneworks that you are knocked up."

"I wonder what they are thinking at the lodgings!"

"I'll go round and explain. Perhaps you had better let me pay up, or they'll think we've run away?"

"Yes. You'll find enough money in my pocket there."

Quite indifferent, and shutting his eyes because he could not bear the daylight in his throbbing eye-balls, Jude seemed to doze again. Arabella took his purse, softly left the room, and putting on her outdoor things went off to the lodgings she and he had quitted the evening before.

Scarcely half an hour had elapsed ere she reappeared round the corner, walking beside a lad wheeling a truck on which were piled all Jude's household possessions, and also the few of Arabella's things which she had taken to the lodging for her short sojourn there. Jude was in such physical pain from his unfortunate break-down of the previous night, and in such mental pain from the loss of Sue and from having yielded in his half-somnolent state to Arabella, that when he saw his few chattels unpacked and standing before his eyes in this strange bedroom, intermixed with woman's apparel, he scarcely considered how they had come there, or what their coming signaled.

"Now," said Arabella to her father downstairs, "we must keep plenty of good liquor going in the house these next few days. I know his nature, and if he once gets into that fearfully low state that he does get into sometimes, he'll never do the honourable thing by me in this world, and I shall be left in the lurch. He must be kept cheerful. He has a little money in the savings bank, and he has given me his purse to pay for anything necessary. Well, that will be the licence; for I must have that ready at hand, to catch him the moment he's in the humour. You must pay for the liquor. A few

friends, and a quiet convivial party would be the thing, if we could get it up. It would advertise the shop, and help me too."

"That can be got up easy enough by anybody who'll afford victuals and drink... Well yes--it would advertise the shop--that's true."

Three days later, when Jude had recovered somewhat from the fearful throbbing of his eyes and brain, but was still considerably confused in his mind by what had been supplied to him by Arabella during the interval--to keep him, jolly, as she expressed it--the quiet convivial gathering, suggested by her, to wind Jude up to the striking point, took place.

Donn had only just opened his miserable little pork and sausage shop, which had as yet scarce any customers; nevertheless that party advertised it well, and the Donns acquired a real notoriety among a certain class in Christminster who knew not the colleges, nor their works, nor their ways. Jude was asked if he could suggest any guest in addition to those named by Arabella and her father, and in a saturnine humour of perfect recklessness mentioned Uncle Joe, and Stagg, and the decayed auctioneer, and others whom he remembered as having been frequenters of the well-known tavern during his bout therein years before. He also suggested Freckles and Bower o' Bliss. Arabella took him at his word so far as the men went, but drew the line at the ladies.

Another man they knew, Tinker Taylor, though he lived in the same street, was not invited; but as he went homeward from a late job on the evening of the party, he had occasion to call at the shop for trotters. There were none in, but he was promised some the next morning. While making his inquiry Taylor glanced into the back room, and saw the guests sitting round, card-playing, and drinking, and otherwise enjoying themselves at Donn's expense. He went home to bed, and on his way out next morning wondered how the party went off. He thought it hardly worth while to call at the shop for his provisions at that hour, Donn and his daughter being probably not up, if they caroused late the night before. However, he found in passing that the door was open, and he could hear voices within, though the shutters of the meat-stall were not down. He went and tapped at the sitting-room door, and opened it.

"Well--to be sure!" he said, astonished.

Hosts and guests were sitting card-playing, smoking, and talking, precisely as he had left them eleven hours earlier; the gas was burning and the curtains drawn, though it had been broad daylight for two hours out of doors.

"Yes!" cried Arabella, laughing. "Here we are, just the same. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves, oughtn't we! But it is a sort of housewarming, you see; and our friends are in no hurry. Come in, Mr. Taylor, and sit down."

The tinker, or rather reduced ironmonger, was nothing loath, and entered and took a seat. "I shall lose a quarter, but never mind," he said. "Well, really, I could hardly believe my eyes when I looked in! It seemed as if I was flung back again into last night, all of a sudden."

"So you are. Pour out for Mr. Taylor."

He now perceived that she was sitting beside Jude, her arm being round his waist. Jude, like the rest of the company, bore on his face the signs of how deeply he had been indulging.

"Well, we've been waiting for certain legal hours to arrive, to tell the truth," she continued bashfully, and making her spirituous crimson look as much like a maiden blush as possible. "Jude and I have decided to make up matters between us by tying the knot again, as we find we can't do without one another after all. So, as a bright notion, we agreed to sit on till it was late enough, and go and do it off-hand."

Jude seemed to pay no great heed to what she was announcing, or indeed to anything whatever. The entrance of Taylor infused fresh spirit into the company, and they remained sitting, till Arabella whispered to her father: "Now we may as well go."



"But the parson don't know?"

"Yes, I told him last night that we might come between eight and nine, as there were reasons of decency for doing it as early and quiet as possible; on account of it being our second marriage, which might make people curious to look on if they knew. He highly approved."

"Oh very well: I'm ready," said her father, getting up and shaking himself.

"Now, old darling," she said to Jude. "Come along, as you promised."

"When did I promise anything?" asked he, whom she had made so tipsy by her special knowledge of that line of business as almost to have made him sober again--or to seem so to those who did not know him.

"Why!" said Arabella, affecting dismay. "You've promised to marry me several times as we've sat here to-night. These gentlemen have heard you."

"I don't remember it," said Jude doggedly. "There's only one woman--but I won't mention her in this Capharnaum!"

Arabella looked towards her father. "Now, Mr. Fawley be honourable," said Donn. "You and my daughter have been living here together these

three or four days, quite on the understanding that you were going to marry her. Of course I shouldn't have had such goings on in my house if I hadn't understood that. As a point of honour you must do it now."

"Don't say anything against my honour!" enjoined Jude hotly, standing up. "I'd marry the W---- of Babylon rather than do anything dishonourable! No reflection on you, my dear. It is a mere rhetorical figure--what they call in the books, hyperbole."

"Keep your fingers for your debts to friends who shelter you," said Donn.

"If I am bound in honour to marry her--as I suppose I am--though how I came to be here with her I know no more than a dead man--marry her I will, so help me God! I have never behaved dishonourably to a woman or to any living thing. I am not a man who wants to save himself at the expense of the weaker among us!"

"There--never mind him, deary," said she, putting her cheek against Jude's. "Come up and wash your face, and just put yourself tidy, and off we'll go. Make it up with Father."

They shook hands. Jude went upstairs with her, and soon came down looking tidy and calm. Arabella, too, had hastily arranged herself, and accompanied by Donn away they went.

"Don't go," she said to the guests at parting. "I've told the little maid to get the breakfast while we are gone; and when we come back we'll all have some. A good strong cup of tea will set everybody right for going home."

When Arabella, Jude, and Donn had disappeared on their matrimonial errand the assembled guests yawned themselves wider awake, and discussed the situation with great interest. Tinker Taylor, being the most sober, reasoned the most lucidly.

"I don't wish to speak against friends," he said. "But it do seem a rare curiosity for a couple to marry over again! If they couldn't get on the first time when their minds were limp, they won't the second, by my reckoning."

"Do you think he'll do it?"

"He's been put upon his honour by the woman, so he med."

"He'd hardly do it straight off like this. He's got no licence nor anything."

"She's got that, bless you. Didn't you hear her say so to her

father?"

"Well," said Tinker Taylor, relighting his pipe at the gas-jet.

"Take her all together, limb by limb, she's not such a bad-looking piece--particular by candlelight. To be sure, halfpence that have been in circulation can't be expected to look like new ones from the mint. But for a woman that's been knocking about the four hemispheres for some time, she's passable enough. A little bit thick in the flitch perhaps: but I like a woman that a puff o' wind won't blow down."

Their eyes followed the movements of the little girl as she spread the breakfast-cloth on the table they had been using, without wiping up the slops of the liquor. The curtains were undrawn, and the expression of the house made to look like morning. Some of the guests, however, fell asleep in their chairs. One or two went to the door, and gazed along the street more than once. Tinker Taylor was the chief of these, and after a time he came in with a leer on his face.

"By Gad, they are coming! I think the deed's done!"

"No," said Uncle Joe, following him in. "Take my word, he turned rusty at the last minute. They are walking in a very unusual way; and that's the meaning of it!"

They waited in silence till the wedding-party could be heard entering the house. First into the room came Arabella boisterously; and her face was enough to show that her strategy had succeeded.

"Mrs. Fawley, I presume?" said Tinker Taylor with mock courtesy.

"Certainly. Mrs. Fawley again," replied Arabella blandly, pulling off her glove and holding out her left hand. "There's the padlock, see... Well, he was a very nice, gentlemanly man indeed. I mean the clergyman. He said to me as gentle as a babe when all was done: 'Mrs. Fawley, I congratulate you heartily,' he says. 'For having heard your history, and that of your husband, I think you have both done the right and proper thing. And for your past errors as a wife, and his as a husband, I think you ought now to be forgiven by the world, as you have forgiven each other,' says he. Yes: he was a very nice, gentlemanly man. 'The Church don't recognize divorce in her dogma, strictly speaking,' he says: 'and bear in mind the words of the service in your goings out and your comings in: What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.' Yes: he was a very nice, gentlemanly man... But, Jude, my dear, you were enough to make a cat laugh! You walked that straight, and held yourself that steady, that one would have thought you were going 'prentice to a judge; though I knew you were seeing double all the time, from the way you fumbled with my finger."

"I said I'd do anything to--save a woman's honour," muttered Jude.

"And I've done it!"

"Well now, old deary, come along and have some breakfast."

"I want--some--more whisky," said Jude stolidly.

"Nonsense, dear. Not now! There's no more left. The tea will take the muddle out of our heads, and we shall be as fresh as larks."

"All right. I've--married you. She said I ought to marry you again, and I have straightway. It is true religion! Ha--ha--ha!"

## VIII

Michaelmas came and passed, and Jude and his wife, who had lived but a short time in her father's house after their remarriage, were in lodgings on the top floor of a dwelling nearer to the centre of the city.

He had done a few days' work during the two or three months since the event, but his health had been indifferent, and it was now precarious. He was sitting in an arm-chair before the fire, and coughed a good deal.

"I've got a bargain for my trouble in marrying thee over again!" Arabella was saying to him. "I shall have to keep 'ee entirely--that's what 'twill come to! I shall have to make black-pot and sausages, and hawk 'em about the street, all to support an invalid husband I'd no business to be saddled with at all. Why didn't you keep your health, deceiving one like this? You were well enough when the wedding was!"

"Ah, yes!" said he, laughing acridly. "I have been thinking of my foolish feeling about the pig you and I killed during our first marriage. I feel now that the greatest mercy that could be vouchsafed to me would be that something should serve me as I served that animal."

This was the sort of discourse that went on between them every day now. The landlord of the lodging, who had heard that they were a queer couple, had doubted if they were married at all, especially as he had seen Arabella kiss Jude one evening when she had taken a little cordial; and he was about to give them notice to quit, till by chance overhearing her one night haranguing Jude in rattling terms, and ultimately flinging a shoe at his head, he recognized the note of genuine wedlock; and concluding that they must be respectable, said no more.

Jude did not get any better, and one day he requested Arabella, with

considerable hesitation, to execute a commission for him. She asked him indifferently what it was.

"To write to Sue."

"What in the name--do you want me to write to her for?"

"To ask how she is, and if she'll come to see me, because I'm ill, and should like to see her--once again."

"It is like you to insult a lawful wife by asking such a thing!"

"It is just in order not to insult you that I ask you to do it. You know I love Sue. I don't wish to mince the matter--there stands the fact: I love her. I could find a dozen ways of sending a letter to her without your knowledge. But I wish to be quite above-board with you, and with her husband. A message through you asking her to come is at least free from any odour of intrigue. If she retains any of her old nature at all, she'll come."

"You've no respect for marriage whatever, or its rights and duties!"

"What DOES it matter what my opinions are--a wretch like me! Can it matter to anybody in the world who comes to see me for half an hour--here with one foot in the grave! ... Come, please write, Arabella!" he pleaded. "Repay my candour by a little generosity!"



"I should think NOT!"

"Not just once?--Oh do!" He felt that his physical weakness had taken away all his dignity.

"What do you want HER to know how you are for? She don't want to see 'ee. She's the rat that forsook the sinking ship!"

"Don't, don't!"

"And I stuck to un--the more fool I! Have that strumpet in the house indeed!"

Almost as soon as the words were spoken Jude sprang from the chair, and before Arabella knew where she was he had her on her back upon a little couch which stood there, he kneeling above her.

"Say another word of that sort," he whispered, "and I'll kill you--here and now! I've everything to gain by it--my own death not being the least part. So don't think there's no meaning in what I say!"

"What do you want me to do?" gasped Arabella.

"Promise never to speak of her."

"Very well. I do."

"I take your word," he said scornfully as he loosened her. "But what it is worth I can't say."

"You couldn't kill the pig, but you could kill me!"

"Ah--there you have me! No--I couldn't kill you--even in a passion. Taunt away!"

He then began coughing very much, and she estimated his life with an appraiser's eye as he sank back ghastly pale. "I'll send for her," Arabella murmured, "if you'll agree to my being in the room with you all the time she's here."

The softer side of his nature, the desire to see Sue, made him unable to resist the offer even now, provoked as he had been; and he replied breathlessly: "Yes, I agree. Only send for her!"

In the evening he inquired if she had written.

"Yes," she said; "I wrote a note telling her you were ill, and asking her to come to-morrow or the day after. I haven't posted it yet."

The next day Jude wondered if she really did post it, but would not

ask her; and foolish Hope, that lives on a drop and a crumb, made him restless with expectation. He knew the times of the possible trains, and listened on each occasion for sounds of her.

She did not come; but Jude would not address Arabella again thereon. He hoped and expected all the next day; but no Sue appeared; neither was there any note of reply. Then Jude decided in the privacy of his mind that Arabella had never posted hers, although she had written it. There was something in her manner which told it. His physical weakness was such that he shed tears at the disappointment when she was not there to see. His suspicions were, in fact, well founded. Arabella, like some other nurses, thought that your duty towards your invalid was to pacify him by any means short of really acting upon his fancies.

He never said another word to her about his wish or his conjecture. A silent, undiscerned resolve grew up in him, which gave him, if not strength, stability and calm. One midday when, after an absence of two hours, she came into the room, she beheld the chair empty.

Down she flopped on the bed, and sitting, meditated. "Now where the devil is my man gone to!" she said.

A driving rain from the north-east had been falling with more or less intermission all the morning, and looking from the window at the dripping spouts it seemed impossible to believe that any sick man

would have ventured out to almost certain death. Yet a conviction possessed Arabella that he had gone out, and it became a certainty when she had searched the house. "If he's such a fool, let him be!" she said. "I can do no more."

Jude was at that moment in a railway train that was drawing near to Alfredston, oddly swathed, pale as a monumental figure in alabaster, and much stared at by other passengers. An hour later his thin form, in the long great-coat and blanket he had come with, but without an umbrella, could have been seen walking along the five-mile road to Marygreen. On his face showed the determined purpose that alone sustained him, but to which his weakness afforded a sorry foundation. By the up-hill walk he was quite blown, but he pressed on; and at half-past three o'clock stood by the familiar well at Marygreen. The rain was keeping everybody indoors; Jude crossed the green to the church without observation, and found the building open. Here he stood, looking forth at the school, whence he could hear the usual sing-song tones of the little voices that had not learnt Creation's groan.

He waited till a small boy came from the school--one evidently allowed out before hours for some reason or other. Jude held up his hand, and the child came.

"Please call at the schoolhouse and ask Mrs. Phillotson if she will be kind enough to come to the church for a few minutes."

The child departed, and Jude heard him knock at the door of the dwelling. He himself went further into the church. Everything was new, except a few pieces of carving preserved from the wrecked old fabric, now fixed against the new walls. He stood by these: they seemed akin to the perished people of that place who were his ancestors and Sue's.

A light footstep, which might have been accounted no more than an added drip to the rainfall, sounded in the porch, and he looked round.

"Oh--I didn't think it was you! I didn't--Oh, Jude!" A hysterical catch in her breath ended in a succession of them. He advanced, but she quickly recovered and went back.

"Don't go--don't go!" he implored. "This is my last time! I thought it would be less intrusive than to enter your house. And I shall never come again. Don't then be unmerciful. Sue, Sue! We are acting by the letter; and 'the letter killeth!'"

"I'll stay--I won't be unkind!" she said, her mouth quivering and her tears flowing as she allowed him to come closer. "But why did you come, and do this wrong thing, after doing such a right thing as you have done?"

"What right thing?"

"Marrying Arabella again. It was in the Alfredston paper. She has never been other than yours, Jude--in a proper sense. And therefore you did so well--Oh so well!--in recognizing it--and taking her to you again."

"God above--and is that all I've come to hear? If there is anything more degrading, immoral, unnatural, than another in my life, it is this meretricious contract with Arabella which has been called doing the right thing! And you too--you call yourself Phillotson's wife! HIS wife! You are mine."

"Don't make me rush away from you--I can't bear much! But on this point I am decided."

"I cannot understand how you did it--how you think it--I cannot!"

"Never mind that. He is a kind husband to me--And I--I've wrestled and struggled, and fasted, and prayed. I have nearly brought my body into complete subjection. And you mustn't--will you--wake--"

"Oh you darling little fool; where is your reason? You seem to have suffered the loss of your faculties! I would argue with you if I didn't know that a woman in your state of feeling is quite beyond all appeals to her brains. Or is it that you are humbugging yourself, as

so many women do about these things; and don't actually believe what you pretend to, and only are indulging in the luxury of the emotion raised by an affected belief?"

"Luxury! How can you be so cruel!"

"You dear, sad, soft, most melancholy wreck of a promising human intellect that it has ever been my lot to behold! Where is your scorn of convention gone? I WOULD have died game!"

"You crush, almost insult me, Jude! Go away from me!" She turned off quickly.

"I will. I would never come to see you again, even if I had the strength to come, which I shall not have any more. Sue, Sue, you are not worth a man's love!"

Her bosom began to go up and down. "I can't endure you to say that!" she burst out, and her eye resting on him a moment, she turned back impulsively. "Don't, don't scorn me! Kiss me, oh kiss me lots of times, and say I am not a coward and a contemptible humbug--I can't bear it!" She rushed up to him and, with her mouth on his, continued: "I must tell you--oh I must--my darling Love! It has been--only a church marriage--an apparent marriage I mean! He suggested it at the very first!"

"How?"

"I mean it is a nominal marriage only. It hasn't been more than that at all since I came back to him!"

"Sue!" he said. Pressing her to him in his arms he bruised her lips with kisses: "If misery can know happiness, I have a moment's happiness now! Now, in the name of all you hold holy, tell me the truth, and no lie. You do love me still?"

"I do! You know it too well! ... But I MUSTN'T do this! I mustn't kiss you back as I would!"

"But do!"

"And yet you are so dear!--and you look so ill--"

"And so do you! There's one more, in memory of our dead little children--yours and mine!"

The words struck her like a blow, and she bent her head. "I MUSTN'T--I CAN'T go on with this!" she gasped presently. "But there, there, darling; I give you back your kisses; I do, I do! ... And now I'll HATE myself for ever for my sin!"

"No--let me make my last appeal. Listen to this! We've both



remarried out of our senses. I was made drunk to do it. You were the same. I was gin-drunk; you were creed-drunk. Either form of intoxication takes away the nobler vision... Let us then shake off our mistakes, and run away together!"

"No; again no! ... Why do you tempt me so far, Jude! It is too merciless! ... But I've got over myself now. Don't follow me--don't look at me. Leave me, for pity's sake!"

She ran up the church to the east end, and Jude did as she requested. He did not turn his head, but took up his blanket, which she had not seen, and went straight out. As he passed the end of the church she heard his coughs mingling with the rain on the windows, and in a last instinct of human affection, even now unsubdued by her fetters, she sprang up as if to go and succour him. But she knelt down again, and stopped her ears with her hands till all possible sound of him had passed away.

He was by this time at the corner of the green, from which the path ran across the fields in which he had scared rooks as a boy. He turned and looked back, once, at the building which still contained Sue; and then went on, knowing that his eyes would light on that scene no more.

There are cold spots up and down Wessex in autumn and winter weather; but the coldest of all when a north or east wind is blowing is the

crest of the down by the Brown House, where the road to Alfredston crosses the old Ridgeway. Here the first winter sleets and snows fall and lie, and here the spring frost lingers last unthawed. Here in the teeth of the north-east wind and rain Jude now pursued his way, wet through, the necessary slowness of his walk from lack of his former strength being insufficient to maintain his heat. He came to the milestone, and, raining as it was, spread his blanket and lay down there to rest. Before moving on he went and felt at the back of the stone for his own carving. It was still there; but nearly obliterated by moss. He passed the spot where the gibbet of his ancestor and Sue's had stood, and descended the hill.

It was dark when he reached Alfredston, where he had a cup of tea, the deadly chill that began to creep into his bones being too much for him to endure fasting. To get home he had to travel by a steam tram-car, and two branches of railway, with much waiting at a junction. He did not reach Christminster till ten o'clock.

## IX

On the platform stood Arabella. She looked him up and down.

"You've been to see her?" she asked.

"I have," said Jude, literally tottering with cold and lassitude.

"Well, now you'd best march along home."

The water ran out of him as he went, and he was compelled to lean against the wall to support himself while coughing.

"You've done for yourself by this, young man," said she. "I don't know whether you know it."

"Of course I do. I meant to do for myself."

"What--to commit suicide?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I'm blest! Kill yourself for a woman."

"Listen to me, Arabella. You think you are the stronger; and so you are, in a physical sense, now. You could push me over like a nine-pin. You did not send that letter the other day, and I could not resent your conduct. But I am not so weak in another way as you think. I made up my mind that a man confined to his room by inflammation of the lungs, a fellow who had only two wishes left in the world, to see a particular woman, and then to die, could neatly

accomplish those two wishes at one stroke by taking this journey in the rain. That I've done. I have seen her for the last time, and I've finished myself--put an end to a feverish life which ought never to have been begun!"

"Lord--you do talk lofty! Won't you have something warm to drink?"

"No thank you. Let's get home."

They went along by the silent colleges, and Jude kept stopping.

"What are you looking at?"

"Stupid fancies. I see, in a way, those spirits of the dead again, on this my last walk, that I saw when I first walked here!"

"What a curious chap you are!"

"I seem to see them, and almost hear them rustling. But I don't revere all of them as I did then. I don't believe in half of them. The theologians, the apologists, and their kin the metaphysicians, the high-handed statesmen, and others, no longer interest me. All that has been spoilt for me by the grind of stern reality!"

The expression of Jude's corpselike face in the watery lamplight was indeed as if he saw people where there was nobody. At moments he

stood still by an archway, like one watching a figure walk out; then he would look at a window like one discerning a familiar face behind it. He seemed to hear voices, whose words he repeated as if to gather their meaning.

"They seem laughing at me!"

"Who?"

"Oh--I was talking to myself! The phantoms all about here, in the college archways, and windows. They used to look friendly in the old days, particularly Addison, and Gibbon, and Johnson, and Dr. Browne, and Bishop Ken--"

"Come along do! Phantoms! There's neither living nor dead hereabouts except a damn policeman! I never saw the streets emptier."

"Fancy! The Poet of Liberty used to walk here, and the great Dissector of Melancholy there!"

"I don't want to hear about 'em! They bore me."

"Walter Raleigh is beckoning to me from that lane--Wycliffe--Harvey--Hooker--Arnold--and a whole crowd of Tractarian Shades--"

"I DON'T WANT to know their names, I tell you! What do I care about folk dead and gone? Upon my soul you are more sober when you've been drinking than when you have not!"

"I must rest a moment," he said; and as he paused, holding to the railings, he measured with his eye the height of a college front.

"This is old Rubric. And that Sarcophagus; and Up that lane Crozier and Tudor: and all down there is Cardinal with its long front, and its windows with lifted eyebrows, representing the polite surprise of the university at the efforts of such as I."

"Come along, and I'll treat you!"

"Very well. It will help me home, for I feel the chilly fog from the meadows of Cardinal as if death-claws were grabbing me through and through. As Antigone said, I am neither a dweller among men nor ghosts. But, Arabella, when I am dead, you'll see my spirit flitting up and down here among these!"

"Pooh! You mayn't die after all. You are tough enough yet, old man."

It was night at Marygreen, and the rain of the afternoon showed no sign of abatement. About the time at which Jude and Arabella were

walking the streets of Christminster homeward, the Widow Edlin crossed the green, and opened the back door of the schoolmaster's dwelling, which she often did now before bedtime, to assist Sue in putting things away.

Sue was muddling helplessly in the kitchen, for she was not a good housewife, though she tried to be, and grew impatient of domestic details.

"Lord love 'ee, what do ye do that yourself for, when I've come o' purpose! You knew I should come."

"Oh--I don't know--I forgot! No, I didn't forget. I did it to discipline myself. I have scrubbed the stairs since eight o'clock. I MUST practise myself in my household duties. I've shamefully neglected them!"

"Why should ye? He'll get a better school, perhaps be a parson, in time, and you'll keep two servants. 'Tis a pity to spoil them pretty hands."

"Don't talk of my pretty hands, Mrs. Edlin. This pretty body of mine has been the ruin of me already!"

"Pshoo--you've got no body to speak of! You put me more in mind of a sperrit. But there seems something wrong to-night, my dear.

Husband cross?"

"No. He never is. He's gone to bed early."

"Then what is it?"

"I cannot tell you. I have done wrong to-day. And I want to eradicate it... Well--I will tell you this--Jude has been here this afternoon, and I find I still love him--oh, grossly! I cannot tell you more."

"Ah!" said the widow. "I told 'ee how 'twould be!"

"But it shan't be! I have not told my husband of his visit; it is not necessary to trouble him about it, as I never mean to see Jude any more. But I am going to make my conscience right on my duty to Richard--by doing a penance--the ultimate thing. I must!"

"I wouldn't--since he agrees to it being otherwise, and it has gone on three months very well as it is."

"Yes--he agrees to my living as I choose; but I feel it is an indulgence I ought not to exact from him. It ought not to have been accepted by me. To reverse it will be terrible--but I must be more just to him. O why was I so unheroic!"



"What is it you don't like in him?" asked Mrs. Edlin curiously.

"I cannot tell you. It is something... I cannot say. The mournful thing is, that nobody would admit it as a reason for feeling as I do; so that no excuse is left me."

"Did you ever tell Jude what it was?"

"Never."

"I've heard strange tales o' husbands in my time," observed the widow in a lowered voice. "They say that when the saints were upon the earth devils used to take husbands' forms o' nights, and get poor women into all sorts of trouble. But I don't know why that should come into my head, for it is only a tale... What a wind and rain it is to-night! Well--don't be in a hurry to alter things, my dear. Think it over."

"No, no! I've screwed my weak soul up to treating him more courteously--and it must be now--at once--before I break down!"

"I don't think you ought to force your nature. No woman ought to be expected to."

"It is my duty. I will drink my cup to the dregs!"

Half an hour later when Mrs. Edlin put on her bonnet and shawl to leave, Sue seemed to be seized with vague terror.

"No--no--don't go, Mrs. Edlin," she implored, her eyes enlarged, and with a quick nervous look over her shoulder.

"But it is bedtime, child."

"Yes, but--there's the little spare room--my room that was. It is quite ready. Please stay, Mrs. Edlin!--I shall want you in the morning."

"Oh well--I don't mind, if you wish. Nothing will happen to my four old walls, whether I be there or no."

She then fastened up the doors, and they ascended the stairs together.

"Wait here, Mrs. Edlin," said Sue. "I'll go into my old room a moment by myself."

Leaving the widow on the landing Sue turned to the chamber which had been hers exclusively since her arrival at Marygreen, and pushing to the door knelt down by the bed for a minute or two. She then arose, and taking her night-gown from the pillow undressed and came out to Mrs. Edlin. A man could be heard snoring in the room opposite. She

wished Mrs. Edlin good-night, and the widow entered the room that Sue had just vacated.

Sue unlatched the other chamber door, and, as if seized with faintness, sank down outside it. Getting up again she half opened the door, and said "Richard." As the word came out of her mouth she visibly shuddered.

The snoring had quite ceased for some time, but he did not reply. Sue seemed relieved, and hurried back to Mrs. Edlin's chamber. "Are you in bed, Mrs. Edlin?" she asked.

"No, dear," said the widow, opening the door. "I be old and slow, and it takes me a long while to un-ray. I han't unlaced my jumps yet."

"I--don't hear him! And perhaps--perhaps--"

"What, child?"

"Perhaps he's dead!" she gasped. "And then--I should be FREE, and I could go to Jude! ... Ah--no--I forgot HER--and God!"

"Let's go and hearken. No--he's snoring again. But the rain and the wind is so loud that you can hardly hear anything but between whiles."

Sue had dragged herself back. "Mrs. Edlin, good-night again! I am sorry I called you out." The widow retreated a second time.

The strained, resigned look returned to Sue's face when she was alone. "I must do it--I must! I must drink to the dregs!" she whispered. "Richard!" she said again.

"Hey--what? Is that you, Susanna?"

"Yes."

"What do you want? Anything the matter? Wait a moment." He pulled on some articles of clothing, and came to the door. "Yes?"

"When we were at Shaston I jumped out of the window rather than that you should come near me. I have never reversed that treatment till now--when I have come to beg your pardon for it, and ask you to let me in."

"Perhaps you only think you ought to do this? I don't wish you to come against your impulses, as I have said."

"But I beg to be admitted." She waited a moment, and repeated, "I beg to be admitted! I have been in error--even to-day. I have exceeded my rights. I did not mean to tell you, but perhaps I ought.

I sinned against you this afternoon."

"How?"

"I met Jude! I didn't know he was coming. And--"

"Well?"

"I kissed him, and let him kiss me."

"Oh--the old story!"

"Richard, I didn't know we were going to kiss each other till we did!"

"How many times?"

"A good many. I don't know. I am horrified to look back on it, and the least I can do after it is to come to you like this."

"Come--this is pretty bad, after what I've done! Anything else to confess?"

"No." She had been intending to say: "I called him my darling love." But, as a contrite woman always keeps back a little, that portion of the scene remained untold. She went on: "I am never going to see him

any more. He spoke of some things of the past: and it overcame me. He spoke of--the children. But, as I have said, I am glad--almost glad I mean--that they are dead, Richard. It blots out all that life of mine!"

"Well--about not seeing him again any more. Come--you really mean this?" There was something in Phillotson's tone now which seemed to show that his three months of remarriage with Sue had somehow not been so satisfactory as his magnanimity or amative patience had anticipated.

"Yes, yes!"

"Perhaps you'll swear it on the New Testament?"

"I will."

He went back to the room and brought out a little brown Testament.

"Now then: So help you God!"

She swore.

"Very good!"

"Now I supplicate you, Richard, to whom I belong, and whom I wish to honour and obey, as I vowed, to let me in."

"Think it over well. You know what it means. Having you back in the house was one thing--this another. So think again."

"I have thought--I wish this!"

"That's a complaisant spirit--and perhaps you are right. With a lover hanging about, a half-marriage should be completed. But I repeat my reminder this third and last time."

"It is my wish! ... O God!"

"What did you say 'O God' for?"

"I don't know!"

"Yes you do! But ..." He gloomily considered her thin and fragile form a moment longer as she crouched before him in her night-clothes.

"Well, I thought it might end like this," he said presently. "I owe you nothing, after these signs; but I'll take you in at your word, and forgive you."

He put his arm round her to lift her up. Sue started back.

"What's the matter?" he asked, speaking for the first time sternly.

"You shrink from me again?--just as formerly!"

"No, Richard--I--I--was not thinking--"

"You wish to come in here?"

"Yes."

"You still bear in mind what it means?"

"Yes. It is my duty!"

Placing the candlestick on the chest of drawers he led her through the doorway, and lifting her bodily, kissed her. A quick look of aversion passed over her face, but clenching her teeth she uttered no cry.

Mrs. Edlin had by this time undressed, and was about to get into bed when she said to herself: "Ah--perhaps I'd better go and see if the little thing is all right. How it do blow and rain!"

The widow went out on the landing, and saw that Sue had disappeared. "Ah!

Poor soul! Weddings be funerals 'a b'lieve nowadays. Fifty-five years ago, come Fall, since my man and I married! Times have changed since then!"



X

Despite himself Jude recovered somewhat, and worked at his trade for several weeks. After Christmas, however, he broke down again.

With the money he had earned he shifted his lodgings to a yet more central part of the town. But Arabella saw that he was not likely to do much work for a long while, and was cross enough at the turn affairs had taken since her remarriage to him. "I'm hanged if you haven't been clever in this last stroke!" she would say, "to get a nurse for nothing by marrying me!"

Jude was absolutely indifferent to what she said, and indeed, often regarded her abuse in a humorous light. Sometimes his mood was more earnest, and as he lay he often rambled on upon the defeat of his early aims.

"Every man has some little power in some one direction," he would say. "I was never really stout enough for the stone trade, particularly the fixing. Moving the blocks always used to strain me, and standing the trying draughts in buildings before the windows are in always gave me colds, and I think that began the mischief inside. But I felt I could do one thing if I had the opportunity.

I could accumulate ideas, and impart them to others. I wonder if the founders had such as I in their minds--a fellow good for nothing else but that particular thing? ... I hear that soon there is going to be a better chance for such helpless students as I was. There are schemes afoot for making the university less exclusive, and extending its influence. I don't know much about it. And it is too late, too late for me! Ah--and for how many worthier ones before me!"

"How you keep a-mumbling!" said Arabella. "I should have thought you'd have got over all that craze about books by this time. And so you would, if you'd had any sense to begin with. You are as bad now as when we were first married."

On one occasion while soliloquizing thus he called her "Sue" unconsciously.

"I wish you'd mind who you are talking to!" said Arabella indignantly. "Calling a respectable married woman by the name of that--" She remembered herself and he did not catch the word.

But in the course of time, when she saw how things were going, and how very little she had to fear from Sue's rivalry, she had a fit of generosity. "I suppose you want to see your--Sue?" she said. "Well, I don't mind her coming. You can have her here if you like."

"I don't wish to see her again."

"Oh--that's a change!"

"And don't tell her anything about me--that I'm ill, or anything. She has chosen her course. Let her go!"

One day he received a surprise. Mrs. Edlin came to see him, quite on her own account. Jude's wife, whose feelings as to where his affections were centred had reached absolute indifference by this time, went out, leaving the old woman alone with Jude. He impulsively asked how Sue was, and then said bluntly, remembering what Sue had told him: "I suppose they are still only husband and wife in name?"

Mrs. Edlin hesitated. "Well, no--it's different now. She's begun it quite lately--all of her own free will."

"When did she begin?" he asked quickly.

"The night after you came. But as a punishment to her poor self. He didn't wish it, but she insisted."

"Sue, my Sue--you darling fool--this is almost more than I can endure! ... Mrs. Edlin--don't be frightened at my rambling--I've got to talk to myself lying here so many hours alone--she was once a woman whose intellect was to mine like a star to a benzoline lamp:

who saw all MY superstitions as cobwebs that she could brush away with a word. Then bitter affliction came to us, and her intellect broke, and she veered round to darkness. Strange difference of sex, that time and circumstance, which enlarge the views of most men, narrow the views of women almost invariably. And now the ultimate horror has come--her giving herself like this to what she loathes, in her enslavement to forms! She, so sensitive, so shrinking, that the very wind seemed to blow on her with a touch of deference... As for Sue and me when we were at our own best, long ago--when our minds were clear, and our love of truth fearless--the time was not ripe for us! Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. And so the resistance they met with brought reaction in her, and recklessness and ruin on me! ... There--this, Mrs. Edlin, is how I go on to myself continually, as I lie here. I must be boring you awfully."

"Not at all, my dear boy. I could hearken to 'ee all day."

As Jude reflected more and more on her news, and grew more restless, he began in his mental agony to use terribly profane language about social conventions, which started a fit of coughing. Presently there came a knock at the door downstairs. As nobody answered it Mrs. Edlin herself went down.

The visitor said blandly: "The doctor." The lanky form was that of Physician Vilbert, who had been called in by Arabella.

"How is my patient at present?" asked the physician.

"Oh bad--very bad! Poor chap, he got excited, and do blasphem terribly, since I let out some gossip by accident--the more to my blame. But there--you must excuse a man in suffering for what he says, and I hope God will forgive him."

"Ah. I'll go up and see him. Mrs. Fawley at home?"

"She's not in at present, but she'll be here soon."

Vilbert went; but though Jude had hitherto taken the medicines of that skilful practitioner with the greatest indifference whenever poured down his throat by Arabella, he was now so brought to bay by events that he vented his opinion of Vilbert in the physician's face, and so forcibly, and with such striking epithets, that Vilbert soon scurried downstairs again. At the door he met Arabella, Mrs. Edlin having left. Arabella inquired how he thought her husband was now, and seeing that the doctor looked ruffled, asked him to take something. He assented.

"I'll bring it to you here in the passage," she said. "There's nobody but me about the house to-day."

She brought him a bottle and a glass, and he drank.

Arabella began shaking with suppressed laughter. "What is this, my dear?" he asked, smacking his lips.

"Oh--a drop of wine--and something in it." Laughing again she said: "I poured your own love-philtre into it, that you sold me at the agricultural show, don't you re-member?"

"I do, I do! Clever woman! But you must be prepared for the consequences." Putting his arm round her shoulders he kissed her there and then.

"Don't don't," she whispered, laughing good-humouredly. "My man will hear."

She let him out of the house, and as she went back she said to herself: "Well! Weak women must provide for a rainy day. And if my poor fellow upstairs do go off--as I suppose he will soon--it's well to keep chances open. And I can't pick and choose now as I could when I was younger. And one must take the old if one can't get the young."

The last pages to which the chronicler of these lives would ask the reader's attention are concerned with the scene in and out of Jude's bedroom when leafy summer came round again.

His face was now so thin that his old friends would hardly have known him. It was afternoon, and Arabella was at the looking-glass curling her hair, which operation she performed by heating an umbrella-stay in the flame of a candle she had lighted, and using it upon the flowing lock. When she had finished this, practised a dimple, and put on her things, she cast her eyes round upon Jude. He seemed to be sleeping, though his position was an elevated one, his malady preventing him lying down.

Arabella, hatted, gloved, and ready, sat down and waited, as if expecting some one to come and take her place as nurse.

Certain sounds from without revealed that the town was in festivity, though little of the festival, whatever it might have been, could be seen here. Bells began to ring, and the notes came into the room through the open window, and travelled round Jude's head in a hum. They made her restless, and at last she said to herself: "Why ever doesn't Father come!"

She looked again at Jude, critically gauged his ebbing life, as she had done so many times during the late months, and glancing at his

watch, which was hung up by way of timepiece, rose impatiently. Still he slept, and coming to a resolution she slipped from the room, closed the door noiselessly, and descended the stairs. The house was empty. The attraction which moved Arabella to go abroad had evidently drawn away the other inmates long before.

It was a warm, cloudless, enticing day. She shut the front door, and hastened round into Chief Street, and when near the theatre could hear the notes of the organ, a rehearsal for a coming concert being in progress. She entered under the archway of Oldgate College, where men were putting up awnings round the quadrangle for a ball in the hall that evening. People who had come up from the country for the day were picnicking on the grass, and Arabella walked along the gravel paths and under the aged limes. But finding this place rather dull she returned to the streets, and watched the carriages drawing up for the concert, numerous dons and their wives, and undergraduates with gay female companions, crowding up likewise. When the doors were closed, and the concert began, she moved on.

The powerful notes of that concert rolled forth through the swinging yellow blinds of the open windows, over the housetops, and into the still air of the lanes. They reached so far as to the room in which Jude lay; and it was about this time that his cough began again and awakened him.

As soon as he could speak he murmured, his eyes still closed: "A



little water, please."

Nothing but the deserted room received his appeal, and he coughed to exhaustion again--saying still more feebly: "Water--some water--Sue--Arabella!"

The room remained still as before. Presently he gasped again: "Throat--water--Sue--darling--drop of water--please--oh please!"

No water came, and the organ notes, faint as a bee's hum, rolled in as before.

While he remained, his face changing, shouts and hurrahs came from somewhere in the direction of the river.

"Ah--yes! The Remembrance games," he murmured. "And I here. And Sue defiled!"

The hurrahs were repeated, drowning the faint organ notes. Jude's face changed more: he whispered slowly, his parched lips scarcely moving:

"Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man-child conceived."

("Hurrah!")

"Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein."

("Hurrah!")

"Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? ... For now should I have lain still and been quiet. I should have slept: then had I been at rest!"

("Hurrah!")

"There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor... The small and the great are there; and the servant is free from his master. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?"

Meanwhile Arabella, in her journey to discover what was going on, took a short cut down a narrow street and through an obscure nook into the quad of Cardinal. It was full of bustle, and brilliant in the sunlight with flowers and other preparations for a ball here also. A carpenter nodded to her, one who had formerly been a fellow-workman of Jude's. A corridor was in course of erection from

the entrance to the hall staircase, of gay red and buff bunting. Waggon-loads of boxes containing bright plants in full bloom were being placed about, and the great staircase was covered with red cloth. She nodded to one workman and another, and ascended to the hall on the strength of their acquaintance, where they were putting down a new floor and decorating for the dance.

The cathedral bell close at hand was sounding for five o'clock service.

"I should not mind having a spin there with a fellow's arm round my waist," she said to one of the men. "But Lord, I must be getting home again--there's a lot to do. No dancing for me!"

When she reached home she was met at the door by Stagg, and one or two other of Jude's fellow stoneworkers. "We are just going down to the river," said the former, "to see the boat-bumping. But we've called round on our way to ask how your husband is."

"He's sleeping nicely, thank you," said Arabella.

"That's right. Well now, can't you give yourself half an hour's relaxation, Mrs. Fawley, and come along with us? 'Twould do you good."

"I should like to go," said she. "I've never seen the boat-racing,

and I hear it is good fun."

"Come along!"

"How I WISH I could!" She looked longingly down the street. "Wait a minute, then. I'll just run up and see how he is now. Father is with him, I believe; so I can most likely come."

They waited, and she entered. Downstairs the inmates were absent as before, having, in fact, gone in a body to the river where the procession of boats was to pass. When she reached the bedroom she found that her father had not even now come.

"Why couldn't he have been here!" she said impatiently. "He wants to see the boats himself--that's what it is!"

However, on looking round to the bed she brightened, for she saw that Jude was apparently sleeping, though he was not in the usual half-elevated posture necessitated by his cough. He had slipped down, and lay flat. A second glance caused her to start, and she went to the bed. His face was quite white, and gradually becoming rigid. She touched his fingers; they were cold, though his body was still warm. She listened at his chest. All was still within. The bumping of near thirty years had ceased.

After her first appalled sense of what had happened the faint notes

of a military or other brass band from the river reached her ears; and in a provoked tone she exclaimed, "To think he should die just now! Why did he die just now!" Then meditating another moment or two she went to the door, softly closed it as before, and again descended the stairs.

"Here she is!" said one of the workmen. "We wondered if you were coming after all. Come along; we must be quick to get a good place... Well, how is he? Sleeping well still? Of course, we don't want to drag 'ee away if--"

"Oh yes--sleeping quite sound. He won't wake yet," she said hurriedly.

They went with the crowd down Cardinal Street, where they presently reached the bridge, and the gay barges burst upon their view. Thence they passed by a narrow slit down to the riverside path--now dusty, hot, and thronged. Almost as soon as they had arrived the grand procession of boats began; the oars smacking with a loud kiss on the face of the stream, as they were lowered from the perpendicular.

"Oh, I say--how jolly! I'm glad I've come," said Arabella. "And--it can't hurt my husband--my being away."

On the opposite side of the river, on the crowded barges, were gorgeous nosegays of feminine beauty, fashionably arrayed in green,

pink, blue, and white. The blue flag of the boat club denoted the centre of interest, beneath which a band in red uniform gave out the notes she had already heard in the death-chamber. Collegians of all sorts, in canoes with ladies, watching keenly for "our" boat, darted up and down. While she regarded the lively scene somebody touched Arabella in the ribs, and looking round she saw Vilbert.

"That philtre is operating, you know!" he said with a leer. "Shame on 'ee to wreck a heart so!"

"I shan't talk of love to-day."

"Why not? It is a general holiday."

She did not reply. Vilbert's arm stole round her waist, which act could be performed unobserved in the crowd. An arch expression overspread Arabella's face at the feel of the arm, but she kept her eyes on the river as if she did not know of the embrace.

The crowd surged, pushing Arabella and her friends sometimes nearly into the river, and she would have laughed heartily at the horse-play that succeeded, if the imprint on her mind's eye of a pale, statuesque countenance she had lately gazed upon had not sobered her a little.

The fun on the water reached the acme of excitement; there were

immersions, there were shouts: the race was lost and won, the pink and blue and yellow ladies retired from the barges, and the people who had watched began to move.

"Well--it's been awfully good," cried Arabella. "But I think I must get back to my poor man. Father is there, so far as I know; but I had better get back."

"What's your hurry?"

"Well, I must go... Dear, dear, this is awkward!"

At the narrow gangway where the people ascended from the riverside path to the bridge the crowd was literally jammed into one hot mass--Arabella and Vilbert with the rest; and here they remained motionless, Arabella exclaiming, "Dear, dear!" more and more impatiently; for it had just occurred to her mind that if Jude were discovered to have died alone an inquest might be deemed necessary.

"What a fidget you are, my love," said the physician, who, being pressed close against her by the throng, had no need of personal effort for contact. "Just as well have patience: there's no getting away yet!"

It was nearly ten minutes before the wedged multitude moved sufficiently to let them pass through. As soon as she got up

into the street Arabella hastened on, forbidding the physician to accompany her further that day. She did not go straight to her house; but to the abode of a woman who performed the last necessary offices for the poorer dead; where she knocked.

"My husband has just gone, poor soul," she said. "Can you come and lay him out?"

Arabella waited a few minutes; and the two women went along, elbowing their way through the stream of fashionable people pouring out of Cardinal meadow, and being nearly knocked down by the carriages.

"I must call at the sexton's about the bell, too," said Arabella.

"It is just round here, isn't it? I'll meet you at my door."

By ten o'clock that night Jude was lying on the bedstead at his lodging covered with a sheet, and straight as an arrow. Through the partly opened window the joyous throb of a waltz entered from the ball-room at Cardinal.

Two days later, when the sky was equally cloudless, and the air equally still, two persons stood beside Jude's open coffin in the same little bedroom. On one side was Arabella, on the other the Widow Edlin. They were both looking at Jude's face, the worn old



eyelids of Mrs. Edlin being red.

"How beautiful he is!" said she.

"Yes. He's a 'andsome corpse," said Arabella.

The window was still open to ventilate the room, and it being about noontide the clear air was motionless and quiet without. From a distance came voices; and an apparent noise of persons stamping.

"What's that?" murmured the old woman.

"Oh, that's the doctors in the theatre, conferring honorary degrees on the Duke of Hamptonshire and a lot more illustrious gents of that sort. It's Remembrance Week, you know. The cheers come from the young men."

"Aye; young and strong-lunged! Not like our poor boy here."

An occasional word, as from some one making a speech, floated from the open windows of the theatre across to this quiet corner, at which there seemed to be a smile of some sort upon the marble features of Jude; while the old, superseded, Delphin editions of Virgil and Horace, and the dog-eared Greek Testament on the neighbouring shelf, and the few other volumes of the sort that he had not parted with, roughened with stone-dust where he had been in the habit of catching

them up for a few minutes between his labours, seemed to pale to a sickly cast at the sounds. The bells struck out joyously; and their reverberations travelled round the bed-room.

Arabella's eyes removed from Jude to Mrs. Edlin. "D'ye think she will come?" she asked.

"I could not say. She swore not to see him again."

"How is she looking?"

"Tired and miserable, poor heart. Years and years older than when you saw her last. Quite a staid, worn woman now. 'Tis the man--she can't stomach un, even now!"

"If Jude had been alive to see her, he would hardly have cared for her any more, perhaps."

"That's what we don't know... Didn't he ever ask you to send for her, since he came to see her in that strange way?"

"No. Quite the contrary. I offered to send, and he said I was not to let her know how ill he was."

"Did he forgive her?"

"Not as I know."

"Well--poor little thing, 'tis to be believed she's found forgiveness somewhere! She said she had found peace!"

"She may swear that on her knees to the holy cross upon her necklace till she's hoarse, but it won't be true!" said Arabella. "She's never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she's as he is now!"