The MILL OF MANY WINDOWS

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Novels by

J. S. FLETCHER

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THE COPPER BOX
THE HEAVEN-KISSED HILL
THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL
EXTERIOR TO THE EVIDENCE
THE VALLEY OF HEADSTRONG MEN
THE LOST MR. LINTHWAITE

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—Q—
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Part the First: THE FIFTH GENERATION

I

Haverthwaite, as regards its geographical situation, lay in a hollow of the hills; a grey-tinted, smoke-canopied place, over the irregular roofs and gables of which rose the high square tower of the parish church, the spires of others, more modern churches, the copper dome of a nineteenth century town hall, and the tall chimney-stacks of many factories. It was a town of irregular streets and squares, and there were more evidences of to-day than of yesterday within its confines, yet the antiquaries and archæologists of the place, of which there were many, had little difficulty in showing the curious and enquiring stranger multitudinous remains and memorials of a long-dead past. Behind palatially-housed bank and luxurious mercantile office lay hid the post-and-pan work of pre-Reformation ages, or the more pretentious architecture of Tudor and Jacobean periods: the inquisitive traveller turned out of a street gay and vivacious with the smartness of the twentieth century into another suggestive of the sixteenth: while at one moment he saw elaborate methods of transit, of lighting, of paving, in the next he found himself contemplating mullioned windows and deep-porched doorways, and his feet treading unevenly on cobble-stones, set down two hundred years before, and not yet fully smoothed out of their original roundness. Here, more perhaps than in any other town of that wild, mountainous, moor-clad region, the old and the new were mingled together in strange fashion—a fashion which, as shrewd observers well knew, was indicative of the mixture of new and old in the mentality of the Haverthwaite people, a self-contained, jealous-natured folk who regarded any man from without their parish as a stranger and foreigner.

Through the heart of the town, and at its lowest point, where a gloom-filled valley cut in winding fashion along the narrow levels, ran a dark and sluggish river, once clear and pellucid enough, but now fouled and stained by the drainage of dye and refuge—effluent from the mills and workshops. Along its banks on either side stood the principal manufactories of the place: whoever walked in close proximity to them, whether in the cold of winter or heat of summer learnt through his nostrils that the great industry of Haverthwaite lay in the working of wool. Hither, to these high grey walls, pierced with many windows, came wool from the far ends of the earth, to be torn, washed, scrubbed, manipulated by many marvellously-contrived machines, and to undergo many strange changes until it emerged from warehouse and show-room in the shape of cloth or carpet. Wool was everywhere: its slivers floated

in the air: its grease permeated the very stones of the streets: the hot, clinging odour of its natural oil infected the atmosphere. The folk talked wool, lived with wool, dreamed of wool: wool was their daily bread: the thinking man, watching the great bales of raw wool, wearily making their slow way from railway to factory, on the last stage of their many thousand miles' journey from Sydney or Auckland, knew that in them lay his meat and drink, his rent and rates, and the future of his children. Not from idle sentiment had his forebears, the wise men of the old borough in long dead days, set in the midst of its lozenged coat-of-arms the figure of a sheep.

Amongst the various many-storied, many-windowed centres of industry which, since the last years of the eighteenth century had risen, built in the strong white stone of the district, along the banks of the Haver, one rose conspicuous above all the rest. On each side of the river, close to its irregular edges, ran a well-made, firm-foundationed road; a highly necessary piece of engineering, considering the constant traffic of waggon and dray, steam or horse or motor-drawn, that was for ever going to and fro.

The various mills and factories and workshops opened off these roads: in most instances they were approached through arched gateways which admitted to the big, enclosed yards within. But in one case the approach was different, and notably so. Half way along the road which ran beside the north bank of the Haver, whoever followed it came to a mill, which was prominently conspicuous above all its fellows, a big landmark in the general surroundings. An immense affair in the Italian style of architecture, many stories higher than any of the highest buildings in its neighbourhood, still comparatively white and fresh in spite of the smoke of half a century, it formed three sides of a quadrangle, the fourth being left wide and open to the road and the river, and only fenced off from them by a row of granite pillars interlaced by ornamental iron chains. Beyond these decorative protections, and looked down upon by the three enclosing walls, each distinguished by a uniform and handsome façade, lay a square of carefully kept green sward, intersected by broad asphalted walks and brightened with neatly fashioned parterres wherein, at the proper seasons, blossomed many choice things in shrub and plant. Strangers, passing this great house of industry, instinctively paused to admire its spick-and-span exterior, the velvet-like texture of the verdant turf in its midst, the evident care which was taken of its appointments: if they were inquisitive and enquired of any bystander as to what it was, and who owned it, they learnt that this was Marrashaw's Mill.

Whoever had cause to pass the granite pillars and iron chains and walk into the lawn-laid quadrangle of Marrashaw's Mill soon acquired certain interesting information about the place and its history. In the centre of the lawn, carefully fenced in by ornamental railings, and surrounded by a pavement of dressed

stone, stood an ancient cottage: the veriest neophyte in archæology would have recognised it at once as a relic of the seventeenth century: an expert would have seen, just as quickly, that where it had been restored the restoration was the work of one who knew the true secret of all architectural renovation is not to alter but to preserve. So well had the restoration of this ancient place been carried out that as the spectator stood outside it, he expected to hear the whirr of the spinning wheel from within, or to see a woman, distaff in hand, emerge from the whitewashed stone porch. From that porch he gained some information: above it, fixed to the beamed and plastered wall, was a stone slab whereon an incised inscription remained still clearly legible: John and Mary Marrashaw: In the Yeare of our Lorde: 1697. Here then was the original home of the Marrashaw family, where, in the old days of handcraft, they had scrubbed and carded, spun and woven the wool from their own sheep; now, around its humble walls, in the place where once there had been nothing but open land, running from hill to river, rose the monster factory wherein the Marrashaw of to-day presided over a marshalled army of three thousand workers.

But there was more to be learnt of the Marrashaws by the stranger, who, on his way to office, or counting-house, or show-room, looked round the lawn across which he strode. At the very entrance to the main path of that lawn was a marble statue: it represented a sturdy, thick-set, strong-featured man in the dress of the middle Georgian period. In his right hand he carried a stout staff; the left grasped a leathern belt which, passing over his shoulder, secured a pack on his back wherefrom protruded the ends of various folded lengths of cloth. This effigy represented an ancestor in the act of carrying his homespun wares to market: on the plinth beneath it appeared the inscription, in square-faced solid-looking gold letters: Matthew Marrashaw: 1718-1796. And as he passed up the broad asphalted main walk which led to the old cottage, the visitor became aware of two more statues, placed at each end of an intersecting path that crossed the lawn immediately in front of that ancient memorial. One, on the right hand side, represented another sturdy, well-built man, in the costume of the later eighteenth century, who held in his hands, and attentively examined it, the model of a machine: beneath him, in more gold letters, was inscribed Christopher Marrashaw, 1760-1837: this was a forebear who had introduced machinery into the first factory. The other, at the opposite extremity of the intersecting path, was the figure of a man in middle-Victorian garments, the straight frock-coat, the high pointed collar, the voluminous neck-cloth: he held in his hand a scroll whereon was depicted an architectural design: on his plinth appeared the name Hanson Marrashaw, 1805-1883; he was the builder of the palace-like edifice which rose above his sculptured head.

But this was not all. Passing beyond the old cottage, so carefully preserved

and jealously kept, the stranger who approached the main and central wing of the huge building found himself, at its very portals, confronted by a fourth statue, which, from its position seemed to look out commandingly on all the rest, and on the cottage, and the lawn, and the high surrounding walls with their hundreds of windows, and on the road the river and on the steep, dark hill which shut in the view beyond. This represented a man who, in appearance, reverted to the Marrashaw of the entrance—another sturdy, thick-set, strong-featured man, in whose face the sculptor had seen and successfully realised certain qualities of doggedness, stubbornness, obstinacy, and imperiousness. The modern garments of this personage were little in evidence: he was represented in the robes and furs of a mayor; he wore the mayor's chain of office about his neck and shoulders; one hand carried the mayoral hat; the other held a scroll. Beneath the figure was incised a lengthier inscription than those on the other statues; it informed the reader that this was Charlesworth Marrashaw, J.P., three times Mayor of Haverthwaite: Governor of Haverthwaite Grammar School: Steward of the Honour of Haverthwaite: President of the Haverthwaite Antiquarian Society. But here there was no date: Charles Marrashaw still lived: he was sole proprietor of the world-famed business which bore his name; he was fully conscious of his own worth, and he had seen nothing incongruous in erecting this statue to himself as a completion of his labours in erecting the others; from the windows of his private office, immediately above it, he looked down with pride on it and on all that surrounded it, every day: what he beheld was the cumulative result of the industry, perseverance, ingenuity, ability of four generations of Marrashaws: he firmly believed that it was all crystallised and brought to the full and perfect flower in himself. Whatever any other Englishman might be, he was Marrashaw, of Marrashaw's Mill.

At this time Charlesworth Marrashaw was a man of nearly seventy years of age, a widower. He had married late in life: needless to say he had married money. There had been two children of the marriage: the elder, Beatrice, was now a young woman of twenty-three: the younger, John Bright, so named because of his father's admiration of the famous statesman, was two years her junior. Charlesworth had certain definite designs and ambitions in respect of both. He meant Beatrice to marry Victor Ellerthwaite, the only son of his particular friend and crony, James Ellerthwaite, another manufacturing magnate of the town: he wanted John Bright—always known as Bright in the family circle—to marry Millicent, Ellerthwaite's daughter. There was a lot of wealth in the hands of the two families: these marriages would solidify and increase it. The notion was one that had fixed itself firmly in Charlesworth Marrashaw's mind for many years: it was welcome enough to Ellerthwaite. And at the precise moment in which this history begins, neither Ellerthwaite

nor Marrashaw had any idea or suspicion that anything would or could occur to interfere with their cut-and-dried schemes: each sprang from a race of hard, practical, unsentimental folk, which, in all its men and all its women, preserved the tribal instinct and believed firmly that the destinies of children are to be settled by those who bring them into the world.

II

About four o'clock of a February afternoon, Charlesworth Marrashaw sat in his office at the mill; a big roomy apartment, the two large windows of which looked out on the quadrangle, its statues, and its old cottage. Charlesworth's desk was set against one of these windows, in such a fashion that he had only to turn his head from it to see his own marble effigy and those of his ancestors and the humble roof under which the first was born. But he saw them again, in another way, when he turned his gaze inward. On the walls of his room hung several family portraits, in oils, heavily framed in solid gilt. There was his father, and there his grandfather, and there his great-grandfather; in smaller, oval canvases were his own wife, now gone, his mother, his grandmother, his great-grandmother. Fine folk, great characters, in his opinion: he was proud of them, beyond measure. And he was proud, too, of another series of pictures, smaller ones, in water colour, which further decorated his walls. These represented Marrashaw's Mill in various stages of its existence. There it was as it stood in 1780; a very elementary humble place, with the old cottage at one corner of its yard. There it was again in 1830: there had been additions to it in the intervening years. Still more additions and improvements appeared in the next view, of 1860, but in that the old walls still stood, conspicuous by their insignificance. Then, in the final one, dated 1875, the present mill stood forth in all its new glory: Charlesworth was particularly fond of drawing the attention of visitors to this, the last, and to that of 1780, the first, of the series. Then he would add with a chuckle that nobody knew what the place might be like in another fifty years; no doubt, he remarked, what now seemed so up-to-date would then be quite out of date, and his own office would be used as a retreat for the doorkeeper.

But the visitor, looking around him at Charlesworth's environment, was inclined to be sceptical. It was difficult to imagine that a merchant prince of the year 2000 could be better accommodated than Mr. Marrashaw was. Everything in that private office spoke eloquently of wealth and luxury. The carpet on the floor, woven in one piece, must have cost a small fortune; the rugs laid here and there were of the finest make and finish; the furniture was worth a sum that would have fitted up a pretentious middle-class villa from cellar to attic; the very door handles and plates were of solid silver, and the window curtains of the rarest silk. There was a clock on the mantelpiece for which Charlesworth—as he was fond of remarking—had given a couple of thousand pounds in Paris: it had belonged once upon a time, to Madame du Barry, and it was flanked, on either side, by candelabra which had graced the salon of the same royal favourite: for them, too, Charlesworth had given a

fancy price. And in a recess close by stood a cigar cabinet: its owner, giving a cigar from it to some close friend or unusually profitable customer, was not slow to let the recipient know that the gift stood the giver in nothing less than five shillings.

The mill-owner was smoking one of these cigars now. It was a big, dark-coloured cigar, and he held it firmly in the corner of his clean-shaven lips. His hands were spread out on his chest, above his ample waistcoat, into the armholes of which he had thrust his thumbs; his fingers, short, thick, aggressive-looking, were playing tattoos upon his broadcloth. There was a wall immediately behind him, and he had tilted back his comfortably elbow-chair against it, and his feet, dangling in space above the thick rug before his desk, kept time to his fingers. Those who knew Charlesworth Marrashaw knew that this restlessness of finger and foot was a sure sign of disturbance.

There were two people in the room who knew it well enough. One was an elderly man who stood leaning against a bookcase near the fire; a man of about Charlesworth's own age, grey, somewhat worn-looking; a workman, whose chequered apron was rolled up about his waist. His attitude showed a certain familiarity with his master; he stood, lazily leaning back, his hands thrust in the pockets of his trousers, his eyes fixed half-enquiringly, half-anxiously on Charlesworth's frowning face. He was Lockwood Clough, now an overlooker and a deeply-trusted servant, who had gone into Marrashaw's Mill as a half-timer in his early boyhood, and had never left it.

The other person in the room was a girl, who sat at a table placed on the left-hand side of Charlesworth's big desk: a fair-haired, slender, delicately pretty girl, of refined features and gentle air; well and smartly dressed, who, while the mill-owner and his man talked, kept her head bent over the blotting-pad in front of her and busied herself in writing. Once she looked up, to consult a calendar that hung on the wall close by her chair; the momentary lifting of her head revealed a pair of large, quick, perceptive grey eyes and a mouth, warm and red of lip, that betokened a good deal of firmness and possible obstinacy. And she was Hermione Clough, Lockwood's daughter and only child, now a young woman of twenty-three, and for the last four years secretary to Charlesworth Marrashaw. A product of the age, Hermione, despite the fact that her father was an ordinary working-man, had had what her employer called a lady's education at various high schools and colleges: she read, wrote, and spoke three languages, French, German, and Italian, and in Charlesworth Marrashaw's opinion was the smartest young person of either sex in all Haverthwaite—which, as he often remarked, was saying a good deal.

There had been silence in the room for a full minute: Lockwood Clough had said something which had made his master think—deeply. Presently Charlesworth took the cigar from the corner of his hard-set lips, and leaning

forward to his desk, gave the overlooker a direct, commanding glance.

"So that's what you think, is it?" he said. "Or, rather, it's what—as it appears to me—what you seem to think! Now what is it, in plain words? Out with it, my lad, out with it! You know me, Lockwood—what's the use of beating about the bush? Speak out—straight!"

Clough made an uneasy motion of head and feet: it betokened diffidence and perplexity. His eyes wandered to his daughter: Hermione made no response to his glance; they shifted from her to the mill-owner: Charlesworth nodded and reiterated his command.

"I say again—out with it, my lad! Why not?" he said. "All safe here—no eavesdroppers. Your lass there knows as much about my business as I do myself—happen a bit more."

Clough shifted his position. There was a chair close by where he was standing, and he suddenly sat down in it. He turned to Charlesworth with an earnest look.

"It's not that, Mr. Marrashaw," he said. "It's just this—I don't like saying aught that I'm not dead sure about. I'm not at all sure about this—it's an idea, a notion, a suspicion; call it aught you like. But it's more than a fancy. Now, I know as well as any man that there's disaffection breeding, not only amongst our lot, but all over the town, and if you want the plain truth, I'm convinced, though I can't prove it, that there's some sort of a secret society at work. That's it, Mr. Marrashaw—a secret society!"

Charlesworth drew back in his chair, staring, and for a while there was silence, broken only by a steady run of Hermione Clough's pen. It seemed a long time before Charlesworth spoke.

"A secret society!" he exclaimed at last. "What?—one of these affairs that you hear tell of in—is it Russia, or France, or?—nay, my lad, I can't believe that! And in Haverthwaite!—ecod, it 'ud be about the first time secrets were ever kept here, I'm thinking—a hot-bed of gossip as the place has always been! Secret! Nay, come!—I can't believe that, Lockwood."

"Well, it's my belief, Mr. Marrashaw," said the overlooker. "And it's the belief of more than me—Ben Thwaites has the same idea. We keep hearing—well, bits of things. My belief is that some of 'em—the dissatisfied lot, you know—meet somewhere in secret, and talk things over, and lay their plans. It's certain, anyway, that they're what they call permeating—infecting, I call it—no end of our folks with their notions. There's a secret centre somewhere, Mr. Marrashaw, where all this discontent and wild talk originates—I'm sure of it."

"And it's to lead to—what?" demanded Charlesworth.

Clough ran his fingers through his thin beard. He, too, was silent for a while; when he spoke, his words were slow, and he shook his head.

"Well, I reckon it 'ud be a strike," he answered. "A strike!"

Charlesworth started, and the cigar, which he had replaced in his teeth, lost its ash, which fell, spreading, on his waistcoat. He dashed it away with an irritated, impatient gesture.

"A strike!" he exclaimed. "A strike? Never been such a thing heard of in connection with Marrashaw's Mill—never!"

"That's not to say there mayn't be, sir," remarked Clough. "We live in different times. Things has changed—wonderful!"

"Aye, my lad!—and for t' worse!" responded Charlesworth, sneeringly, and relapsing into the vernacular of the district, as he always did when strongly moved. "But a secret society!—mole's work—underneath methods—come, Lockwood, that's summat 'at mun be seen to! We mun find out what it's all about, my lad, and who's at t' bottom on it."

Clough shook his head, regarding his master with doubtful eyes.

"How's that to be done?" he asked. "It's my opinion there's only a handful of 'em, and they'll keep things close."

Charlesworth laughed. There was a cynical note in his laughter, and for the fraction of a second Hermione Clough glanced at him: she had an intuitive knowledge of what her employer's laughter meant when that note was in it.

"Aye, no doubt!" said Charlesworth. "Close enough, I daresay. But there's allus one thing'll open a man's mouth, Lockwood, my lad!—especially a Yorkshireman's. That's—brass!"

"You think you might—bribe one of 'em?" suggested Clough. "Buy him?"

"Aye, I do!" exclaimed Charlesworth. "In every affair o' that sort there's always one 'at'll betray t' rest—if it's made worth his while. Every man has his price, Lockwood!—mak' no mistake about that. And if they've secret methods, why, we mun have secret methods, too. Look ye here!" he went on, leaning closer over his desk. "You keep your eyes and ears open and try to find out all you can. You'll be getting to know somebody 'at knows something—definite. When you do, bring him or her to me, on t' quiet. Then we'll see what a bit o' brass'll do. T' mole's in his run, no doubt—well, we'll set a trap for him, and bait it wi' bank-notes—what?"

"I've no doubt something'll come out, in time," said Clough.

Charlesworth threw away his cigar and pulled out his watch: it was his time for leaving the office. As he rose from his chair, the door opened, and a boy put his head into the room.

"Brougham at the front, sir," he announced, and departed as suddenly as he had come.

Clough made over to the door, silently. With his hand on it, he turned and looked at his master. Charlesworth was putting on his overcoat.

"That's the game, my lad!" said Charlesworth. "Secret deeds need secret detection. Set your wits to work! Find me somebody, man or woman, lad or

lass, that knows *something*—and I'll soon open their mouths and loosen their tongues for 'em. Brass, my lad, brass!—they'd sell their grandmothers' souls for a ten-pound note. And I'm none short o' ten-pound notes, Lockwood."

Clough nodded and went away in silence, and Charlesworth, having carefully fitted on his silk hat and his gloves, picked up his gold-mounted umbrella and prepared to follow him. But first he glanced at Hermione, whose head was still bent over her table.

"Niceish lot one has about one—all unbeknown!" he remarked bitterly. "A man like me finds work, and bread and meat, and clothes and boots, to say naught of beer and skittles, for nigh on to three thousand folk, and some on 'em's so dissatisfied 'at they start conspiracies i' corners! Ye'd think 'at such a thing as gratitude had vanished off t' face o' t' earth. Well, good-day, my lass."

Hermione looked up and pointed a slender finger to two or three sheets of paper which she had just placed on Charlesworth's desk.

"Those letters need signing, Mr. Marrashaw," she said.

"Oh, now then!" answered Charlesworth. "Mustn't forget business, anyhow. That's all, my lass?" he asked when he had attached his signature to the papers. "Aught else?"

"That's all to-day," replied Hermione. "Good afternoon, Mr. Marrashaw."

She folded the letters into their envelopes when Charlesworth had gone, placed them with several others in a basket, and ringing a bell, handed them over to the boy who had announced the arrival of the brougham. Her work was over for the day: there was nothing to do now but to switch off the electric light, lock the door of the office, and hand the key to the porter as she passed out through the counting-house. But after a glance at the two-thousand pound clock, Hermione lingered. It was not yet five. Suddenly, as if she had made up her mind about something, she went over to the telephone which stood on Charlesworth's desk, and called up one of the many departments of the mill.

"Hello!" she said as she got an answer. "Is Howroyd there? Yes? Tell him to bring the January order book round to Mr. Marrashaw's office—just now. Coming? All right." Then she waited: it would take Howroyd at least five minutes to come from his department to the office: she occupied herself meanwhile in putting on her hat and jacket. Presently the door opened, and a man entered hastily, carrying a big leather-bound book under his left arm. He glanced from Hermione to Charlesworth's desk: Hermione shook her head.

"All right," she said in a low voice, motioning him to close the door. "That was an excuse about the order book. I wanted to see you."

Howroyd set the book down on Hermione's table and turned to her with an inquisitive look. He was a man of something under middle age; a pale-faced, thin-cheeked man, noticeable only for a pair of large, lambent, imaginative

eyes, in which a certain enthusiasm burned—students of physiology would have said of him at first glance that here was a man whose natural bent was towards cult of some sort. He had the large, loose mouth of the orator; the pendant lip of the thinker: his thick, coal-black hair, slightly shot with grey strands, fell untidily over a broad, high forehead, scored deeply with many lines and furrows. He lifted a thin, worn hand as he turned to Hermione; its fingers, long and slender, swept the hair away from his eyebrows: it was a characteristic gesture of his and betokened not so much weariness as pre-occupation.

"Yes?" he said.

"Look here, Allot," began Hermione, sinking her voice to a whisper. "Something's wrong! Somebody's got to know—something—about us. There's a traitor somewhere!"

Howroyd started and stared at her.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "There's only nine of us—I'd answer for every man and woman! Just as I would for myself."

"I don't care!" said Hermione. "Something's—out. Listen—my father's got an inkling of it. He's been in here, just now, telling his suspicions to Marrashaw. He's convinced, my father, that there's a secret society in the town, whose purpose is to spread disaffection and all the rest of it, amongst the workers. He says he doesn't know (anything certain, but I'm not so sure that he doesn't know) more than he lets out. Now then?"

"What did Marrashaw say—or do?" asked Howroyd, after a moment's reflective silence.

"Say? Do?" exclaimed Hermione, with a sneer. "What do you think, Allot? Men like that have only one idea. He told my father to get hold of somebody who knew something definite, and to bring him or her to him—money, he said, would unlock any secret. Now think, Allot, think!—is there anybody, amongst us, who's open to bribery? Is there a rat amongst us? Because, if things are given away now, why, then—"

"Well?" asked Howroyd. "Then—what?"

"Then," she answered sullenly, "all we've worked for will be—ruined! The time's not come! And if Marrashaw, and Ellerthwaite, and all the rest of them know what we're planning, well—we're done! That's all."

Howroyd looked round; evidently he was deeply perplexed.

"I can't think of a soul!" he said at last. "There's just the nine of us—and you know them all. And then—you know how careful we've been about our meetings. I can't see how anything can have leaked out. It must be that you father's got—well, just an idea, a suspicion. With, of course, nothing to go on."

But Hermione shook her head. Her grey eyes became positive.

“No!” she answered. “I know my father. He knows something. He’s not the sort to talk without some bed-rock of fact. And you know how old-fashioned he is, and how fond of this business and of the Marrashaw tradition—he’ll serve Charlesworth Marrashaw by trying to find out more. Think now, Allot!—is there anybody, amongst—us—that could be bribed—bought?”

“Upon my honour, I don’t know, can’t think, of one, man or woman,” answered Howroyd. “But—you never can tell!”

“What?” exclaimed Hermione. “You think—that?”

Howroyd smiled, a little wearily.

“We haven’t got to perfection in human nature—yet,” he answered. “After all, none of us know what the other man’s thinking—or doing.”

“If anybody’s turning traitor, he or she ought to be shot!” said Hermione. “And I’m not speaking metaphorically. Are we going to have all our plans upset, wasted, wrecked, for the sake of a squeamish sentiment about—”

“Sh!” whispered Howroyd. “We haven’t come to that, my girl—and don’t want to.” Then he laughed gently, looking at his companion with a half-whimsical expression. “I think you must be a throw-back, to the times of the Terror or the Commune,” he said. “No, no—we don’t want that sort of force. Leave it to me—I’ve means of finding out if we’ve a traitor in the camp.”

“Well, I’ve told you,” said Hermione. “And I tell you again—I know my father! He knows something; he’s heard something, learnt something.”

“You couldn’t get it out of him?” suggested Howroyd.

Hermione signed to him to pick up his order book, and lifted her gloved hand towards the switch of the electric light.

“No more than he could get anything out of me, Allot,” she answered. “Well, that’s all, now. Let’s be going.”

They left the room together: whoever met them in the corridors outside had no other idea of them than that the clerk and the secretary were discussing the ordinary details of the business in which they were employed: certainly no one suspected that the thoughtful-looking man and the gentle, pretty girl were two highly-dangerous revolutionaries, sworn to pull down and grind into dust the pillars and stones of existent society.

III

Charlesworth Marrashaw, on leaving his private office, passed out through the counting-house and the highly decorated, marble-pilastered entrance hall beyond it, and down a flight of broad stairs to the swinging doors and granite steps which gave on the quadrangle. There, on the asphalted drive, stood his brougham, a neat, solid, luxuriously-fitted equipage drawn by a pair of fine bay horses, in charge of an elderly, highly-respectable coachman. Charlesworth never got in or out of that brougham without casting a pleased and critical eye over it and its cattle: he paused now, drawing on his gloves, to glance at the horses: they were recent acquisitions, and he had given five hundred guineas for the pair. There was something comforting in looking at that sort of thing: it drove from his mind the disagreeable news which he had just heard from Lockwood Clough. And he glanced from the horses to their driver with a certain sly look of smug satisfaction.

"I think I got my money's worth in these two, Crowther," he remarked. "They seem to look better every day!"

"Fine pair, sir," assented the coachman. "A very fine pair! Rowbottom, the vet., said to me this morning, sir, when I had 'em out on the moor, 'Crowther,' he says, 'that's t' finest pair I've set eyes on this many a long day,' he says. 'I don't know what your master paid for 'em,' he says, 'but they're worth every penny o' six hundred pound!' That's what he said, sir."

Charlesworth heard this with a double delight—it pleased him to know that he possessed such excellent horseflesh; it pleased him still more to know that a competent judge priced his possession at a hundred pounds more than he had given for it.

"Aye, well, Rowbottom knows what he's talking about," he observed as he moved to the door of the brougham. "Now then, I want you to call at Pearman's, the jewellers, in High Street—you know—t' watch and clock shop."

The coachman lifted his whip in sign of assent, and Charlesworth got into the brougham and was driven away. There were always papers and magazines in a basket attached to the padded cushions at his side; he took one out now, and began to skim its pages: it was very rarely that he ever looked out of the windows of his carriage until he was near his own private residence on the outskirts of the town. There was little on the homeward way that interested him. For the smart brougham and high-stepping horses, on leaving the mill, turned through the narrow, winding streets of the old part of Haverthwaite, a dull, dismal, almost squalid quarter which Charlesworth, if he ever looked at it, viewed with an apathy that almost amounted to indifference. Here there were

long, formal rows of grey stone cottages, all built before modern ideas about house-planning and sanitation came into existence; the folk who lived in them were cramped for accommodation, badly off as regards water-supply, sparsely furnished with gas-lamps, and herded too closely together for comfort. And most of them, nine-tenths of them, were Charlesworth's workpeople, and in his opinion what had been good enough for their fathers and mothers was good enough for them.

Over the stone-paved streets of this quarter of narrow lanes, dark squares, and cellar dwellings, the rubber-tyred wheels of the brougham swiftly sped, to emerge into the wider and more modern thoroughfares of the business centre of the town. The electric lights were flashing there, and their cold radiance fell strongly on the window of the jeweller's shop at which Crowther pulled up the bay horses. There was a wealth of gold and silver, pearls and diamonds, in that window, evidences of a highly valuable stock: the well-to-do folk of Haverthwaite had a somewhat barbaric taste for furnishing their tables with the rare metals and decorating their women folk with gems: Charlesworth himself, busy man though he was, rarely passed down High Street without spending a few minutes in front of Pearman's window, admiring the wares set out there. But on this occasion he walked straight into the shop, well knowing what he wanted. The proprietor, an elderly, fashionably dressed man, who looked more like a highly prosperous banker than a tradesman, came forward from his desk in the rear, with a smile and bow which suggested his admiration of the Marrashaw ability.

"Now then, Mr. Pearman," said Charlesworth, in his usual abrupt, bluff fashion. "We've come to do a bit of business with you. No objection, I reckon—what? Not that you're ever slack in that way, I'll lay—plenty o' going-out and coming-in here, I'll warrant!"

"Always pleased to do still a little more, you know, Mr. Marrashaw," answered the jeweller with a smile. He threw open a door and bowed his customer into a quiet, snugly furnished little parlour at the back of the shop. "What can we do for you, sir?" he asked.

Charlesworth, seating himself at the centre table of this retreat, glanced round with some curiosity.

"I reckon this is where you bring them that wants to buy a wedding-ring?" he said, slyly. "They like to do that sort o' thing—measuring t' finger, and what not—in private, eh? You reckon to give 'em half-a-dozen silver spoons along of a ring, don't you?—I have some recollection 'at summat o' that sort happened me when I bowt mine," he went on, relapsing into the familiar dialect. "Bowt it of old Gankrodger, I did, 'at hed a clock shop at that time in Low Green. But he's dead many a year—and it's five-and-twenty years since I did that bit o' business—I married late i' life."

"Wanting to buy another, Mr. Marrashaw?" asked the jeweller. "Very happy to hear it, if you do."

"Nowt o' t' sort!" said Charlesworth. "Nay—once is enough, at my age. No!—I'll tell you what I want. Yon lad o' mine, my son, Mr. John Bright Marrashaw, comes of age to-morrow—he'll be one and twenty years old at exactly seventeen minutes past nine to-morrow morning: I entered it all up i' t' family Bible within half-an-hour o' t' doctor reporting 'at mother an' child were doing well. Seventeen minutes past nine, t' eleventh day of February, in the year of Our Lord eighteen hundred and eighty five, so as it's now t' tenth o' February, nineteen hundred and six, John Bright attains his majority, as they call it, and as I say, to-morrow."

"Hearty congratulations, Mr. Marrashaw," said the jeweller. "To both of you."

"Thank yer," replied Charlesworth. "I'm obliged to yer. Well, now, that's what I came here for. It's been a custom in our family, and this is t' fifth generation on it, since it came to be what you might call a family o' real standing and importance in t' town, to give every lad a real, first-class watch on t' day he came of age. A right, sound, good, dependable watch, you know, Pearman—summat 'at'll last a lifetime. My father gave me one—this is it; his father gave him one; and his father gave him one before that: I have 'em all, locked up i' my safe at Marrashaw Royd. That, I say, has been our family custom, and I mun stand by it."

"A very good custom indeed, Mr. Marrashaw," remarked the jeweller. "Much to be recommended. You want a real, first class watch for Mr. Bright: very good."

"T' best article you've got in all t' shop," declared Charlesworth. "Ne'er mind t' expense! I shall hev' summat left to buy a bit o' meat and drink wi' when I've paid yer."

The jeweller laughed, and leaving his customer to himself for a few minutes, returned with a small velvet-lined tray whereon reposed three or four watches. Charlesworth, drawing out and putting on his gold-mounted pince-nez, bent over the tray with an admiring but business-like air.

"Well, now, come!" he remarked. "That's a very nice looking class o' goods! But I'm no expert at that sort o' thing, you know, Pearman—I shall have to rely on you. Which o' them, now, would yer thoroughly recommend?"

He sat quietly listening and observing while the jeweller went into details: in the end he put the tip of his finger on the watch which Pearman most favoured. "And that's—how much?" he asked.

"Hundred and twenty guineas, Mr. Marrashaw," answered the jeweller, promptly.

"Pounds, I think, Pearman," said Charlesworth. "Pounds, now!"

“Well, pounds, then, Mr. Marrashaw,” assented the vendor, with a smile. “Pounds—to you.”

“Put it aside,” commanded Charlesworth. “Now, then, we mun have a chain—have you aught like this o’ mine? Plain, heavy, first-class.”

He presently selected a chain priced at thirty pounds, and drawing out his cheque-book carefully wrote out a cheque for a hundred and fifty pounds, and put watch and chain, duly wrapped up, in his pocket.

“That’ll be on my son John Bright’s plate when he sits down to his breakfast to-morrow morning,” he said, with a wink at the jeweller. “We mun keep these owd customs up, yer know, Pearman—there’s naught like ’em.”

“There’s nothing like having an indulgent and affectionate father, Mr. Marrashaw,” remarked the jeweller. “Your young people are fortunate! By-the-bye,” he went on, looking at his customer with a speculative eye, “oddly enough, I was thinking about you, and about Miss Marrashaw, just before you came in.”

Charlesworth became interested—it flattered him to think that anybody had him in thought.

“Aye?” he said. “And what about me and my daughter?”

“I was in London last week,” answered Pearman. “I bought a very good diamond ring while I was there—second-hand. I don’t mind telling you—I bought it from a certain lady of title; very high rank indeed, I assure you, who, as such ladies sometimes are, was a bit—you know.”

“Aye, short of the ready!” chuckled Charlesworth. “Such like often is. Well?”

“You wouldn’t like to buy it for your daughter?” suggested the jeweller. “It’s a bargain! You wouldn’t get a ring like it elsewhere for anything like what I’m willing to take for it. I wouldn’t take what I’ll ask you for it if it were not for a quick sale—I wouldn’t indeed.”

“My daughter’s a rare lot o’ them things,” said Charlesworth. “She’s gotten all her mother’s, and I’ve bought her a good many myself, one time or another. But—you say it’s a bargain?”

“Such a bargain as you’re not likely to see again very soon,” answered Pearman. “Let me show it to you.” He unlocked a small safe that was let into the wall at one corner of the room, and produced a case. “There!” he said, as he opened it. “Miss Marrashaw would like that, I know!”

Charlesworth professed to be something of a judge of diamonds—he sported one in his cravat and another on his finger, and he knew what he had given for each. He carefully inspected the ring which Pearman lifted from its velvet bed.

“How much do you want for it?” he asked suddenly.

The jeweller hesitated a moment.

“You and I know each other, Mr. Marrashaw,” he said, at last. “I’ll be candid with you. I gave five hundred for it—a week since. I’ll take seven hundred and fifty. It’s worth more.”

Charlesworth also hesitated, turning the ring over and over. Then he turned to the chair he had just risen from, and sitting down again pulled out his cheque-book for the second time. “Now, then!” he said. “I lay t’ lass’ll find a finger to put it on. And there’s allus t’ vally o’ your brass in diamonds.”

“You’re a very good judge of them, Mr. Marrashaw,” remarked the jeweller.

IV

Charlesworth lived on the outskirts of the town, in a house which he had built for himself when his daughter was four and his son two years old. North-west of Haverthwaite, but within a mile of its centre, lay a wide expanse of moorland, secured as an open space to the townsfolk for ever by gift of the lord of the manor; at its edge, at a point which commanded a magnificent view of the valley of the Haver, and of the dark, wild-featured hills that overhung it, Charlesworth, about the time of his marriage, had secured a fine plot of land, and there, in due course, he had built his house, laid out his gardens, and planted his trees. He had all a maker's pride in Marrashaw Royd: he was just as proud of it as his father had been of the huge mills which he had planned and erected on the site of the original Marrashaw holding. Even now, when the house had nearly twenty years of familiarity to him, and the trees and shrubberies were assuming respectable shapes in height and bulk, he never approached his domain without pride, nor quitted it without an admiring backward glance. And it was his habit, when he drove home from the mill late in the afternoon, whether in summer or in winter, to leave his brougham at the entrance gate and walk slowly through his grounds to his front door. In summer there were the carefully kept flowers, rare shrubs, and growing trees to look at: in winter, the lights of the big house to admire for their cheerful welcome: all the year round there was the feeling that the place was all of his own contriving.

Like most folk, of whatever degree, of that part of the world, Charlesworth was house-proud. He had laid out his money lavishly in the planning and building of his house: he had been what he himself considered extravagant in furnishing and fitting it. He had let a world-famed firm of upholsters work their own will in respect of chairs, tables, beds, carpets and all the rest of it; he had provided every latest improvement and labour-saving device that money could command: he had laid out thousands in pictures; he had even fitted a fine library with rows upon rows of standard works in expensive bindings, not one volume of which he ever opened. Nothing pleased him better than personally to show visitors and guests round his miniature palace; to point out to them the solid silver fittings of the bathrooms, a thousand-guinea picture, an edition-de-luxe, the magnificence of the billiard-room. With a big cigar in the corner of his mouth, and his hands under the tails of his coat, Charlesworth made an excellent, if leisurely cicerone, and if he was not quite certain who Corot was, or in what century Canaletto lived, he always knew what he had given for his specimens of their art and genius.

But, also like most folk of his sort, Charlesworth in the midst of his

domestic splendour, had a favourite room and in it a favourite corner. A great deal of the house struck carnal and hyper-critical visitors as being a curious compound of the state apartments seen in royal and ducal palaces, and the show-rooms exhibited, as specimens, in very smart London or Paris furnishing warehouses: the drawing-room and the dining-room, for example, looked as if nothing was ever out of place and nobody ever entered them. But there was one room which showed signs of human life—a big, comfortable apartment called the morning-room: in it, when there were no guests in the house, Charlesworth, his son, and his daughter, always breakfasted, lunched, and dined. It contained furnishings with which Charlesworth had been familiar all his life: its chairs, tables, sofas, sideboard, every odd and end, had belonged to his father; so, too, had the pictures on its walls. All the rest of the house, as Charlesworth knew well enough in his heart, was show: this room was home: this, and in his old-fashionedly furnished bedroom, was where he really lived. And in one corner of its wide hearth, he had a chair which, as he was proud of telling people, had certainly belonged to Marrashaw the Second, and very likely to Marrashaw the First. It was ancient, and much mended, and considerably patched, and some of its oaken framework was worm-eaten, but it was the most important thing in its neighbourhood, and nobody but Charlesworth ever sat in it: it was his throne. Close by it, in a recess in the wall, was placed a small, very solid, ancient oak table, with spindle legs and fine old brass fittings; on this lay a massive copy of the Holy Bible, heavily bound in morocco and richly gilt; in it, on the fly-leaves which prefaced the title-page, was inscribed the entire history of the Marrashaw family since the days of Queen Anne: every Sunday night, when all the rest of the household had retired, Charlesworth drew this table and its burden to the side of his chair and discharged two solemn duties. One was to read a chapter of Holy Scripture; the other to go slowly and conscientiously through the family story as set forth in the entries of births, marriages, and deaths. His favourite Biblical reading lay amongst the chronicles of the kings and prophets: they were deeply interesting folk, in his opinion, but he was not quite sure that they came up to the Marrashaw standard.

It was into this room, and to this chair, that Charlesworth betook himself when he had entered his house and laid aside overcoat and hat. Six o’clock was then approaching, and his two parlour-maids, smart girls, were laying the table for dinner at seven. This was a performance which Charlesworth had a curious love of watching: when there were no guests and the grand dining-room was not in use, he liked to sit by the fire in the leisurely hour before dinner, watching the trim figures of his maids as they set out his fine linen, his solid silver, his priceless glass and china: it gave him a feeling of infinite ease and satisfaction. He was fond of luxury, and now, as he entered the room, with a

benevolent nod to his servants, for whom he felt in a sort of patriarchal way, he went over to a cupboard, in which he kept certain little matters of his own, and helped himself to a glass of his very old and rare dry sherry, and found a small cigar which it would take him just half-an-hour to smoke. And with these aids to comfort he sat down in his chair and stretched his feet to the cheery blaze of the fire.

As the clock struck six, Charlesworth's daughter came into the room, which the parlour maids, having finished their preparations, had just vacated. Her father, who had begun, against his will, to think about the news which Lockwood Clough had given him that afternoon, brightened up at the sight of her. She was his favourite of the two children, probably because she was easy to understand. He looked her over admiringly as she came towards the hearth —a tallish, slim, golden-haired, blue-eyed girl, pretty and regular of feature whose slenderness and colour were well set off by her smart dark blue walking costume and the dark furs at her neck. Charlesworth was proud of her looks— she was, in his opinion, a lady to her finger-tips, and did credit to the big sums of money which he had laid out, on her behalf, on governesses and finishing schools in London and Paris. But unprejudiced observers, having some experience of her, said that pretty and stylish though Beatrice Marrashaw was, she was also cold, apathetic, and selfish, the sort of young woman who would always keep a level head, remain a slave to convention, and take good care of her money.

"Now, Trissie, my lass!" said Charlesworth, greeting her in the familiar fashion which he always adopted in his home circle. "And where ha' you been putting yourself this afternoon?—been out, I see."

Trissie threw aside the black wolf stole which she had unwound from her throat and coming closer to the hearth put a daintily shod foot on the fender.

"I've been over at Ellerthwaite's," she answered. "Milly asked me to tea."

"Aye!" said Charlesworth, with a sly look. "And I reckon Victor 'ud be somewhere about, what?"

"He walked back with me," replied Trissie. She looked round at the door, and seeing it to be safely shut, turned to Charlesworth with a slow, enquiring glance. "I think I'd better tell you," she said in a calm, even voice. "Victor's asked me to marry him."

A gleam of satisfaction stole into Charlesworth's face: to be replaced at once by a certain anxiety.

"Aye, aye, my lass!" he answered. "Aye, to be sure! And—what did you say to him, Trissie?"

"I suppose it's all right," she replied. "It—it seems as if it was the right thing. It's what you want, isn't it?"

"It's what both me and Jim Ellerthwaite's wanted this many a year," said

Charlesworth. “We’ve always had it in mind, my lass. But we weren’t going to force matters, you know—it’s best to let young folks settle these things for themselves. He’s a good straight, responsible young fellow, is Victor—he’ll take care of all ’at his father’s made. You couldn’t do better, my lass!”

Trissie nodded, leaving the hearth and picking up her fur, turned to the door.

“All right!” she said. “As long as you’re satisfied. Of course, I always expected I should marry Victor. So—as I say, all right. I must go and change my things. Is there any one coming to dinner?”

“Nobody!” replied Charlesworth. He suddenly thrust his fingers into his waistcoat pocket, and pulled out the diamond ring. “Here, my lass,” he went on. “Here’s a trifle I bought this afternoon at Pearman’s—I was going to keep it till your birthday, but you can take it for a bit of a momento, like, of to-day. What do you think o’ that, now?”

Trissie’s unemotional eyes lighted at the sight of the diamond. She drew the glove from her right hand and fitted the ring on one of the fingers.

“It’s a beauty!” she said, with conviction. “Thank you! You’re an awfully good judge, you know, father.”

Charlesworth chuckled. It gave him more pleasure to be told that he was a judge of this sort of thing than it did to know that he was the leading manufacturer of Haverthwaite.

“Aye, I know a good thing o’ that sort when I see it, my lass!” he said triumphantly. “I paid a pretty penny for that, but it’s worth more than I gave for it. You’ll none be without visible means o’ subsistence, Trissie, while you’ve got that about you.”

Trissie smiled faintly and went off, and presently, Charlesworth, observing that dinner-time was drawing near went away, too, to make simple preparations. It was a rule of the establishment that when there were no guests, neither father, daughter nor son dressed for dinner: secretly, much as he liked pomp and display, Charlesworth liked to dine *en famille* far better, alone with his children in the homely morning room which was much more sunny and comfortable than the solemn state apartment across the hall.

“Mr. Bright come in?” he asked of one of his parlour-maids, who came into the room as he left it.

“I think not yet, sir,” answered the girl. “It’s Wednesday night, sir.”

This answer meant that on Wednesday evenings Bright Marrashaw was either late for dinner, or only came in as it was set on the table. Charlesworth nodded his recollection and understanding.

“Aye, to be sure—so it is,” he said. “We’ll not wait, Bella.”

Bright had not come in when his father and sister put their spoons into their soup at seven o’clock. But five minutes later he came, a heap of books and

papers under his left arm. He set this down on a side-table and made for his chair, nodding to Charlesworth.

"Sorry, father," he said as he sat down and unfolded his napkin. "I can't finish before a quarter to seven on Wednesdays, and it's a regular race to get home."

"If you can't, my lad, you can't," answered Charlesworth. "And better late than never, even at dinner-time. So long," he added, "as there's a hot plate."

This was intended as a piece of peculiarly smart humour, and Bright smiled politely: Trissie, who had no sense of humour outside the material and obvious, wondered what he smiled at. And, as she happened to be looking at him just then, she wondered, too, why her brother, the heir to much wealth, always looked so very lost and untidy. Victor Ellerthwaite, devoted to business and money-making though he was, always looked as if he had just stepped out of his clothes-press: he was the smartest young man in Haverthwaite, which was saying a great deal in a town of first-class tailors and superfine clothes. But Bright looked as if he scarcely knew whether his coats buttoned in front or behind, and to Trissie's certain knowledge he had worn the same old black neck-tie every day for several months, and was careless whether it rested under his ear or his chin. And suddenly, utterly indifferent to the presence of the parlourmaids, she leaned across the table.

"Bright!" she exclaimed. "Whenever did you brush your hair last?"

Bright started, laughed, and half turning in his seat, glanced at his reflection in the big mirror above the side-board. He laughed again at what he saw.

"Oh, I don't know, Trissie!" he answered good-naturedly. "This morning, I suppose."

"You really don't know," retorted Trissie. "And if I were you—well, I'd get it cut."

Bright laughed again, and Charlesworth laughed too, indulgently.

"Bright's something else to think about than fashions, my lass," he remarked. "And if he has got what you might call an unusual crop on top, it's not all empty beneath it. What're you up to now, my lad?"

"Same thing—still," answered Bright. "Synthetic dyestuffs. Pretty stiff proposition, too, father!—there's a jolly lot to be done yet."

"I reckon!" said Charlesworth, drily. He had always let his son go his own way about his education and occupation. After some years at the local grammar school, an ancient foundation of much fame, Bright, refusing his father's offer to send him to either Oxford or Cambridge, had betaken himself to the Haverthwaite Technical College, and for the last three years had spent all his time in its chemical department. He was off to his researches and experiments as soon as he had breakfasted; he was at them all day; very often,

dinner over, he would go back to his corner of the laboratory for another hour or two: he was without doubt, said Charlesworth, a born grafter in his own line. “Aye!” he added, still more drily. “We made a fine mistake when we let them German chaps get ahead of us in that line, Bright! Chaps like you have your work set. Dyes!—ecod, I wish I’d all t’ brass ’at I’ve spent in Germany for dyes!”

The mention of dyes made Trissie glance at her brother’s hands. Sometimes they were of a deep indigo colour; sometimes bright green; sometimes red; sometimes yellow: it was only when Bright took his annual holiday and went mountaineering, his great hobby, that they ever regained their normal colour. To-night they were sky-blue: Trissie looked from them to the rest of him, and wondered, for the hundredth time, why she and Bright were so unlike. While she was tall, slim, fair, Bright was short, stocky, dark; plain of feature, and only redeemed from the commonplace by a pair of unusually brilliant eyes which gleamed like lamps from under his shock of unkempt hair. Suddenly she laughed, a little satirically.

“Bright’s hands always remind me of what one reads in the history books, about the ancient Britons,” she said. “What did they stain themselves with, Bright?—you’ll know, of course.”

“Woad,” answered Bright, promptly. “*Isatis tinctoria*, a cruciferous plant, with yellow flowers and pendulous pods.”

Charlesworth listened approvingly. Perhaps he would have liked Bright to take more interest in the mill, to have shown more pleasure in visiting it; to have made evident more keenness about money-making. But Bright could reel off Latin, and talk learnedly, and Charlesworth, who had never had over much education himself, had a mighty respect for folk who had sat in the groves of the Cephissus.

V

As a rule Charlesworth and his family, when they were alone, passed their evenings in placid and prosaic fashion. Beatrice, whose one taste and one accomplishment was music, usually betook herself to the grand piano in the drawing-room; Charlesworth always settled himself in his own chair and nodded over the newspapers; Bright, when he did not go back to his laboratory at the Technical College, hid himself away in one which he had fitted up in a remote region of the big house. And when dinner was over on this particular evening, he picked up his armful of books and papers, evidently intending to flee to this eyrie, wherein he often pursued his investigations far into the night. But Charlesworth stopped him.

"You must give me a bit o' time to-night, my lad," he said, smacking his son familiarly and affectionately on the shoulder. "I want a word or two wi' you."

"Of course," answered Bright, cheerfully and readily. He laid aside his books and papers and pulled an elbow-chair to the hearth. "I'd nothing particular to do," he continued. "Only some memoranda to set down—that can wait."

Charlesworth produced a box of cigars from his cupboard and handed it silently to his son. But Bright shook his head and pulled out an old briar pipe: it was not once in a twelve-month that he smoked a cigar.

"Too good for me!" he said with a laugh. "Cheap tobacco's more in my line."

"Suit yourself, my lad," remarked Charlesworth. "I smoked shag when I was your age. There wasn't much choice in those days—light and dark." He carefully cut off the end of a cigar and lighting it smoked thoughtfully, standing with his back to the fire, until the servants had cleared the table and gone away. From the drawing-room, across the hall, came the first notes of Trissie's piano. "Rare nice touch, yon lass has!" said Charlesworth, approvingly. "She improves every year." Then he turned suddenly on his son. "Bright, my lad!" he said—"Do you know 'at you're one-and-twenty to-morrow?"

Bright started. A look of genuine surprise came into his eyes.

"I'd completely forgotten it!" he answered. "Yes, of course."

"Aye, I reckoned it had slipped your memory," said Charlesworth with a dry laugh. "But—there it is. To-morrow, you're of age. In the eyes of the law—a man!"

Bright looked up, an enquiring glance in his face.

"Yes?" he said.

“That’s what I want to talk about,” continued Charlesworth. “When a young fellow comes of age—especially in your position and circumstances—there’s things to be done.”

“Yes?” said Bright, still full of an enquiring wonder. “Such as—what?”

Charlesworth dropped into his chair, settling himself for what he evidently meant to be a long and serious talk.

“I’ll tell you, my lad,” he answered. “But first, let’s go back a bit. Now, you’ve had a rare good education, much better than what I ever had, and it’s been kept up longer, far longer, than mine ever was. I was in our mill by the time I was fifteen.”

“Your instincts led you that way,” remarked Bright.

“My instincts were for trade and money-making,” asserted Charlesworth with a dry significance. “I’d none outside ’em, and never had till I went into public life and became a Town Councillor and then Mayor o’ Haverthwaite. But now, you—I let you stop at t’ Grammar School till you were eighteen, and then I gave you t’ chance o’ going to either Oxford or Cambridge, whichever place took your fancy. But you choosed our Technical College instead—all right; there were no objections on my part: I like a lad to put his feet on his own path. And you’ve been there three years, Bright, following up these chemical experiments—no objection to that, neither; it’s none waste o’ time, that. But—there’s something else than that, my lad—more important.”

“What?” asked Bright. He was listening carefully and thoughtfully to all that his father said; so carefully, indeed, that he had let his pipe go out, and now sat biting ruminatively at its stem. “What’s more important?”

“My business,” answered Charlesworth. “You know what it is—t’ biggest and t’ finest business in Haverthwaite. And I’m getting on—I’m nearer seventy nor sixty, and though t’ doctors always say I’ve a many good years o’ life i’ front of me, a man can’t live for ever. Now, long before I were your age, I were practically running our business, and t’ day I were twenty-one your grandfather took me into partnership. It’s set down there i’ t’ owd Bible—my father wrote it down himself, t’ day it was done.”

“Well?” asked Bright.

“The same thing should be done now—i’ your case,” continued Charlesworth. “You mun come into partnership and devote yourself to t’ business and take some responsibility off o’ my shoulders. I’ve told Slater and Pilthwaite to prepare t’ papers; they’ll have ’em ready for signing in a day or two.”

If Charlesworth expected a ready acquiescence he was disappointed. Instead of replying at once, Bright remained silent, staring at the fire. He was silent so long that at last his father looked at him.

“You can’t have any objections, my lad!” he said suddenly, and with a tone

of almost anxious surprise—"It's—it's t' right thing!"

"I'd hoped to have at least another year at my work," answered Bright, at last. "You know what I'm at—there are experiments in these days that I can't finish for months yet."

"That can be arranged," replied Charlesworth. "No occasion for you to keep your nose to t' grindstone all day and every day. Half-a-day at t' mill, and half-a-day wherever else you like—eh? If that's all—"

Bright shook his head. It was evident that there was doubt and indecision in his mind. And before he could speak Charlesworth went on again, hurriedly.

"It's t' right thing, my lad!" he said. "You mun come in! What!—a splendid business like ours! T' sooner you get it all at your fingers' end t' better, for all of us, for me, for your sister there, for yourself. I want you, now 'at you're one-and-twenty, to get settled down, Bright—settled down to t' business. And," he added, a little nervously, "while I'm about it, I'll say a word more—I want to see you settled down i' another way. I want to see you married."

Bright started and his cheek flushed.

"Married?" he said. "Why!—you didn't marry early."

"No, and more fool me!" answered Charlesworth. "I owt to ha' done. But I want to see you and Trissie wed—it's t' best thing for young folk. And Trissie's settled—she's going to marry young Victor."

"I expected that," remarked Bright, calmly. "They'll suit each other—very well."

"Aye, my lad, and I'll tell you who'll suit you," said Charlesworth. "Yon lass o' Ellerthwaite's is the very woman! Milly Ellerthwaite—you'd not find a better wife i' all England. That's what you mun do, Bright—come into t' business and marry Milly Ellerthwaite. Then," he added, with a glance at his son which was almost appealing, "then I shall feel 'at all's settled, and 'at I've done my best for all t' lot!"

Bright suddenly got up from his chair and thrusting his hands in the pockets of his trousers began to walk up and down the room. Charlesworth watched him uneasily and curiously; already he had some vague fear that this son of his, whom he did not altogether understand, had ideas and notions and plans for the future which were his own, and very different from his father's. And he put in another word for himself.

"You mun remember my responsibilities, my lad," he said. "I want to see all settled before I give up."

Bright came to a halt by his father's chair and laying a hand on Charlesworth's shoulder gave it a squeeze.

"There's no one could ever say you haven't done your best for the lot, father!" he said with emphasis. "That's abundantly evident. But—we've all got

ideas—and ideals—of our own. I'd better speak plainly. I don't want to go into the business—or into any business. And I don't want to marry Milly."

Charlesworth took his cigar out of his lips, and Bright saw that his hand trembled as he lifted it. But Charlesworth kept a calm tone.

"I shall want to know t' whys and wherefores o' that, my lad," he said quietly.

"I'll tell you," answered Bright. "And first as to the business. I don't like business. I'm not cut out for business. I've no taste for money-making. I'd better be frank with you—I haven't a scrap of interest in manufacturing. What I have a taste for is scientific research, especially in chemistry, and I've always hoped you'd let me follow my bent, and—"

"You could make a hobby of it," interrupted Charlesworth, eagerly. "Nought against that!"

"No!" said Bright. "It wouldn't do—I couldn't play at what I want to do—it'll have to be life-work. I tell you that if I came into partnership and had to devote myself to the business, I should be in my wrong place. It may be unfortunate, and in a way, it's a pity, but I haven't a scrap of interest in the mill, and what's more, I'm a convinced disbeliever in existing economic conditions."

It was Charlesworth's turn to start. Start he did, staring at his son, who was now leaning against the big dinner table, with wide opened eyes in which incredulity, surprise, and a certain amount of disgust were manifested.

"What d'yer say?" he exclaimed. "Existing economic conditions? What!—you don't mean to say 'at you've gotten infected wi' this socialistic talk?—all poison!"

"You brought me up in Radicalism," said Bright, with a laugh. "You've always been a stout enough Radical yourself, haven't you?"

"My Radicalism stops at politics," growled Charlesworth. "It's naught to do wi' business."

Bright laughed again.

"Of course!" he assented. "You're one of the old Manchester school, aren't you, father? Yes, but the world doesn't stand still. Some of us have gone further."

"Have you, then?" demanded Charlesworth, with a sneer.

"If you really want to know," answered Bright. "Yes, I have—conscientiously. You know what's coming—a clear issue between capital and labour. Well—I'm all for labour. There's the fact, however unpleasant. Labour!"

It was a straight challenge, and Charlesworth knew it. But for the moment he sought refuge in another sneer.

"Labour!" he exclaimed. "What's labour? A pack o' idle, discontented,

agitating fellers ’at owt to be thrown into gaol!”

“It’s a poor definition,” retorted Bright. “I can give you a far better one of capital, though it’s a bit crude. Did you ever read Cobbett’s opinion of capital?—that it was money taken from other people’s labour? There’s a lot in it, you know. Where would our family have been if it hadn’t been for the people who worked for it?”

“Aye, and where would they ha’ been if it hadn’t been for our family?” exclaimed Charlesworth, at last showing signs of temper. “What?—d’yer mean to say ’at a son o’ mine, and a descendant of all t’ Marrashaws ’at’s dead and gone, is soft enough to believe ’at wealth springs from labour?”

“I’m quite sure it doesn’t spring from anything else!” retorted Bright, with a good-humoured laugh. “Now, come, father, how could it?”

Charlesworth, for a moment, sat staring at his heretic son, wide-eyed and open-mouthed. And suddenly, he turned and clapped a heavy hand on the family Bible at his side.

“Wealth spring from what you call labour!” he exclaimed. “No, my lad, I’ll tell you what our wealth sprang from. You look at our past, as it’s written down i’ t’ good owd Book here. Them statues i’ our mill front means summat, my lad! There was Matthew Marrashaw, to start with. He spun his own stuff, and made his own cloth, and carried it on his own back to market. He saved brass, and his son Christopher came into it and took care of it, and started a factory and machines. And he made brass, and his son Hanson came into that, and where Christopher had employed a hundred men Hanson employed a thousand. And I followed Hanson, and where Hanson had two thousand men, I’ve three. What did all that? Was it t’ men?—was it labour? No!—it was capital!—it was us!—us Marrashaws!”

“That’s the wrong way of putting it, father,” said Bright, with irritating imperturbableness. “All right about ancestor Matthew—he was a thoroughly commendable old party—a handicraftsman, and entitled to all he could get. But Christopher made his brass by getting other men to work for him, and not only men but women and children, and you know how they worked in the bad old days before the Factory Laws were passed. And grandfather Hanson made his money out of the labour of others—and, to be truthful, so do you. All the Marrashaw money has come out of the cleverness and astuteness of three generations—no, four—of Marrashaws who knew how to get first hundreds, and then thousands, of men and women to work for them—and took to themselves pretty nearly all the profits of the people’s labour. Come, now!—that’s economic history! It’s true.”

Charlesworth favoured his son with a glance of open dislike. He had never made a favourite of Bright, and he had long had a suspicion that there was in him some curious un-Marrashaw-like strain.

“So you’re one o’ them ’at thinks ’at t’ working folks is a poor, abused, down-trodden lot!” he exclaimed with another sneer. “Happen you’d like to give ’em all t’ brass ’at they produce, and let t’ unfortunate capitalist go wi’out? How that would be, like?”

“Well, scarcely that,” answered Bright. “I’m not quite an extremist. But I’ve thought all this out, more than you know of. My present notion is profit-sharing. I believe there’s more in that, towards solving a very serious problem, than employers and employed think.”

“Profit-sharing!” said Charlesworth, with a deeper sneer. “Profit-sharing! I never heard such soft talk!”

“Not much softness about it, when you go into it, seriously,” declared Bright. “Look at Saylor, of Upper Cotley—he’s had it in force in his mills for years now, and it’s had splendid effects. And what Saylor can do, others can do. You can’t get away from it—as things are, one man, the capitalist, is getting nearly everything, and what is left is—just enough for the actual creators of the wealth to exist upon. That’ll not be stood much longer! But, a real sound scheme of profit-sharing—”

“I’ll take damned good care nobody shares my profits!” said Charlesworth, with sudden anger. “And you—a son o’ mine!—d’ you mean to say ’at if you stepped into my shoes in my business, ’at you’d start on to them fond games? I should turn i’ my grave!”

“I might be obliged to,” answered Bright. “Things aren’t going to continue as they are. Your Manchester school’s dead—as dead as aught can be. But—I don’t want to go into business.”

“What do yer want?” growled Charlesworth.

“To follow my own bent,” answered Bright. “I’ve no great love of money. I have of science.”

“Will science keep you—as you’ve been kept?” demanded Charlesworth.

Bright gave his father a sharp look which gave Charlesworth a momentary fear: he was beginning to recognise in Bright a stronger, even more determined spirit than his own.

“You’ve been a very good and indulgent father,” said Bright. “You’ve kept me—as you put it—in unusual comfort. But—I’ve no taste for riches or luxury. Seems queer, considering everything, but I haven’t. And as to science keeping me. Yes!—I could get an appointment at six hundred a year to-morrow morning, in this very town, first thing.”

“Six hundred a year!” exclaimed Charlesworth. “God bless my life and soul!—What’s a ha’porth o’ brass like that to a partnership wi’ me? Six hundred—”

“I’d rather have six hundred a year out of work that I’m really interested in than six thousand a year from a business that I don’t like,” said Bright, “Fact!”

“Then you’re a fool, my lad!” declared Charlesworth. He flung his cigar away, with an impatient gesture, and rising from his chair went over to his cupboard, got out a decanter of whiskey and mixed himself a drink, while his son watched him in silence. “Don’t be a fool, Bright!” he said, suddenly turning round. “There is lads, I know, ’at gets these harum-scarum notions—don’t be one of ’em! Throw ’em aside!—they’re nowt but young-man fancies. Come into t’ business and marry Milly Ellerthwaite and—”

Bright’s face became serious, and when he spoke his voice, which up to then had been rather bantering than otherwise, was grave and ominous.

“Honestly, father, if you’ll let me go my own way, I’d rather stick to what I know is my own proper line,” he said. “I’ve meant to tell you that for some time, but I’ve kept putting it off. I should make a mess of business: I shall make a name in my own profession. And as to the other thing,” he continued, lowering his voice, “I can’t marry Milly Ellerthwaite. Milly’s a very nice, good girl—one of the best I’ve ever come across. But—I may as well tell you the truth—I want to marry somebody else, and I mean to. In fact—if we’re to be plain with each other—I’m already engaged.”

Charlesworth sat bolt upright in his chair. His cheek paled, and for a moment he looked at Bright as if he doubted his own ears.

“What?” he said at last. “Say that again! Engaged—to be wed? And—who to, if one may ask?”

“It’s no use being angry, father,” said Bright. “After all, we’ve all got to settle our own lives. I say, I’m already engaged—to Hermie Clough.”

There was no mistaking Charlesworth’s anger now. The sudden pallor that had come over his cheek changed to a significant red, and when he spoke his voice shook with scarcely suppressed rage.

“What!” he exclaimed. “You—to my sekkitary? Lockwood Clough’s lass? A working man’s dowter?”

“She’s the best educated and the cleverest young woman in Haverthwaite—and you know it, well enough!” retorted Bright. “She’s what I want, anyway, and I’m going to marry her. I’ve got my own life to think about, and to map out—I’m not the sort to live according to orders.”

He was not without a temper of his own, and the contempt in his father’s tone in referring to Hermione Clough had roused it. And now, without further speech or lingering, he turned away, and picking up his books and papers, left the room, leaving Charlesworth staring at vacancy.

But before long Charlesworth got heavily out of his chair, and walked, still heavily, across the hall to the drawing-room, where Trissie was still busy at the piano. She glanced at him as he lumbered across the floor, and her hands left the keyboard.

“What’s the matter?” she asked. “Something happened?”

Charlesworth laid his hand on his daughter's shoulder.

"Trissie, my lass!" he muttered, bending to her. "Whatever do you think? Yon lad—our Bright—he's gone and gotten himself engaged to be married! And swears he'll do it, choose how! And to who do you think? My sekkitary—Lockwood Clough's dowter!"

Trissie opened her lips until they made a perfect circle. It seemed a long time before they moved to speech.

"You don't mean it!" she said, in an awestruck whisper. "Hermione Clough!"

"He says it's so," answered Charlesworth. His voice had become dull and colourless. "He says it's so—he's fixed on it. And—he'll do it! There's naught'll stop him."

Trissie let her slim hands fall in her lap. She stared at the sheet of music set up before her. She was thinking; wondering what Victor Ellerthwaite, who had big social ambitions, would say when he heard that his brother-in-law-to-be wanted to marry the daughter of a working man.

VI

Bright Marrashaw always breakfasted at eight o'clock, so that he could be at the Technical College well before nine. This meal was for him a lonely one: his father and Trissie breakfasted an hour later. And on this, the morning of his twenty-first birthday, there was no difference. When he came down to the morning-room at his usual time, five minutes to eight, it was to find his breakfast—always, by his own choice, a simple one—ready for him, and the table to himself. By that time he had forgotten that this was his birthday: he was not even reminded of the fact by the presence of a small parcel, loosely wrapped in tissue paper, which lay on his plate. But taking this up and unwrapping the folds, a slip of paper fell out whereon was written, in Trissie's conventional and characterless handwriting, the words *Many Happy Returns of the Day*. Bright remembered, then, and he instinctively glanced again at the table. Never, since he was five years old, did he recollect a birthday morning whereon he had not found awaiting him some handsome present from his father. Last year he had found the very latest thing in microscopes—an instrument which he knew must have cost Charlesworth a prodigious sum; the year before that his father had given him a chemical apparatus, the like of which Bright had never seen. But this year there was nothing to greet him, and Bright sighed, not from disappointment but because he remembered that since yesterday the undoubted fact that he and his father thought and felt differently about things in general had been forced upon both.

"As it was bound to be!" he muttered, sitting down to his porridge. "It had to come."

While his right hand was busy with the spoon, his left unrolled the rest of his sister's parcel. Trissie had presented him with a new necktie. It was a very grand one, and must have cost her at least half-a-guinea, thought Bright; perhaps even more. He thought, too, that it would have suited Victor Ellerthwaite and one of his smart suits far better than it would suit him and his old, much worn, chemical stained blue serge: nevertheless, as this was his birthday and Trissie had remembered it, he went over to the mirror when he had finished his breakfast and divesting himself of coat and waistcoat, discarded his own ancient neckwear and put on the present. It made all the rest of him look shabby, and its grandeur was so conspicuous that he slunk away out of the house lest any of the servants should notice his unaccustomed finery.

Charlesworth, just then drawing up the blinds in his bedroom overlooking the grounds, saw Bright walking off, his pile of books and papers in one hand, his little bag in the other. He felt very miserable at the sight: he, too, remembered that this was the first time he had neglected to put a birthday

present in readiness for his only son. True, the birthday present was in readiness: he had certainly not forgotten it, but it still lay in the pocket into which he had dropped it in Pearman's parlour. It was not too late to open the window and call his son back. But he let Bright go, and watched him vanish behind the laurels and myrtles, conscious that he himself was full of a dull, angry resentment at things. What had he done that differences should arise between himself and his son? all the son he had. And how had Bright, the last of a race in which the individualistic principle had always been strong, come to get hold of ideas which, in Charlesworth's opinion, were only fit to be held by that curse and pest of society, the paid agitator? It made him feel sore from head to foot, sore in brain, sore at heart. And that morning, instead of chatting in lively fashion with Trissie, with whom he always got on exceedingly well, she having no ideas whatever that were not his, he sat glum and silent, moodily resentful of the new and unpleasant situation, and when he rode off to the mill in his brougham his face was as sullen as it was stern.

Charlesworth had been brought up in an old school, and he had remained true to its traditions. He had voiced the truth when he said that his Radicalism stopped at politics. A political Dissenter, he was all for Disestablishment and Disendowment of the State Church, and he subscribed generously to the Liberation Society. He was a convinced Free Trader: Free Trade had helped him and his to make their money. He was all for reform of the Land Laws; having no agricultural estates himself, he was zealous in wanting to set in order the houses of those who had. He favoured the reconstruction of the House of Lords: in his own opinion he was much more entitled to a seat in that august assemblage than any empty-headed, vacuous youngster who happened by the accident of birth to succeed to a peerage. And he had no objection to the extension of the franchise, so long as the newly-enfranchised voted for his party, as he considered they were bound to do in common decency and gratitude. But when it came to reform and progress in social and economic matters affecting his own class and his own pocket, Charlesworth's Radicalism vanished, and he became transformed into a reactionary of the most thorough-going type. To him State interference was an abomination. He regarded the factory reformers of the 'thirties and 'forties as men who set up dangerous doctrines and established bad precedents: he believed with John Bright that Trades-Unions are founded on principles of brutal tyranny and monopoly; with Richard Cobden that workers should make their own bargains. That last principle, takes two to make a bargain, and when one party is a rich mill-owner and the other a man who has nothing to bless himself with, the bargain is all on one side. Hands off Capitalism!—this was Charlesworth's shibboleth, to be held to and protected through thick and thin: in his opinion the workers were folk who ought to praise God day and night that their employers by finding

work for them to do, gave them the chance of putting meat and bread into their bellies.

"To think of a son o' mine favouring that lot!" he grumbled as the brougham drew up at the broad steps of the mill offices. "Same as if he were one o' these paid agitators—fellers 'at's nowt about 'em but t' gift o' t' gab and t' power o' persuadin' a pack o' fools to keep 'em i' idleness! An' then to want to wed wi' a working man's dowter—my sekkitary! A sekkitary's no more nor a sarvent-lass, when all's said and done—it's nowt but a difference o' degree, and he might just as well ha' ta'en up wi' my parlour-maid, Bella Perkins."

The secretary was at her table, by the side of Charlesworth's desk, when he entered his room, and from sheer force of habit, he replied civilly to her greeting. But Hermione, who was remarkably keen of intellect and acute of observation, noticed that her employer was unusually taciturn and even grumpy as she went through the letters with him and took his instructions about answering them: it was not often that he was like that; as a rule, Charlesworth, in his business affairs was an easy and a pleasant man to get on with, so long as he had his own way, which he usually had. She noticed, too, that, the letters being dealt with, and the various heads of departments summoned to Charlesworth's presence for the customary daily conference, his manner in dealing with each was curt and snappy, and that he was evidently anxious to dismiss them. When the last man had gone, Charlesworth, after a moment's hesitation, turned to her.

"Ring up t' south wing, and bid your father come here, just now," he commanded. "I want a word with him."

While Hermione went to the telephone, Charlesworth rose from his desk, and turning to the window, looked out on the quadrangle. His own statue was there, right enough, he thought; he had erected it himself, as he had a good right to do in his own opinion, he, the fourth generation, ranked equally in merit with his ancestors of the third, the second, and the first. But would Bright's statue ever stand there? He felt sure that Bright himself would never raise it; he had neither the taste, the grit, nor the assurance for such a thing. But would it ever be raised by any one else, in memory of Bright?

"More like, all t' rest 'ud be ulled down, same as they pulled down t' saints and angels i' t' owd parish church yonder!" he muttered, half-aloud. Then, remembering that he was not alone, he turned on his secretary. "Now then?" he said sharply—"Is he there?"

"Coming along now," answered Hermione, calmly. She sat down at her table, and began to arrange the letters in order. "Will you sign these replies before you go to lunch, or afterwards, Mr. Marrashaw?" she asked.

"Anytime they're ready—leave 'em on my desk," replied Charlesworth. "I

shall be in and out all day."

Hermione slipped a sheet of paper into her typewriter and prepared to go to work. But before the machine had clicked off many lines, the door opened, and Lockwood walked in, an air of enquiry about him. It was seldom that he was ever sent for to the office: his idea now was that Charlesworth wanted to say more about the conversation of the previous afternoon.

"Sit you down," said Charlesworth, indicating a chair. He dropped into his own, and looked from father to daughter. "Leave that machine alone for a bit," he went on. "I've a word to say to t' two on you."

The clicking of the typewriter stopped, and Hermione folded her hands and waited. There was nothing but a look of complaint obedience on her face: Charlesworth saw that she had not the least idea of what he was going to say.

"It's this," he said, turning to Lockwood. "And a sore thing for me to have to say. I'd a talk, private and confidential, with my son, Mr. John Bright Marrashaw, last night. And he told me straight out that he's engaged himself to be married to this young woman here—your daughter."

Lockwood started, and turned a quick glance on Hermione. Charlesworth turned on her, too: Hermione, under this double inspection, paled for the fraction of a moment, but the colour came back as quickly as it had vanished, and she looked at her employer in a fashion which showed him that she was neither afraid nor thrown off her guard.

"My father knows nothing about it, Mr. Marrashaw," she said. "Nothing!"

Lockwood shook his head.

"No!" he muttered. "I know naught about it!—never imagined aught o' t' sort, naturally. Is it right?" he asked, suddenly looking at his daughter. "You've never said a word to me, my lass!"

"Quite right—quite true," answered Hermione. "I was going to tell you—at once. Indeed, I meant to tell you to-night. Bright was going to tell his father to-night. I don't know, yet, why he told him last night. And—in our opinion—it's a matter that concerns nobody but ourselves."

Lockwood shook his head again, with a little sigh: it would have been plain to any careful observer that he felt himself powerless where his daughter was concerned. But Charlesworth, moved to sudden anger, smote a hand on his desk.

"Nobody's concern but their own!" he exclaimed. "D'ye hear that, Lockwood, my lad? Them's t' principles o' t' rising generation!—o' some on 'em, at any rate. What do you think on 'em o' t' lips o' your own flesh and blood?"

Lockwood once more shook his head, slowly and deprecatingly.

"My daughter's ideas and notions aren't mine, Mr. Marrashaw," he answered in a low voice. "I'm a plain-thinking, old-fashioned chap. I don't

understand these young folks now-a-days."

"Nor me, nor nobody—nobody 'at's any sense o' decency i' their bodies!" said Charlesworth. "When I were a lad I were browt up like a God-fearing Christian, to keep t' commandment and honour father and mother. Fathers and mothers!—ecod, they count for nowt, now-a-days! These here lads and lasses o' t' new school, they've no respect for nowt and nobody. All's to be as they order—we mun all stan' aside. They know better nor what we do—we're what they call out-o'-date—back numbers!" He turned with increasing temper on Hermione. "Do you—an eddikated young woman like you!—think it right and proper to indulge i' underhanded business like this here?" he demanded. "Doing things behind folks' backs!—do yer?"

"There has been nothing underhand, Mr. Marrashaw," answered Hermione. "Nothing at all. Your son and I have seen a great deal of each other at the Technical College during the last year or so. We've a very strong mutual respect and esteem for each other. He asked me to marry him, a fortnight ago, and I consented. We were going to tell you and my father of it, as I said. I say again—there has been nothing underhand. As to marriage—no one on earth has anything to do with that but just ourselves—no one!"

"Haven't they?" said Charlesworth, with a sneer. "Oh, indeed! Them's new-fashioned principles, of course. Ye an' me, Lockwood, is owd fossils!—we owt to be preserved i' sperrits o' wine, and put i' t' town museum! Has it never struck you," he went on, turning to Hermione, "'at I may ha' had different plans for my son's future, and different ideas as to t' condition o' things. I ha' nowt to say again your father there—me an' Lockwood's owd friends, and he's been a faithful servant o' me and mine for fifty year and more, but he'll know what I mean when I say 'at I can't have a son o' mine wedding wi' t' daughter o' one o' my workmen. Wi' all your French and your German, and your accomplishments, my lass—you're nowt but a working man's dowter, so there!"

Lockwood nodded, as if in assent. But Hermione seemed to freeze.

"That's a question I'm not going into, Mr. Marrashaw," she said. "We differ in opinion. Your son wants me to be his wife because of what I am. Neither he nor I have any respect for birth or position. I'm his intellectual and educational equal, anyhow!"

Charlesworth turned to Lockwood with another sneer.

"There y' are!" he said. "That's what comes o' eddikation!—o' eddikatin' folk above their place. Under ord'nary circumstances this lass o' yours 'ud ha' been i' t' mill—as it is, she thinks she's a lady, all because she's been eddikated like one! It's a nice thing, considering 'at t' money 'at were spent on her eddikation came out o' my pocket!"

The last words disturbed the hitherto comparatively quiet atmosphere.

Lockwood looked up with a faint murmur of protest, and his worn cheeks flushed. But Hermione sprang to her feet, indignant and insistent.

"What do you mean, Mr. Marrashaw?" she exclaimed. "Your money paid for my education? What does he mean?" she continued, turning on her father. "Speak!—I'm going to know!"

"It was between him and me, my lass," said Lockwood, protestingly. "An arrangement—a sort of understanding. I never thought you'd ha' reaped it up, Mr. Marrashaw," he continued, reproachfully. And then he turned to his daughter, with an almost beseeching air. "It's naught to do wi' you, Hermie, my lass," he said. "Naught at all! It should never ha' been mentioned to you."

But Hermione kept her resolute attitude, looking from one man to the other. Under her indignant eyes Charlesworth began to feel uncomfortable, and to shift the papers on his desk, aimlessly.

"But it has been mentioned, and it's everything to do with me!" she exclaimed. "I'm going to have the truth. What does Mr. Marrashaw mean by saying he paid for my education?"

"He means this—since it's got to come out," answered Lockwood. "You were an uncommon promising lass, and I wanted to give you t' best I could. I couldn't afford t' money for them schools 'at you went to, and Mr. Marrashaw found it. That's where it is."

"How much did he find?" demanded Hermione. "I'm going to know."

"First and last, three hundred pound," said Lockwood. "But there was a condition—'at would pay him."

"What condition?—out with it!" persisted Hermione.

"Well, 'at you should come here and be his clerk—secretary—what you like to call it—he knew 'at you'd be uncommon useful, knowing all them foreign languages, and such-like. And, as I say, it was understood that it was all between him and me," concluded Lockwood with another reproachful glance at his master. "It should never ha' been mentioned—to you."

"It has been mentioned!" said Hermione. She stood looking at the two men for a moment, half-indignant, half-sullen. Suddenly she turned to where her hat and jacket hung on the wall near her table, and snatching them up, walked resolutely out of the room. Charlesworth, frowning, and obviously uneasy, stared from the closing door to Lockwood.

"What's she up to?" he asked. "What's that mean?"

"I don't know!" retorted Lockwood. "She's a high-spirited lass, and you should never ha' said aught o' that sort. If I'd ever done aught for one o' yours, I should never ha' reminded either them or you on it, Mr. Marrashaw. You've had t' value o' what you laid out!"

"Haven't I paid her a good wage?" demanded Charlesworth. He was aware that he had made a mistake, and he was angry with himself for his haste, and

his anger was ready to spread elsewhere. “And do you think ’at I’m going to let my son wed your lass?” he went on. “I’ve other aims for him!”

Lockwood turned to the door and laid his hand on it.

“It strikes me from what I’ve seen o’ your son ’at he’s one o’ them ’at’ll suit himself about serious things like that,” he said quietly. “And if him and my lass has agreed to wed, they will wed! So there it is.”

With that he went out of the room, and Charlesworth, left alone, fumed and fretted. He was very well aware that Hermione was something more than useful to him, she had come to be indispensable. And there had been a look on her face when she went out of the room that made Charlesworth wonder what she was going to do.

He was not long left in doubt. Before an hour was over, and as he was standing at his window, staring out on the quadrangle and its memorials of the great departed Marrashaws, he saw a cab drive up, and Hermione get out of it. A few minutes later, flushed and indignant, she walked into the room, clutching something in her hand. As Charlesworth turned to her she laid this on his desk—a roll of Bank of England notes, some gold, some silver.

“There, Mr. Marrashaw!” she said, panting a little from her haste. “There’s the three hundred pounds you paid for me! And there’s a month’s salary, in lieu of notice. So there’s nothing to do but to say good-bye to you—we’re on level terms now!”

She turned to the door, and Charlesworth found his tongue, with an effort.

“Come here, you silly lass!” he exclaimed. “Do you think I’m going to take __”

But Hermione was already through the half open door, and the next instant it had closed upon her. Charlesworth swore softly to himself: the very thing that he most feared had happened. He felt as if somebody had suddenly cut off his right hand. And after a moment’s reflection he went to the telephone and summoned Lockwood, who, coming back, unwillingly enough, stared at the money to which Charlesworth directed his attention.

“What is it, Mr. Marrashaw?” he asked. “I don’t want no more bother, sir—I’m troubled enough about what’s taken place this morning.”

“D’ye see that brass?” demanded Charlesworth. “Your lass flounced in here just now, flung it on t’ table there, said it were my three hundred pound, and a month’s salary i’ lieu of notice, and flounced out again! What do you think o’ that, now?”

“I think it’s just what I should ha’ expected her to do,” answered Lockwood. “I told you she was high-spirited. I thought she was up to summat o’ that sort when she flung out o’ t’ room when I was here. She’s been a saving sort, ever since she came here—I knew she’d money i’ t’ bank. And now, it seems she’s gone and drawn it out—to pay you. She’s not t’ sort to be

beholden to anybody, Mr. Marrashaw."

Charlesworth's anger was rapidly cooling; Hermione's action had impressed him.

"Well, I respect her for what she did!" he said, with sudden heartiness. "She's t' right sort i' that way, anyhow, my lad. Here!" he went on, pushing the heap of notes and coins towards Lockwood. "Put all that i' thy pocket, lad; give her it back, and tell her to come back here, and we'll say no more about it. No doubt I aughtn't to ha' said what I did. Put it i' thy pocket, Lockwood!"

But Lockwood shook his head, and backed towards the door.

"No!" he said, with decision. "I know her! She'll never come back, after what you said. You've touched her pride. There's naught 'ud make my daughter take that money back, Mr. Marrashaw. You needn't think 'at she'll be regretting t' parting with it—none she! What she'll be feeling," he continued, with a sly laugh, " 'll be a deal o' pride to think 'at, after all, she's paid for her own schooling! She's as independent as ever they make 'em!"

Charlesworth pushed the money nearer the edge of the desk.

"Now then!" he said. "No nonsense! Take it back to her."

Lockwood laughed again, and turned to leave the room.

"I wouldn't do such a thing, Mr. Marrashaw," he declared. "She'd tell me a nice piece of her mind, if I did. And besides," he added, opening the door, "I think t' lass did right. After you'd said what you did, there were no other course left open to her. You're a queer man, you know, sir!—You seem to think that nobody but millionaires has a right to be independent! But—happen that'll show you 'at millionaires has no monopoly i' that way." He pointed to the money, and with a nod and another laugh, left the room, leaving Charlesworth reflecting on the undoubted fact that in this first encounter with the opposing forces he had come off without honour or advantage.

VII

It was Charlesworth's daily custom to lunch at the Haverthwaite Club, a select and exclusive institution, the members of which were drawn from the upper circles of Haverthwaite society. A few country gentlemen, representatives of the old hill-side and moorland families, a certain sprinkling of clergymen, doctors, lawyers and other professional men, a goodly number of merchant princes like himself, and of men high-placed in the commercial circles of the town: these were the folk amongst whom Charlesworth invariably spent the middle of the day. It was his practice to go to the club about half-past twelve and to remain there until three o'clock: his ostensible object was meat and drink, but most of his time was spent in going, sometimes as one of a group, but more often in close quarters with his friend and crony, James Ellerthwaite, one of the principal manufacturers of the town. Ellerthwaite and he were of the same age: they had been at school together: had grown up together: each had married rather late in life: each had a son and a daughter. All their tastes and ideas were in common, save in the particular respect of politics: while Charlesworth Marrashaw was a Radical, Ellerthwaite was a Tory of the deepest and most uncompromising sort. This difference in opinion, instead of separating the two men, drew them closer together: Ellerthwaite was never tired of chaffing Charlesworth about his heresies: Charlesworth was always ready to let loose his eloquence in denouncing class privileges and the iniquitous union of church and state: each extracted much pleasure out of teasing the other.

These two had a particular corner of the club smoking-room preserved to themselves: long usage had made it sacred to them at any time between half-past twelve and three o'clock: it was known to all their fellow members as Marrashaw and Ellerthwaite's Pew. In this retreat, a glass of dry sherry in front of him, a cigar between his lips, and a frown on his face, Charlesworth was found by Ellerthwaite, an hour after the episode of Hermione Clough had come to its dramatic end. Left alone in his office, Charlesworth, after fuming and fretting for five minutes, had fled to the club for comfort, and since his arrival had sat glowering in his corner. He even glowered at his crony as Ellerthwaite, a big, bearded, off-handed sort of man, with a pair of half-cynical, half-humorous eyes, sauntered up and dropped into the seat at his side. It was characteristic of both men that their only salutation to each other was a careless nod on Ellerthwaite's part, and a species of grunt on Charlesworth's; it was not until Ellerthwaite had beckoned to a steward, been supplied with a drink, and had lighted a cigar, that speech, laconic enough to begin with, came from either.

“Well?” said Ellerthwaite. “What about my lad and your lass?”

“I’ve heard,” responded Charlesworth. “Suits me all right. And you too, I reckon.”

Ellerthwaite closed the penknife with which he had carefully cut off the end of his cigar, and restored it to his waistcoat pocket.

“Aye—I’m agreeable,” he answered. “I reckon they’ll run very well in harness, them two. They’re both pretty cool, old-fashioned customers. But what about t’ other two? Yon lad o’ yours, now?”

Charlesworth frowned more than ever, and moved uneasily in his seat.

“I was going to tell you,” he said, glad to let his tongue go at last. “I’m afraid I’m going to have trouble with our Bright. You know, James, he’s twenty-one to-day, and so of course, I wanted to have a bit o’ serious talk wi’ him last night, about a partnership, and settling down, and marrying and so forth. And it go fro’ one thing to another, and he let it all out—he’s no taste for business, and he doesn’t want to go into mine, and he’s all for this scientific research, and—in short, he’s not a chip o’ t’ owd block, and there it is! It’s beyond me.”

“Well?” suggested Ellerthwaite, drily. “There’s more?”

“Aye, there’s more!” agreed Charlesworth, making a wry face. “He’s all for this new labour business—it’s my belief he’s already infected wi’ Socialism—wants to see profit-sharing and what not o’ similar foolishness set up, and says ’at wealth springs from labour. But there’s worse nor that!”

“What?” asked Ellerthwaite.

Charlesworth looked round. There were no other members near them, for it was as yet early for the mid-day assemblage, but he leaned nearer to his companion and lowered his voice. “He wants to wed yon lass o’ Lockwood Clough’s!” he whispered. “Aye, and says he will, wi’ all!”

“What, that secretary o’ yours?” exclaimed Ellerthwaite.

“As was,” grumbled Charlesworth. “Is, no longer. She’s left me—we had words this morning. Over this affair, of course. So she’s cleared out.”

“Then it’s serious?” suggested Ellerthwaite.

“They both say they’re determined to wed,” answered Charlesworth. “And they’re both as obstinate as bulls and as high-spirited as dukes! A nice look out it is—my son wanting to wed one o’ my workmen’s daughters, and putting up for this here pestilential labour business—it’s enough to make every Marrashaw o’ t’ last four generations turn in his grave!”

“This is t’ fifth generation, my lad!” observed Ellerthwaite. He cocked his cigar in the corner of his lips, put his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and favoured Charlesworth with a dry, quizzical smile. “I can’t say ’at I’m surprised,” he went on. “Yon lass o’ Clough’s is a rare smart and clever ’un—more brains about her, I should say, than any young woman i’ t’ town: I reckon

neither your girl nor mine could hold a candle to her i' that matter, Charlesworth. And as to Bright and his politics, well, what do chaps like you expect? You're only reaping t' harvest you've sown."

"What d'ye mean?" demanded Charlesworth. "When did I ever sow owt o' t' sort?"

"You never been doing owt else since I knew you," retorted Ellerthwaite, imperturbably. "You and your lot! Nowt 'd suit you till you gave all these folk votes, and passed education bills, and found 'em free libraries and cheap newspapers, and encouraged 'em to read and think and improve theirselves, as you called it. Well, they have read, and they have thought and they have improved theirselves—if it is improvement—and now, when they carry it, or try to carry it to its logical conclusion, you want to shove yourself i' t' way. That's a Radical all over, my lad! You Radicals are just like a man 'at sets a ball rolling down a hill-side and then grumbles because it goes straight to t' bottom—out of his reach, and further than he can follow."

"What's all that got to do wi' our Bright?" demanded Charlesworth, surlily. He was aware that his crony's argument was sound and unassailable, and he was beginning to wish that he, like Ellerthwaite, had inclined to Conservatism. "I'm talking about him!"

"It's all to do wi' him and his like," answered Ellerthwaite, coolly. "Do you think there's aught strange in his tastes and ideas? Nowt o' t' sort! There's any amount o' well-to-do, highly educated youngsters 'at's taking up wi' these new ideas—it's natural. Why, they tell me 'at Oxford University's getting permeated with new ideas—social and economic—the very place where you'd think it 'ud be difficult to dig up owt but fossils and remnants o' t' Middle Ages. No, no, my lad!—this world's moving, and young fellows like Bright turns to new theories like lasses turns to love-making: they will have it. All these new ideas come out o' t' soil you Radicals prepared i' t' Victorian times—and then you grumble because t' crop's not to your liking. But consistency and logic were never Radical qualities—Radicals is a bit wanting i' intellect."

"I believe you side wi' these here modernisin' fellers!" growled Charlesworth.

"Nowt o' t' sort!" declared Ellerthwaite. "I'm i' t' opposite camp, my lad, and always shall be, and always have been. Nowt 'ud make me into a Socialist! I believe 'at t' peculiar genius o' this nation is for individual efforts, not for collective.—I've read a bit too much history to think otherwise. But Socialism's there, and to be reckoned with, and it's nowt but t' result o' Radicalism. You Radicals ha' been preparing t' ground, and sowing t' seed, and watering t' plants ever since 1832—and now 'at t' stuff's coming up, more vigorous and taller than you ever thowt for, you curse and swear at it. You think that over a bit, young feller," concluded Ellerthwaite, with a triumphant

grin, “and you’ll find I’m not far out. It’s all your doing—yours, and chaps like you. You’ve been wanting to pull t’ Church down, ever since I knew you—well, these Socialist fellers are going to pull you down! You shed tears over t’ poor working man being without a vote, and at last you gave him a vote—well, he’s going to use it against you! You would have cheap newspapers and free libraries for t’ working man and you got ’em for him—well, he’s done his bit o’ reading, and he’s found out ’at you Radicals are all—humbugs! Why, he’s more affection for good, old, plain Tories like me than he has for you!—he knows what we’re at, but you’re neither one thing nor t’other, Charlesworth. And in a few years he’ll shift you clear out o’ t’ arena—there’ll be no Liberal nor Radical party left, and it’ll be a straight fight between two principles—Individualism and Nationalisation. You mark me!—if you live to see it.”

“I’ll take good care nobody nationalises my business!” growled Charlesworth. “Me and mine made it, and we’ll stick to it!”

“There’s a time coming, my lad, when your consent’ll not be asked, nor your opinion taken,” said Ellerthwaite, with a cynical laugh. “It’s as I tell you—you Radical chaps sowed the wind and you’ll reap the whirlwind. I’m none surprised to hear that Master Bright’s got infected with all these new ideas—not I! It shows ’at he takes an intelligent interest in things. Happen he’ll modify his present opinions—happen he won’t. But I’ll tell you what, Charlesworth,” he concluded with a shrewd look, as he pulled out his watch, which indicated one o’clock, the hour of the club lunch, “you can make up your mind to one thing—if Bright and yon lass o’ Clough’s has made it up to wed, they’ll wed! And if Bright’s determined to go in for Socialism, he’ll none half do it! I’ve kept my eye on Bright—he’s t’ sort that’ll do a thing thoroughly if he puts his hand to it. Come on!—let’s go and peck a bit.” Charlesworth rose and followed his friend to the dining-room, where a table was always reserved for them. Usually, he had an excellent appetite, but on this occasion the events of the morning had spoiled it.

VIII

That evening found Charlesworth and Beatrice dining alone: a little before six o'clock, Bella, the parlourmaid, summoned to the telephone in her master's and young mistress's absence, received a message from Bright to the effect that he would not be home for dinner and would be out late. Charlesworth, having this repeated to him on his arrival, formed his own conclusions: Bright wanted to see Hermie Clough. The thought of that made him sorer in mind and spirit than ever: he had a certain instinct that Hermie was going to be an enemy. All day he had suffered from her defection. She had become more indispensable to him than he was aware of: there had been more than a humorous meaning in his words when he remarked that she knew as much and perhaps more of his business that he did. There had been continental correspondence to attend to that afternoon: Charlesworth had found difficulty in raking up a clerk who had sufficient French and German to do clumsily what the departed secretary would have done easily and well. He himself had been kept late at the office attending to ordinary letters: instead of getting away at his usual time he had been obliged to countermand the brougham. Altogether he was in a state of ruffled temper when he sat down to his soup, and for the second time that day his daughter got next to nothing out of him in the way of conversation.

"Where's Bright?" asked Trissie as she came into the room, to find her father alone, gazing grumpily into the fire. "Hasn't he come in?"

"Not coming, so Bella says," growled Charlesworth. "I reckon we're going to see less o' Master Bright, my lass! He'll be wi' yon dowter o' Clough's. Infatywated!—that's what he is—nowt else. She's come round him wi' her big eyes and fine talk. She's after my money, is yon! But we'll see—I reckon it's my concern where my brass finds its way to."

But if Charlesworth had been secretly hidden behind his son and Hermie Clough at that moment and had over heard their conversation, he would have speedily learnt that money matters were not of such vital importance to them as to himself. Bright and Hermie at half-past-six o'clock that evening were in a quiet corner of Hobson's Café in the centre of the town, sharing a modest meal of poached eggs and weak tea. This was a place where they frequently foregathered: the corner panelling, had it had ears and understanding could have told interesting things about their conversation. Now, by the time Hermie had drained the tea-pot's last drop into Bright's cup, the various advantages of the past twenty-four hours had been narrated on both sides, and the two rebellious spirits realised that they had cut themselves adrift and were face to face with new departures. Being very young, and very independent, and full of

the new spirit, the prospect had no terrors for either: each, indeed, felt an atmosphere of freedom, wherein it was easier to breathe.

"It'll come to this, Bright," said Hermie, as they leaned back in their quiet corner and whispered their confidences. "Now that you've said what you have to your father, you'll have to start out on your own hook. After letting him see what you really feel and think, you can't do anything else than stand on yourself."

"No difficulty about that," answered Bright. "Leening, the dyer, wants a chemist who's an expert in dyes, and I've nothing to do but walk into his office to-morrow morning and get the job. He was speaking to me about it at the Technical College last week, asking if I could recommend anybody, and I know the vacancy's still there. It's six hundred a year."

"Well, I'm going to Hallanwhite's," remarked Hermie. "I went there this afternoon, knowing that they wanted somebody who can do all that I can do. It's settled—three hundred."

"Then there's no need to worry about that sort of thing," said Bright. "Nine hundred between us!—we ought to marry."

But Hermie shook her head, firmly and with decision.

"No!" she answered. "No marrying until we've been engaged at least two years, Bright. That's a stipulation. We're going to try each other and prove each other before getting tied up for life. We shall know a lot more of each other two years hence than we do now."

"It's said, isn't it, that people never do know each other until they actually live with each other—eh?" suggested Bright. "After all, one's got to experiment."

"Well, I'm not going to experiment in that particular thing," declared Hermie. "No talk of marriage, my boy, until two more years have passed. Then—all right, if we're in the same mind that we are now. We aren't fools, you know, Bright—anyway, I'm not!"

"You've a remarkably good opinion of yourself!" said Bright, with a sly laugh. "Do you think I'm a bit of a fool, now?"

"You're not a bit of a fool," replied Hermie. "But you're more easily influenced than I am. You've a soft nature. I haven't. I ought to have been born in a time of active revolution—I'd have been somebody then! As it is, I'm only one in a crowd—a pawn in a game."

Two young men were playing chess at a table close by: Hermie's eyes were on the board. But Bright laughed and shook his head: his eyes, too, went to the bits of ivory.

"By George, but there's a lot of power in a pawn!" he said. "It can settle anything but a King!"

Hermie gave him a queer, quizzical look out of her eye-corners. She was

about to remark that even a poor pawn can put a proud King in a perilous position, but she suddenly remembered that Bright's political training had not advanced quite as far as her own, and she remained silent. But it was only for a moment. Presently she nudged his elbow, and pointed to a clock on the opposite wall.

"Getting on to seven," she said. "We'd better be making for the hall."

That night there was to be an address given in Haverthwaite by a famous labour leader from London, under the auspices of the local branch of the Independent Labour Party: the subject was a big one, bigger even than was indicated by the lengthy title, which for the past fortnight had been advertised in heavy-typed posters all over the town—*Capitalism as a Dead-Weight in True Economic Production*. Bright, who rarely attended public meetings, felt an itching curiosity to know what the man from London had to say on this subject and had arranged to go with Hermie to hear him: he, after all, was not his father, nor, as yet, a representative of the hated capitalists who would doubtless come in for severe denunciation: moreover, the meeting was free and open, and a cordial invitation to politicians and economists of every shade of thought was extended in the announcements of the newspapers and boardings. He rose from his seat, picking up the check for the tea and poached eggs.

"Come on, then!" he said with alacrity. "Let's hear what this chap's got to say. I reckon it'll only be a réchauffée of Karl Marx and the Fabian Essays!"

"There are some meats that you can't warm up—and serve piping hot!—too often," retorted Hermie. "Especially at tables where capitalism sprawls all over the cloth!"

Bright laughed and led his lady-love out into the street. He was well aware of Hermie's advanced notions, though he had no real knowledge of how far they had already led her along the path to what she believed to be emancipation. He had always been fond of speculating in social and economic questions: curiously enough, considering the stock he sprang from, his entire sympathies were with the workers; as a mere boy he had turned with a strange loathing from the evidences of power and wealth which lay all about Marrashaw's Mill to look with vague doubt and bitter resentment at the squalid streets and dark places in which his father's workpeople mostly lived. Always he had felt a burning desire to ameliorate and improve their lot: to see them better housed, better clothed, better fed, sharing in the pleasures and comforts which resulted from their toil, taking a greater slice out of the big lump of wealth which was moistened by the sweat of their bodies and kneaded by the expenditure of their strength. His discovery of the fact that Hermie Clough, into whose company he had been thrown a good deal at his chemistry classes, shared his tastes, ideas, and sympathies, had drawn him to her, and in time he had discovered that in this particular instance the woman was like to lead the

man. Bright, indeed, by this time had taken Hermie as guide and mentor: he was learning from her. But he was unaware that Hermie had taken a leaf out of the theologian's book and was past mistress in the art of employing reserve in the communication of doctrine: she did not tell Bright all she thought, nor all she knew; her policy was to catch him first, lead him gently, and perfect him gradually. Already, in her opinion, he was an apt and promising pupil.

The hall to which Bright and Hermie bent their steps through the chilliness of the February evening stood in a side street in the centre of the town. It had once upon a time been a dissenting chapel, the congregation of which, gradually waxing wealthy in their portions of the goods of this world, had forsaken the old-fashioned parts of Haverthwaite, removed to villa residences and smart terrace dwellings on the outskirts of the town, and there built themselves a new Zion, with a Gothic spire and stained-glass windows. The cast-off building had remained empty, desolate, mournful, and uncared for during several years; then, when it was about to be turned into a warehouse, the newly-formed Independent Labour Party secured it, and transformed the former house of religion into a forcing-house of politics. Yet even now it retained its old Conventicle aspect: an organ filled up one end: beneath it, a sort of rostrum-pulpit served as a platform; the floor-space was filled with pews; around three sides of the interior ran a pew-filled gallery: the only difference between the affairs of the building in the old days and the new was that whereas the walls once echoed loud proclamations of free grace and the singing of hymns of doubtful theological value, they now resounded to fiery phillipics about capital and labour and the chanting of the *Red Flag*.

Bright and Hermione secured seats in a front pew of the right-hand gallery, a little in front of the platform immediately below: they were thus close to the speaker, and in full view of his audience. As the hall filled, until there was scarcely a seat left vacant, Bright realised that he was by no means the only outsider who was present. The man from London was not only a labour leader of considerable name and fame but a well-known writer on social and economic subjects, who had recently attracted much attention outside his own party: many Haverthwaite politicians, from the Conservative and Liberal camps, had come to hear what he had to say: Bright recognised several leading men in the front rows beneath the platform; amongst them his father's chief crony, James Ellerthwaite, who, in company with two more prominent Tories, sat patiently waiting and evidently curious and interested. Once, Bright caught Ellerthwaite's eye; Ellerthwaite nodded good-humouredly to him, and his glance transferred itself with the ghost of an arch smile to Hermie Clough. But Hermie was looking at the little door behind the platform through which the local Labour lights and the speaker would emerge: she, too, was curious to see the man whose name had been freely placarded in big letters all over the town.

Presently, with his chairman and supporters he appeared, and a man sitting next to Bright immediately remarked, aloud, with true and characteristic Haverthwaite bluntness, that however clever he might be he was naught much to look at. What the audience did look at was an unassuming, quiet-mannered, somewhat worn-faced man, who, to Bright's thinking, was much more like a college professor, lecturing in his class-room, than a demagogue preaching rebellion to revolutionaries.

For an hour the packed audience listened to an economic discourse. There were no fireworks. There was no enthusiasm. The speaker was ready and fluent, but his was the fluency and readiness of the man who knows his subject. He possessed a competent vocabulary, but he spoke as if he were repeating the contents of a printed page, carefully committed to memory. He had a pleasant musical voice and a clear and polished enunciation, but the voice never strayed away from a certain quiet pitch, and the perfect accent became monotonous: more than ever as the address went on, Bright was reminded of professorial deliverances. And he began to wonder if this was what was wanted. Was it practical politics? Was it helping the true cause forward for seven or eight hundred men and women to sit attentively listening to a cut-and-dried discourse, academic to the last degree, wherein it was sought to prove, by argument and illustration and deduction, that the private ownership of the means of production is inimical to the development and increase of national wealth? Doubtless, it was valuable education, but—was there not wanting, all through its text-book-like perfection, some human note that would spur folk to action?

The address came to an end, on the same easy, quiet note on which it had begun, and when the speaker had resumed his seat, as unruffled and professor-like as when he got up from it, the chairman announced that the subject was open for discussion—the subject and any question that was immediately relevant to it. Let any one speak who wished—there were some present, remarked the chairman, with a twinkle in his eye and a glance at the front pews, who were not of their political persuasion, others who were still wandering in the desert, some who were, perhaps, halting between two opinions—but let any man speak what was in him—out of the multitude of councillors cometh wisdom.

If the chairman, or certain members of the audience, expected a discussion in which both, or various, sides of the question would be taken, he and they were doomed to disappointment. There was no lack of speakers, but as one succeeded the other, it was made increasingly evident that each had but one pet subject—denunciation of capitalists and capitalism. The academic spirit of the earlier part of the proceedings died away: the rattle of fire-arms, the bursting of shells, the explosion of fire-works broke out as first this, and then that

demagogue got on his legs. The cynical members of the audience began to laugh: the folk of the opposite camps to smile: what had begun as a lesson in pure economics was rapidly degenerating into exhibition of class hatred. Once more Bright found himself wondering what use all this was to practical politics. And suddenly, he touched Hermie's elbow as she sat close at his side.

"Hermie!" he whispered. "I—I'm going to have a cut in! It's time!"

Then, before she could reply, Bright sprang to his feet, laying his hands on the front of the gallery and turning an eager glance on the chairman.

"Mr. Chairman!" he began. "I—"

A dead silence had fallen on the hall as Bright rose. There was not a person present, man or woman, who did not know him, save the man from London. Every eye was turned on him, wonderingly: whispers broke out. Suddenly a man jumped to his feet in the body of the hall and lifted a hand towards the platform.

"I object to a millionaire capitalist's son speaking in an Independent Labour Party hall!" he exclaimed. "Let him go where he belongs! He's not wanted here! I object!"

The chairman, a bluff, hearty-looking working man, who sat twiddling his thumbs in the seat of authority, rose to his feet.

"Tha can object as hard and as often as tha likes, mi lad!" he said good-humouredly. "It'll hev no effect. This is a free and open meeting, and we'll gi' t' Duke o' Northumberland or Pierpont Morgan, or t' Pope o' Rome or anybody 'at likes to spout, a reight hearin'. Sit thisen down!" Then he turned and nodded cheerfully at Bright. "Go on!" he said.

"I shall not detain you long," continued Bright, leaning over the front of the gallery, and taking a comprehensive view of his audience, "and if the gentleman who has just objected to hearing me doesn't like to suffer me for five minutes, there are, I believe, several exits to this building, and I don't suppose that anybody will prevent him from going out of one of them. I have got up with the idea of making a useful contribution to this debate. I believe I have a right to speak. I can safely declare, as a thoroughly truthful man, that there is nobody, neither man nor woman, in this place, who is in more absolute and thorough sympathy with the hopes and aspirations of labour than I am, or who would do more than I would, cheerfully, to further the just cause of labour. I take no credit to myself for this—it just happens that I have felt like that ever since I can remember anything, and that the feeling grows stronger as I grow older. All my most cherished ideas and notions for the good of the world and the human race are bound up with the establishment and triumph of democratic government—that's just mere fact; it's the truth. Well, I have listened, dutifully, and with absorbed interest, to the principal speaker of the evening. As a student of economy myself, there is very little, there is

practically nothing, in what he has said in which I am not in the fullest agreement with him. And as he has already said pretty nearly everything that I myself would have said on the same subject, I need not supplement his remarks with any of mine: his theories are my theories—have been for a long time. But—and this is the reason why I ask your indulgence for a few minutes—I have been wondering, while I sat here, how these theories can be applied to what is, after all, practical politics. For when all is said and done, no theories are of any value unless they can be reduced to practice—unless they can be made a thing of everyday life. Now, in my opinion, everything that the workers of this country, or of any country which is on a footing with this as far as political power is concerned, wish to get, they can get for themselves. How? Through the exercise of the privileges—a bad word, but you all know what I mean—which have been increasing and heightening in their hands ever since 1832. Before that year, how many workers possessed a vote! Since that year successive Acts of Parliament have given the vote to tens, nay, hundreds of thousands of us—I hope we shall, in our own time, see the vote in the hands of every adult man and woman in this country. Now think for a moment what the power of the vote is. It makes possible, nay, certain, the securing, by purely constitutional means, of any reform which the people desire. Get a majority of your own representatives in the House of Commons—a substantial, really workable majority, and you can effect what changes you please. You can sweep individual ownership of the means of production clear away—a good riddance,—and substitute nationalisation. That is only one thing; just one thing—there is no limit to what you can do through the ballot-box. But now I have a crow to pull with you—and by the word you I mean the World of Labour. You won't make use of the vote in your own interests! You won't vote for your own interests! You won't support labour candidates when they come before you. You are like a man who has a splendid weapon put into his hands wherewith to fight an enemy, and who does anything but use it. Is there any man in this place who can contradict that plain statement of fact? If there is, he is a bold fellow, and as ignorant as he is bold. Let us consider a few figures and statistics: let us take a few towns in our own neighbourhood—almost entirely a working-class neighbourhood—at the last General Election. At Moorford there are 21,000 electors on the roll; the vast majority are working men. The Liberal candidate polled in round figures 5,000 votes; the Conservative 4,000; the Labour man got barely 2,000. That's bad, but what is worse, out of 21,000 folk who possessed a very valuable thing, no less than 10,000 refused to make use of it. Then take the example of Warthwaite, where there are 19,000 voters. There 8,000 electors wouldn't take the trouble to walk round a corner to put their papers in a box, and out of the 11,000 who did, 7,000 voted Liberal, 3,000 Tory, and only 1,000 Labour. Let us look at home.

Nobody doubts that Haverthwaite is a working man's town—well, we have 26,000 voters on our register, and at the last election 6,000 votes were given to the Liberal, 5,000 to the Conservative, under 4,000 to the Labour man. And it's not only like that in Parliamentary elections—the same thing obtains in local elections. You won't elect your own men to the Town Council, nor to the Guardians: when we had School Boards you never made any effort to capture them. Can anybody here deny these plain facts? Nobody! And I say that if you want to become practical politicians, if you want to reduce theories to practice, if you want to see abuses swept away and reforms established, if, in short, you want to see the cause of Labour achieve that triumph towards which pioneers and reformers have been looking, and for which they have been labouring, for a good hundred years, there are certain things you've got to do. You must agree amongst yourselves. You must unite. You must educate. You must permeate. And above everything you must drive into the mind of every worker that in his vote he possesses a weapon as deadly for his purpose as a machine gun is in the hands of a trained soldier, an axe that will cut through the trunk of the stoutest tree. Capture the constituencies! That's the advice of a man who believes in being sternly practical and matter-of-fact—and if you don't consider it good, then all I have to say is that I'm sorry I've troubled you with it."

Bright wound up his remarks with a satirical smile and dropped back into his seat with an almost careless gesture; a gesture which seemed to suggest that he had made his hearers a valuable present and would think little of them if they did not value its worth. But his quick eye had seen that all through his speech he was gaining the unqualified assent and commendation of the man from London and of the chairman and the local lights of Labour who were gathered about him, and he was not surprised when the platform led the applause that greeted his last words. He had hit the right nail on the head, then?—and he turned to Hermie with a half-shy laugh of satisfaction. But Hermie was looking into the body of the hall, and her lips suddenly parted in a whispered warning.

"Grew!" she said. "Simon Grew! Look out, Bright!—he'll go for you."

A man had risen in the midst of the packed audience on the floor, and stood, patiently waiting until the applause and buzz of talk which had ensued on the conclusion of Bright's speech had died away into silence. He was a little, reddish-haired, sandy-bearded, light-eyed man, with the furtive, shifty look of a ferret and the half-sneering, half-malignant air of one who nourishes a perpetual grievance against things in general. Everybody in the hall knew him as the paid secretary of a small trades-union, and as one who passed his time in wholesale quarrelling, fault-finding, and interference. And as he turned to the platform and opened his lips, a voice came out of the shadows beneath

the gallery.

"Good lad, Simon! Let 'em hear thi tongue! Gi' 'em some oil o' vitriol, owd lad!"

There was a burst of laughter at this truculent counsel, and Grew himself smiled as he raised his voice.

"You're all easily carried away," he began, letting a scornful and cynical glance sweep the place from gallery to floor before it rested with open defiance and dislike on the chairman and those round him. "It always was the failing of democracy to lick the toes of every upstart demagogue that had a ready tongue and knew how to use it! You're all saying 'Hear—hear!' to Mr. Bright Marrashaw for telling us a few things that have been said so often by men like myself, this twenty years and more, that they've become platitudes. If I've said once, with pen as well as with tongue, what he's just said, I've said and written it a thousand times—there's naught new in a word he's spouted. What call has he—a millionaire capitalist's son!—to come here and read us a lesson. I think Mr. Bright Marrashaw 'ud ha' been far better and more fittingly employed if instead o' coming here to tell us how to do our business, he'd stopped at home yonder at Marrashaw Royd, among t' thousand-guinea pictures and five-hundred pound carpets, and preached to his own father! There isn't a man or woman in this place 'at doesn't know how t' Marrashaw money's been made—by grinding and robbing, and sweating and exploiting—and who isn't well aware, having heard their fathers and mothers and their grandmothers and grandfathers talk, 'at of all t' bad old lot i' t' bad old Factory times, t' Marrashaws were t' very worst i' this part of industrial England! What were Marrashaw's Mill like, and how did t' Marrashaw o' that day treat his workpeople before Factory Reform came in? This here Bright Marrashaw's grandfather was t' hardest taskmaster at ever—"

Bright's face flushed with indignation, and despite Hermie's whispered entreaty, and her hand on his arm, he sprang to his feet.

"Am I responsible for what my grandfather did?" he demanded hotly. "Do you mean to imply that I'd have countenanced what went on before the coming of Factory Reform?"

Grew included Bright in a comprehensive sneer that took in everybody present.

"I know you're a Marrashaw," he retorted quietly. "And I reckon you'll be no better than your breed! You come of a bad, grasping stock 'at's made its brass out o' our flesh and blood, and for all your fine words—all talk for t' sake o' talking!—you'll do as they've always done when t' mill comes into your hands—you'll do as your grandfather did, and as your father's done. And I say it's naught but a waste o' time and an insult to our intelligence 'at a young feller like you should get up here, and have t' cheek and impudence—"

Grew suddenly stopped. The chairman, himself a well-known labour leader and an old trades-unionist, had risen to his feet with an authoritative gesture of his hand.

"That'll do, mi lad!" he said with decision. "We've heard enough o' thy tongue for this time. This is a free and open meeting, and any man or woman here's welcome to have his or her say, but we'm going to stop at personalities. Sit tha down, Grew!—I'm i' power here! Now then," he went on, looking round his audience with a good-humoured smile. "I agree i' every word 'at young Mr. Marrashaw said! It wanted saying! No matter if its been said a thousand times, and written ten thousand times, it wanted saying again—there's some platitudes 'at you can't repeat too often. If some of us talked less and did more about practical politics, we shouldn't allus be at t' bottom o' t' poll. Go home, all t' lot o' you, and think about what you've heard, and next time there's a candidate o' your own before you, just take t' trouble to walk as far as t' polling booth, and give him your vote. What's t' use o' concealing t' plain truth? There's more nor three-fourths o' t' working men i' this country at'll never go to t' polling booth at all if a public-house chances to stand between it and them! There's Gospel fact for you. I tell you again, I agree heartily wi' every word 'at t' young feller's said—Marrashaw or no Marrashaw!—and I hope he'll say it again, and yet again, and then happen some o' you thick-headed 'uns 'll come to realise 'at you're responsible citizens. For my part, I'm much obliged to Mr. Bright Marrashaw for getting on his legs and opening his mouth."

"Hear, hear!" said the man from London with hearty approval. "Hear, hear!"

The meeting broke up, and Bright and Hermie slipped away down the gallery staircase. At its foot they met the chairman and the man from London. Both smiled, and the man from London held out his hand and gripped Bright's.

"You said the right thing, and said it well!" he exclaimed. "You put a whole book into a paragraph!"

The chairman nodded approval and laid his hand on Bright's shoulder.

"Mr. Bright!" he said, earnestly. "You must join us—join our party! We want such as you. You'll stiffen us! Come in!"

"Is it necessary?" answered Bright with a laugh. "A man can believe and do things without joining a party."

"No!" declared the chairman. "You must come in! Come!—and we'll run you for Parliament, next time there's a chance."

"That's it!" exclaimed the man from London, approvingly. "Excellent! The very thing!"

But Bright laughed again, and steered Hermie through the crowd.

"Oh, we'll see about it—time enough yet!" he answered. "Things are only

just beginning, you know."

Outside he and Hermie walked quickly away—other men spoke to Bright, and would have detained him, but he made more laughing excuses and hurried off.

"I don't know whatever made me do that!" he exclaimed suddenly when he and Hermie, after a period of silence, were half-way towards her father's house. "But—it just seemed as if I'd got to."

"You spoke well," said Hermie, thoughtfully. "I think you'd make a success in the House of Commons, Bright. But—"

She paused, as if doubtful of what she had been about to say, and they walked on some little distance in silence.

"But—what?" asked Bright, at last.

"I was going to say that these people would never believe in you, nor follow you, unless you were one of themselves," she answered in a low voice. "They earn their own livings, you know."

"Am I not going to earn mine—from to-morrow?" asked Bright.

Hermie sighed deeply.

"All the same, even then, you're your father's son," she said. Then she laughed, a little nervously, but not without a touch of malice. "Whatever would your father say if he heard of—to-night? You!—in a Labour meeting—aiding and abetting!"

"He'll hear," answered Bright with a grim laugh. "Ellerthwaite was there. When they lunch at the club to-morrow he'll tell my father of every word I said!"

IX

Charlesworth Marrashaw heard all about his son's performance long before he turned in at the club next day. The thing had not been done in a corner. The man from London enjoyed a considerable amount of reputation and fame, not only as a labour leader but as a writer on political economy, and the Editor of the Haverthwaite Guardian, also conscious that the Independent Labour Party was a growing force in the town and district, had sent one of his best reporters to the meeting, with instructions to do it justice. That reporter had a flair for news, and an excellent idea of what would particularly appeal to local appetite, and when young Mr. Bright Marrashaw got on his legs, his heart leapt within him. He took a full note of Bright's speech, and of the subsequent proceedings and remarks, and when the Guardian came out next morning its readers found that while the man from London's academic discourse was carefully edited down to a full abstract, all that Bright had said, and all that Simon Grew had said, and all that the Chairman had said was given in the exact words in which they had said it. And over the top of the columns in which this report appeared, ran three striking headlines in bold black type.

EVENTFUL EVENING AT THE LABOUR HALL.
LEADING CAPITALIST'S SON CONDEMNS CAPITALISM.
MR. BRIGHT MARRASHAW LAYS THE LAW DOWN TO LABOUR.

Charlesworth found the Guardian, damp from the press, lying with other papers and his private letters, on his breakfast table next morning. He was alone in the room: Bright, whom he had not seen since the disturbing conversation of two nights before, had departed to his beloved Technical College; Trissie had not yet appeared. Now Charlesworth's first action, every morning, as he stood on the thick velvet-pile hearthrug, his back to the fire, waiting the arrival of the hot dishes, was to open the Guardian and skim its contents: he had a naturally parochial instinct, and was much more interested in local gossip, of however small importance, than in the news of the greater world which lay outside the parish boundary. The first thing that caught his eye was his son's name; the next a word or two that forced the blood to his face and a hasty expletive to his lips. He read the whole thing through, then, and had just finished it when Bella brought in the eggs and soles, the kidneys and bacon of which Charlesworth had been thinking with appreciation and appetite: he was a mighty trencherman at breakfast time and very particular about a full provision for his wants. Somehow, as the girl set various matters on the table and others in their chafing-dishes before the fire, Charlesworth felt as if bitterness had descended upon his palate: if he had voiced his sentiments

in homely language he would have exclaimed that he had already got a bellyful. Instead, he threw the Guardian towards his daughter, who just then came into the room.

"There's an appetiser for you, my lass!" he growled, as Bella left the room, leaving him and Trissie alone. "Enough to put a man clean off his feed, that is! God bless my life and soul—what next?"

Trissie, who was always half-asleep and lackadaisical of a morning, caught the offending newspaper and glanced at it with small idea of her father's meaning. But she awoke to realisation when she had seen Bright's name, and had hastily read the reporter's dramatic account of the scene at the Labour Hall which had followed on Simon Grew's rising.

"Father!" she exclaimed, turning astonished eyes on Charlesworth, who was angrily taking off the top of his first egg. "Do you think Bright's a bit—mad?"

"Mad?" growled Charlesworth. "No!—he's in a fair way to be bad—bad, not mad, my lass! All that's naught but badness—a son o' mine to fraternise wi' them fellers, cockerin' 'em up till they think at they've got all t' world at t' end of a piece o' string! Bright's a throw-back!—but where he throws back to, I can't think. There's been no Marrashaw at ever I heard on 'at had notions o' that sort. It's naught but sheer defiance!—saying 'at he agreed wi' all 'at this London feller—some chap 'at no doubt can't rub one penny again another!—had to say about capital and labour. But I'll take good care 'at none o' my brass goes i' that direction!"

"Whatever will you say to him?" asked Trissie. To her, Bright's open declaration seemed the blackest treachery against his own class; once more she was wondering what Victor Ellerthwaite would think of such conduct. "He ought to be spoken to—severely! It's—It's setting up all the working people against—against us."

Charlesworth made no direct answer. He went on eating, grumbling to himself between every mouthful, and when breakfast was over he set off to the mill in a sore and aggrieved state of mind, for the second time in two days. It seemed to him that everything was going wrong. He had lost his useful secretary, and would find it hard to replace her; a rift had sprung up between him and Bright, and now Bright by his foolishness had widened it into a gulf. The clerk whom he had installed in Hermie Clough's place, for the time being, had a bad hour with Charlesworth that morning; so, too, had the heads of departments. And for the first time for many a year, Charlesworth neglected to take his usual morning walk round the mill. Except when he was away holidaying, or on business, he always made a daily round of the place, his hands under his coat-tails, his lips fixed, his eyes shrewdly observant, noticing everything that was going on. But that morning he remained in his private

room, angry, sullen, resentful. The truth was, as he realised very well, that he felt ashamed to face his work people. He knew that most of his men and a great many of his women were members of the Independent Labour Party, and that a considerable number of them must have been present at the Labour Hall the night before and consequently would have heard Bright's declaration of his principles and sympathies. And he also knew that if he went his usual round of the rooms and sheds there would be sly looks and whispered words and smiles behind his back: everybody in the place would be wanting to know, with more or less malicious curiosity, how the old man had taken what the young one had said.

"It's come to a bonny pass when a man's ashamed to meet his own work folk!" grumbled Charlesworth. "Them into whose mouths he puts their bread-and-butter! Ecod, we do live i' strange times, an' all! It's naught but risings-up and rebellions on all sides. And there's some folk soft enough to say there's no such thing as a Devil! I lay t' owd lad's busy enough i' Haverthwaite."

Then, feeling it necessary to vent his wrath on somebody, Charlesworth fell to scolding the temporary secretary, and gave him a further bad time until the hour came for migration to the Club. His temper had not abated when he went out: there were two people in Haverthwaite for whom he was saving up pieces of his mind—one was the editor of the Guardian; the other, James Ellerthwaite. The first had incurred Charlesworth's anger by printing all that had fallen from Simon Grew about the dead and gone Marrashaws: the second by aiding and abetting the Labour folks by his presence at their meeting: each had got to hear Charlesworth's opinion of their conduct, and at once: he was not the sort of man to keep silence where his feelings were concerned—whoever trod on his corns, he was fond of remarking, would know about it before he took his boots off.

Charlesworth took in the Guardian office on his way to the Club: it lay in a sort of back alley off High Street. Oddly enough, he had never set foot in it before, and he was not too well pleased at being directed to climb a steep, narrow, and dark staircase to the editorial rooms. Nor did it increase his general well-being when, having reached the threshold of the sanctum he was made to cool his heels for ten minutes in a dark and stuffy little waiting-room wherein was nothing but a worn-out chair, a faded map of Haverthwaite and district, and a ricketty-legged table whereon reposed a much-thumbed file of the Guardian. Charlesworth was more accustomed to make people wait than to be kept waiting himself, and he chafed and fretted under this enforced idleness until, at last unable to possess his mind in patience any longer, he pushed open the door and confronted a phlegmatic youth who stood on sentry-guard in the lobby without.

"Did you tell t' editor 'at Mr. Marrashaw was here?" he demanded.

"Yes!" answered the janitor, laconically.

"Well, what did he say?" asked Charlesworth.

"Not at liberty," retorted the phlegmatic youth.

Charlesworth began to feel small. He choked down his wrath and temporised.

"When will he be at liberty?" he asked.

"Can't say," said the janitor. "Never sees nobody except by appointment. He might be an hour yet—there's that gentleman from London with him, what was speaking at the Labour Hall last night, and they're busy talking."

"Go and tell him 'at Mr. Marrashaw must see him!" commanded Charlesworth. The mere idea that a pestilential labour leader should be preferred before himself, an ex-mayor of Haverthwaite and the town's leading magnate, was unbelievable. "Go at once!—d'ye hear, young man?"

"Can't!" said the young man, with all the nonchalance of extreme youth. "Not to be disturbed. Them's his orders."

Charlesworth's face grew dark and his voice aldermanic.

"D'yer mean to say 'at I'm to wait his convenience?" he exclaimed. "Me 'at's—"

"He'll ring his bell when you can go in," said the youth, "That's how it's done. If you come without an appointment you have to wait—ah, I've known some of 'em wait a couple of hours! And then very likely he wouldn't see 'em. He didn't say that he'd see you."

Charlesworth suddenly made for the narrow stair.

"Then you can tell him he'll see a lawyer's letter!" he vociferated, shaking his umbrella. "I lay he'll see that, whether he likes or not! D'ye hear?"

"Yessir," answered the youth, imperturbably. "A lawyer's letter. When can he expect it?"

Charlesworth glared at this matter-of-fact young person, and descended the stair. He was now in a worse temper than ever, and at first turned his steps in the direction of Slater and Pilthwaite's, his solicitors, bent on asking them if the references to the dead-and-gone Marrashaws in the Guardian of that morning were not libellous. But it was now nearly one o'clock, and he was beginning to feel the need of his usual glass or two of old sherry. So, after a moment's reflection, he made for the Club, and presently walking into the smoking-room found Ellerthwaite in the usual corner, his long legs carelessly crossed, his thumbs in his waistcoat, his hat tilted over his forehead, a cigar in the corner of his mouth, and a cynical mocking smile in his eyes.

"So you're not ashamed to show your face, young man?" observed this candid friend. "I should ha' thought t' owd cock 'ud ha' retired into t' hen-house for a bit when t' young cockerel crowed so loud as yon lad o yours did last night!"

Charlesworth frowned heavily at this pleasantry, and gave a passing steward an order that sent him hastening to the bar.

"You're a nice sort o' Tory!" he growled, as he sat heavily down by his crony's side. "I saw it—all t' town's seen it, I reckon. There it was, i' solid print—'Amongst the audience we noticed several prominent Conservatives of the town, Mr. James Ellerthwaite, Mr. Walter Owlershaw' and cetera and cetera. Nice sort o' Tories—dancing attendance on fellers like them thur! Aiding and abetting, I call it."

"Aiding and abetting be damned!" retorted Ellerthwaite. "You're a poor, ignorant chap, Charlesworth. If you were a free, enlightened, up-to-date, educated Conservative like me, you'd go anywhere, to hear all sides of a question. Go into t' enemy's camp, my lad, if you want to know what t' enemy's doing! But you Radicals!—Lord bless you, I never knew a Radical yet 'at ever dared to hear t' other side of any question. It's all one-sidedness wi' you—you're afraid o' hearing opinions 'at's different to your own. You political dissenters is t' most bigoted, narrow-minded, intolerant, prejudiced folk 'at draw breath!—you think there's nobody has any rights but yourselves."

"We don't go fraternisin' wi' t' scum, anyway," retorted Charlesworth. "I should ha' been ashamed to ha' been seen sittin' i' t' same room wi' fellers like them—enemies o' society!"

"I lay ye've sat i' far worse company, my lad," said Ellerthwaite. "I shall go again. If t' enemy's willing to let his opponents sit by while he discloses his plan o' campaign, well, why not take advantage? And I'd pleasure o' hearing young Bright, any way!"

"Bright owt to be thoroughly ashamed of his-self," growled Charlesworth. "Bringing contempt on me and mine!"

"Nowt o' t' sort, fathead!" retorted Ellerthwaite. "I don't agree wi' what Bright said—not I!—but t' lad spoke well, and straight, and from t' labour point o' view, he said t' right thing. And I'll tell you summat, young feller mi lad!—yon son o' yours'll be t' first Labour member for Haverthwaite! Now there!"

Charlesworth started. He was holding the glass of sherry which the steward has just brought, and he took two or three hasty sips at it before replying to this emphatic prophecy.

"If my son ever puts up for Parliament in that interest," he said at last, "I'll take good care 'at I put up against him i' t' other! D'ye hear that?"

"I hear!" laughed Ellerthwaite. "And I should like to see it. With you on your platform and him on his, our man 'ud get in. You know t' owd saying, Charlesworth—'When thieves fall out, honest men come by their own.' Now you're an owd thief o' one sort—you want to rob t' Church and t' landlords

and Bright's a young thief of another sort—he wants to rob private capitalists; so between t' two on you happen a man o' my complexion'll come out on t' top. But," he added, dropping his bantering tone, and giving Charlesworth's elbow a nudge, "you mark my words, Charlesworth, my lad—if Bright joins t' Labour movement, and puts his back into it, he'll be Member o' Parliament for Haverthwaite in t' Labour interest as sure as we're sitting here! Have you seen him since last night?"

"No!" exclaimed Charlesworth.

"And you're spoiling to tell him your mind," continued Ellerthwaite, with a sly, knowing glance at his friend's angry countenance. "Now then, you take a bit of advice. Count twenty, Charlesworth, count twenty! Leave t' lad alone! He's young, and he's clever, and he's got brain and ability. He may go on in this line, and he mayn't—with more experience of the world, and of life, and of men, he'll happen modify his views—he's young, Charlesworth, young and eager. Let him be!—he's cleverer than you are, and he's as much common sense as you have—an happen a bit more," concluded Ellerthwaite, who was nothing if not candid and outspoken. "You take an old friend's advice and leave him alone."

"I'm not going to be muzzled by nobody!" declared Charlesworth. "It seems t' fashion now-a-days for every Tom, Dick, and Harry to have his say—I'll have mine!"

"All right, my lad!" said Ellerthwaite. "But let me remind you o' one o' your Radical doctrines—every man's free to have his own opinions. Your son's entitled to his. Let him have 'em—it'll none harm you, unless," he added, with another sly glance at Charlesworth as they rose and made for the dining-room, "unless you're like all t' rest o' you Radicals—nowt but an abstract philosopher 'at doesn't like to see your theories put into practice. What all you Radicals mean when you say 'Let every man be free' means 'Aye, as long as his freedom doesn't interfere with my liberty'! That's about it, my lad. But, once more—leave Bright alone."

Charlesworth made no reply beyond a resentful grunt. It was his intention to have things out with Bright that very night. He had already formulated in his mind what he meant to say to him. Once more he would appeal to the family traditions, to the memory of the dead-and-gone Marrashaws; once more he would remind Bright, descendant of a line of (in Charlesworth's opinion) glorious ancestors, of all that his forebears had accomplished; once more he would ask him to give up his foolishness, come into the business, marry Milly Ellerthwaite, and inherit riches and position. He would use every argument he could think of; make every effort he could conceive: put out every plea and entreaty he could imagine. But if Bright proved obdurate, if he showed himself joined to his idols, why, then—

Charlesworth felt that—then—he would not know what to do. He could not turn his only son out of his house simply because they differed in politics, nor because Bright wished to follow a profession which had been adopted with his father's consent. Charlesworth knew well enough that popular opinion in Haverthwaite would be against any such high-handed proceeding. Haverthwaite folk were mighty independent: they would doubtless think Bright a fool for taking the line he seemed to favour, but they would be quick to style Charlesworth a tyrant if he strove to force him off it. Individual freedom was an ideal which was worshipped to a fanatical degree in Haverthwaite: Haverthwaite folk had suffered stripes and imprisonment and loss of worldly goods for it in times past. Here was Ellerthwaite, himself a crusted Tory, insisting that Bright should be let alone! Altogether, Charlesworth realised that he was in a strange dilemma, and he began to be nervous about his next meeting with his son. He knew that Bright had a temper not dissimilar to his own; that he was obstinate, self-willed, had to persuade or convince: there would be disagreement, perhaps bitter words. And Charlesworth felt what most men feel as they approach the evening of life—that as one gets older, one cares less and less for argument that leads to dissension.

But he was spared the trouble which he anticipated. As he and Ellerthwaite sat in their corner after lunch, enjoying their cigars and their coffee, the hall-porter brought Charlesworth a letter which, he said, had just been delivered by hand. Charlesworth recognised his son's handwriting. Without ceremony he opened the letter and read it carefully. It was concise, friendly, even dutiful, but its phraseology was candid and plain. Once more Bright expressed his dislike of the business, and his wish to follow his own profession and to make his own way unaided in it. And that morning, he said, he had secured a post as analytical chemist at Leening's dye-works, at a commencing salary of six hundred a year, and was entering on his duties at once. It was necessary, he proceeded, that he should live in close proximity to the scene of his new labours, so he had taken rooms close by Leening's. He hoped that his father would endeavour to see things in his light. Perhaps, he added, it would be best, as they could not agree on certain matters into which he need not go, that for a time he should confine himself to his duties—nevertheless, he concluded, he need not say that he should never forget nor neglect, the ties and obligations of relationship and affection, wherefore he presented his duty and his love. Charlesworth grunted audibly when he came to that, and without a word of comment passed the letter to Ellerthwaite.

Ellerthwaite read and re-read the letter, and handed it back.

"Leave the lad alone!" he said tersely. "Let him be, Charlesworth."

"Naught else to be done," muttered Charlesworth. "He's taken his own

road.”

He put the letter in his pocket-book, and presently remarking that he must get back to the mill, rose and went away. Ellerthwaite, watching him keenly as he made his way across the big room, noticed that Charlesworth was beginning to stoop a little, and that his step seemed to have lost some of its springiness and activity.

X

When Charlesworth went back to the mill that afternoon he found Lockwood Clough waiting for him in the corridor outside his private office. There was that in the overlooker's manner which suggested that he had come on confidential matters, and Charlesworth for one moment felt a gleam of hope that Lockwood had brought an olive-branch from Hermione, whose presence Charlesworth was missing more than he would have cared to admit. And when he had sent away the substitute, and he and Lockwood were alone, he went straight to the point uppermost in his mind.

"Has that lass o' yours come to her senses?" he asked surily. "She must know 'at she's putting me to a deal o' inconvenience!"

But Lockwood shook his head.

"I haven't come about that, Mr. Marrashaw," he answered. "I've naught to do with it. My daughter goes her own way—she's one o' these here emancipated young women. No—I've come on that business we were talking about t' other afternoon."

"Well?" demanded Charlesworth. "What of it?"

"I've come across a man 'at'll tell you all about that affair," said Lockwood, unconsciously lowering his voice. "There is such a society as I said, and this man's been one of 'em, and knows all about it. And he'll tell—in strict secrecy, and, of course, for a consideration."

"What consideration?" asked Charlesworth.

"That you mun settle with him," answered Lockwood. "But—secrecy's what he stipulates for."

"Who is he?" said Charlesworth.

Lockwood glanced at the door, and though it was safely shut drew a little nearer his master's desk.

"Yon man Grew," he said in low tones. "Simon Grew—you know him. Secretary o' t' Vanmen and Carters' Union."

Charlesworth made a face. It indicated aversion and disgust.

"That feller!" he exclaimed. "A chap 'at owt to be i' jail! Why, it were him 'at said all them foul things about me and mine at that meeting last night!—they're i' print i' t' Guardian."

Lockwood laughed.

"That's all what you might call professional talk, Mr. Marrashaw," he said. "T' chap has to say summat to keep his place and earn his wage. He'd say t' very opposite if he were paid for it. Anyway, I tell you he knows all about this here secret society, and he'll tell, i' secrecy, and if it's made worth his while. And—you wanted to know."

Charlesworth felt that this was true; he knew, too, that his curiosity would not rest until he had got to know what Grew could tell him.

"Where can he be seen, then?" he asked. "And when?"

"When and where you like to appoint," answered Lockwood. "So long, I say, as nobody knows naught about it."

Charlesworth reflected. Then he remembered that he had heard Trissie say that morning that she was going with Victor Ellerthwaite to the theatre on this very evening: as Bright had voluntarily departed his father's house, he, Charlesworth, would be alone.

"Tell him to come to my house, Marrashaw Royd, at eight o'clock to-night," he said suddenly. "Bid him give a gentle tap at one o' t' lighted windows 'at he'll see on t' right hand side o' t' front door—I'll let him in myself, and nobody'll know he's ever been there."

"Very good," said Lockwood.

He turned away, and was leaving the room when Charlesworth stopped him with a look.

"You know nowt, yourself?" asked Charlesworth.

"Nowt!" replied Lockwood. "But—he knows."

He was going away then, but he in his turn hesitated and closed the door again.

"There's one thing you should bear i' mind, Mr. Marrashaw," he said, returning to the desk. "This here chap Grew, for all he's a wind-bag, is a clever feller—he's read and studied a deal. He's none a sound man—else he wouldn't be willing to sell secrets. But—he can tell you a deal more nor you know of. He's been in a good many inner circles in his time—and he either leaves 'em, or he gets chucked out of 'em—you understand? But—he knows!"

"All right!" assented Charlesworth. "I reckon a bit o' brass'll open his mouth?"

"Aye, brass'll open his mouth, right enough!" said Lockwood drily. "He's got his price, no doubt."

Charlesworth thought no more of the coming disclosure until the evening came on. He dined alone and felt sorer than ever at the sudden upheaval of his family affairs. Nothing in his life had ever upset him so much as Bright's action: to his mind and way of thinking it was incomprehensible. But he had great faith in James Ellerthwaite's shrewdness and judgment, and he felt that at that moment there was nothing to do but to leave Bright alone. Perhaps Bright would come to his senses—it seemed incredible that the heir to a great business and a big fortune should throw away chances and prospects, to say nothing of certainties, for the sake of mere chimeras and theories. He was revolving the possibilities of getting his son into a better state of mind, when, soon after eight had chimed from the clock on his mantelpiece, he heard a light

tap on one of the windows behind him. The traitor, then, was at hand.

Charlesworth went quietly into the hall, lowered the light which burned there, and opened the big front door. A cloaked and muffled figure confronted him from the shadows of the porch.

"Come your ways in," said Charlesworth. "Nobody about!"

Grew followed him into the morning-room, and Charlesworth turned the key upon them. Much as he disliked the notion of having a fellow like Grew under his roof, he was not going to forget the duties of a host, and after bidding his visitor take his coat off, and pointing him to an easy chair, purposely drawn up to the fire near his own, he got out the cigars and the whiskey.

"Best respect, Mr. Marrashaw," said Grew, with a polite bow over the rim of his glass. "I wish you and yours very good health, sir."

Charlesworth, regarding his guest slyly, with a sidewise glance, laughed cynically.

"Ye wish me nowt o' t' sort, mi lad!" he said. "Ye were mis-calling me and mine shameful, i' public, only last night."

Grew laughed. It was evident that he was not readily to be put out of countenance.

"Why, Mr. Marrashaw!" he exclaimed. "That was naught but—professional talk! You've seen enough o' the world in your time to know that one has to say things, now and then. What about all 'at's said in Parliament, on both sides? Being what I am, I have to say my lesson. There's a lot said in political life that's not meant—it's part o' t' game, sir!"

"D'ye think that my lad didn't mean what he said last night?" demanded Charlesworth.

Grew's sharp eyes and crafty face grew serious.

"If your son's really got those ideas fixed in him," he said, "I mean to say if he's really and honestly going to champion t' working-classes, well, all I say is, God help him!"

"What for?" asked Charlesworth, surprised and curious.

" 'Cause he'll get his heart broken!" answered Grew. "He'll get neither gratitude nor understanding. I know!"

This was beyond Charlesworth. He sat silent for a moment, staring at Grew as if he were some odd specimen of humanity. Then he suddenly remembered why Grew was there.

"Well, what's this 'at you can tell me?" he said. "I understand 'at there's a sort o' secret society here i' t' town 'at's at t' back o' some o' these here labour movements, and 'at you know all about it, and's willing to tell? Is that so?"

Grew, who was evidently enjoying the cigar which Charlesworth had given him, bowed his head.

"That's so, sir," he answered. "And I'm willing to tell you all about it, on two conditions—one, that you respect my confidence, and t' other, that you make it worth my while. Fair conditions these, Mr. Marrashaw, as you, a business man'll acknowledge."

"I've naught again 'em," replied Charlesworth. "There's one thing, though—about the confidential part. Ha' you any objection to me telling James Ellerthwaite aught that you tell me?"

"Well, no," answered Grew, after a moment's reflection. "He's straight enough, is Mr. Ellerthwaite. But you must give me your word 'at it doesn't go beyond him and you. Then I've no objection."

"Done!" said Charlesworth. "Then—there's naught but t' other thing. What do you want?"

Grew lost no time in voicing his terms: he had evidently got them cut-and-dried.

"Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Marrashaw," he answered. "Mind you, there's nobody but me that you could get this information out of—all t' rest is red-hot enthusiasts: I'm not. Well—I'm wanting to buy yon house 'at I live in: I've t' chance o' gettin' it just now very reasonable. Find me in t' money, and I'll tell you all I know."

"How much do you want?" asked Charlesworth.

"Four hundred and fifty is t' price," replied Grew. "It's a good seven-roomed house, too."

"Now then!" said Charlesworth. "I'll gi' you a cheque before you go. Well, what is this you've to tell? I'm buying a pig in a poke—but let's hear."

"It's worth hearing—to a man in your position," answered Grew, calmly. "For there's naught truer than t' old saying that to be forewarned is to be forearmed. Well, it's this—there is a society here in Haverthwaite: a group, that's one of a good many groups that's beginning to be formed here and there throughout this country, though to be sure, the thing's as yet in its infancy. It's a group of advanced men and women who are banded together to spread the doctrines of Syndicalism."

"Syndicalism?" said Charlesworth. In spite of his dislike to his visitor, he was growing interested in him, and he settled himself to close attention. "Syndicalism! Aye, I've heard—just heard—that term. Now, what's t' exact meaning?"

"It spread here from France," answered Grew. "In my opinion, from what I've read, it's naught much else—here in England, anyhow, and up to now—than a revival of Robert Owen's form of Socialism. What it really means is this—that the workers in the big groups of industry, such as mining, metal, transport, and textiles, should organise themselves into comprehensive unions in which both skilled and unskilled men should have equal shares, and that

these unions should take over the responsibility for the management of these industries. Understand, sir?"

"Where will t' private employer, t' capitalist, come in?" asked Charlesworth.

"Nowhere!" answered Grew. "He'll be—clean swept away."

"How does this Syndicalism regard trade-unions, then?" continued Charlesworth. "I can already see 'at there's differences."

"Yes," said Grew. "Syndicalism has two crows to pull with trades-unionism—one, because trades-unionism is sectional; the other, because under trades-union the tendency is for the skilled artisan to dissociate himself from the unskilled labourer. But there's more than that, Mr. Marrashaw. Syndicalism utterly condemns the fundamental policy of trades-unionism as it's been worked out during the last sixty years—namely, that while it's extracted from employers like you as large a share as possible of the disposal surplus of industry, it's left to such as you a normal rate of profit. Syndicalism sees no reason for limiting the demand of labour at what the employer can concede. If the whole lot of you capitalist-employers were driven into bankruptcy, it would be all the easier for organised Syndicalism to take up control of your industries and establish a new order of society."

Charlesworth, concentrating his mind on all he was being told, nodded his head, and remained thinking for a minute or two, during which he replenished his own and his visitor's glass.

"What means would they adopt to set up this sort o' thing?" he asked, after a pause.

"A general strike of all the big industries," answered Grew promptly. "Railways, transport, seamen, firemen, dockers, miners, metal-workers, textile-workers, shop-assistants, and so on."

"All over t' country?— Just so!" said Charlesworth. "And—do you think these ideas are spreading?"

"Yes!" replied Grew. "But—only gradually. And they're different here to what they are in America and France. There they're international; here, they're national. But that'll be altered in a few years' time. Yes, sir—it's spreading."

"Through these groups 'at you talk about?" suggested Charlesworth.

"Just so," said Grew. "Through the groups. Permeation! The notion is to capture the trades-unions."

"And this group in Haverthwaite?" asked Charlesworth. "What about it?"

Grew smiled.

"Well," he said, "there's nobody knows that it is what it really is. It has a name, to be sure, but the name's all bluff, Mr. Marrashaw. It's called the Athenian Society—Athena, you know, was the old Greek goddess of wisdom, same as the Roman goddess Minerva—you've seen her statue in t' People's

Park yonder—and she was also the patroness of weavers. It was really started as a reading society, but that's all done with, except for a purpose—what it really is, is a society for spreading Syndicalist doctrine amongst the workers."

"And it meets—where?" asked Charlesworth.

"Sometimes at one member's house—sometimes at another's," answered Grew. "There's only nine members—but," he added, "they're all of more influence than you'd think."

"Aye?" said Charlesworth. He was becoming more and more interested; already he felt that he was laying out his money well in thus securing information about the common enemy. "And who may they be, now, these nine?"

"Well," answered Grew, "that, of course, is where you'll respect my confidence more than in anything else. They're not the sort o' people you'd suspect: they aren't common working folk. There's myself, for one—though, as I tell you, I'm beginning to be doubtful: I'm more for trades-unionism as it has been."

"Well?" asked Charlesworth. "And t' others?"

"There's Mr. Coleflower," said Grew. "You know him."

Charlesworth let out a gasp of astonishment.

"What?" he exclaimed. "T' parish church curate? You don't say!"

"He's a red-hot 'un," affirmed Grew. "Then there are two o' them teachers at the Secondary School—Mr. Chambers and Mr. Firmantle."

Charlesworth gasped again. His astonishment was increasing.

"What ha' they to do wi' trade matters?" he growled. "Parsons and teachers! Ecod! It's queer."

"That's four," continued Grew. "Then there's Shorewood, one of the assistants at Mawson and Graydon's, the drapers, and there's Farling, the under-cashier at Ellerthwaite's. That's six. And t' other three are amongst your own folks, Mr. Marrashaw."

"Mine?" demanded Charlesworth. "Who, now?"

"Well, there's Allot Howroyd and Lister Jubb," replied Grew. "You know them, I reckon."

"Two o' my most trusted men!" muttered Charlesworth. "Bless my soul! And t' other?"

"That lass o' Lockwood Clough's—Hermie," said Grew. "Hermie Clough!"

Charlesworth leaped in his chair.

"No!" he exclaimed. "Her? You don't mean it!"

"Her, and Mr. Coleflower, and Allot Howroyd are t' principal leaders," said Grew coolly. "They're what you'd call the brains of the movement. Especially Hermie Clough. I believe," he added, with a laugh, "I believe 'at

Hermie Clough ’ud rejoice to see every capitalist in England burned at t’ stake —same as they did wi’ t’ owd martyrs, Mr. Marrashaw. Not ’at she’d regard ’em as martyrs! I’ve heard a good deal o’ blood and fire talked i’ speeches i’ my time,” he concluded, reflectively, “but I never heard man or woman that could let their tongues go as Hermie Clough can when she gets on to politics and capitalism. She goes far beyond me—she’s a revolutionary!”

“Bless my soul!” repeated Charlesworth. He was lost in wonder, and in uneasiness. Hermione had been his right hand for a long time, and she knew a lot of his business and trading secrets. “Bless my soul!” he said again. Then feeling that he had heard enough for that time and that he wanted to reflect, he went across to a bureau in the corner of the room and sat down at it. Coming back to the hearth a few minutes later he slipped a folded cheque into Grew’s ready hand. “There!” he said. “I’ve made it out to bearer on a private account o’ mine that I keep at Leeds—run over there and cash it; then nobody’ll be any the wiser; it’s better than drawing it on a bank i’ t’ town here—we mun keep this to ourselves. And if and when you get to know any active doings o’ this lot —come to me.”

“I understand, Mr. Marrashaw,” said Grew, as he put away his reward. “Active doings?—oh, yes, there’ll be that, sure enough!—sooner or later.”

X

When Grew had gone away, Charlesworth, after an aimless turn or two up and down the morning-room, went out into the hall, got into a heavy overcoat, and set off into the night. He felt that he could not keep his newly-acquired information to himself; he must share it with James Ellerthwaite, at once.

Ellerthwaite lived in an old stone house on the opposite edge of the moor; a big, rambling seventeenth century house originally built by one of his ancestors, and added to by others at various times during the first hundred years of its existence. It stood within half-an-hour's walk of Marrashaw Royd; under ordinary circumstances such a brief excursion would have been child's play to Charlesworth. But when he got outside his own grounds he found that since his coming home that evening the weather had changed; the wind had got into the west, always a bad sign in that quarter of the country, and now a great storm of sleet and rain was tearing across the open moor. At any other time, Charlesworth would have gone back to the warmth and comfort of his own fireside, but now, excited by what he had heard from Simon Grew, and eager to tell his crony the result of the interview, he turned up the collar of his coat and pulled his cap about his ears and pushed on across the moor. And as he battled with the elements he thought of that other battle which was evidently preparing, and of the forces that were secretly arming in readiness for it. He was perplexed and astonished: the whole thing was beyond him. Astute enough in business, subtle and crafty in money-making and money-keeping, Charlesworth was withal a simple man, and he found it difficult to comprehend that any one could cherish ideas different to his own. He could not understand why anybody should be discontented with the system under which he had amassed a fortune: to him it was a system without a flaw. His forefathers and himself, by industry, ingenuity, perseverance, foresight, a genius for buying and selling, had built up a great business which afforded the means of employment to thousands of workpeople: surely the first duty of these thousands was to be grateful to those who put bread, beef, and beer into their mouths. Not everybody, argued Charlesworth, could live in fine houses and wear broadcloth; but it was a great deal to have the chance of earning a good wage, keeping a sound roof over one's head, and putting something by for rainy days and old age. And they could all do it—if they liked, he affirmed, with a sardonic laugh; he himself could point to scores of his workfolk, Lockwood Clough amongst them, who, by frugality and soberness of life had saved a nice bit, enough to live on comfortably in life's evening. And what some had done and were doing, all the rest could do—why, then, this unrest, and dissatisfaction, this perpetual grumbling at the masters, this envy and

covetousness. It was devil's work, in his opinion—and the folk who were spreading it, disseminating poison, secretly and insidiously, amongst the people, turned out to be parsons and schoolmasters and educated men and women. This, then, was the result, as Ellerthwaite had said, of encouraging folk to read books and papers and to improve their intellects: they got to know, or to think they knew, too much, and they turned and bit the hands that had fed them.

"If I'd ha' known what it meant to find three hundred pound for yon lass o' Clough's to get all that higher eddikation and book-learning, I'd never ha' put my hand down for one penny on it!" muttered Charlesworth, as he battled, half-breathless, across the wind-swept moor. "It 'ud ha' been a deal better for her if she'd put clogs on her feet and a shawl over her head and gone to t' mill like all t' rest on 'em!—and a deal better for me, too! If eddikation leads to stirrin' up strife and sedition and revolution and such like, then t' sooner it's done away wi' t' better!"

Buffetted and beaten by the storm, Charlesworth came at last to the edge of the moor, and to the last stage of his journey. It was also the most difficult one: Ellerthwaite's ancestor, the first builder of the old family homestead, had raised its stout walls on the summit of a low hill which overlooked the moor on one side and the deep valley of the Haver on the other. He and his successors had planted the hardiest trees around it: oak, fir, pine, now grown to maturity, sheltered the house itself, but the hillside up which Charlesworth had to climb, in the teeth of the tearing wind, was bare and unprotected, and by the time he had scaled it and come within the shelter of Ellerthwaite's door, set deeply in the massive porch of the original building, he was panting and out-of-breath.

"Ecod, but that's a rough 'un!" he gasped to the maid-servant who admitted him. "A wild, wild night! T' master in, my lass?"

The girl helped him off with his coat and hat, and threw open the door of Ellerthwaite's dining-room. Charlesworth, still out of breath, walked in upon a homely and cheerful scene. There was little sound of the raging wind and beating rain there: the walls of the old house were many feet in thickness, and the doors and windows fitted so closely that scarce a sigh of the storm stole through. And there, before a bright fire of leaping flame, sat Ellerthwaite, smoking his pipe and glancing lazily at the newspaper, and close by him his daughter, Millicent, who, as Charlesworth entered, was holding up a piece of fancy needlework before her, inspecting it with a sidelong critical glance.

Ellerthwaite turned on his old friend with a look of surprise.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Out on a night like this? Why—"

Charlesworth made for an easy chair on the hearth. Now that he had come under shelter and into the warmth of the room, he was conscious of a curiously faint feeling, and for the second time that day, Ellerthwaite's sharp eyes

noticed a hesitancy in his step. As Charlesworth sat down he sprang to his feet and instinctively made for the sideboard and a spirit-case that stood there.

"You've overdone yourself, my lad!" he said, as he took up a decanter of whiskey. "It's a bit stiff, coming over yon moor when there's a wind like—"

"Father!" exclaimed Milly. "Quick! He's fainting!"

Ellerthwaite turned, to see Charlesworth's head falling against the padded back of the deep chair into which he had dropped, and Milly darting to his side. With a hasty exclamation he set down the whiskey and seized on a decanter of brandy. But before he could reach the hearth he heard a deep, fluttering sigh, and his daughter called him again, that time in a whisper.

"Quick!" she said. "Oh!—look!"

Ellerthwaite made a sharp stride across the room. He bent down close—closer. And suddenly he raised his tall figure and laid a hand on Milly's shoulder.

"Go and fetch the women, my lass!" he whispered in tones that shook a little. "Make no fuss—but fetch them!"

Milly glanced fearfully from his face to Charlesworth's; her eyes went back to Ellerthwaite.

"Is it—is he—?" she asked. "It isn't—?"

"He's gone!" said Ellerthwaite, with a nod. "Gone!"

He folded his arms when the girl had left the room, and for a moment stood staring at his dead friend. He had seen death come swiftly more than once in his life, but it had never come quite so close to him as now. And suddenly remembering an old superstition of those regions, and impelled by a mood that he could not account for, he crossed to one of the curtained windows, and throwing open a casement let the liberated soul go out into the night.

END OF THE FIRST PART

Part the Second: THE MANY-HEADED

I

Charlesworth Marrashaw, who in his moments of leisure had travelled a good deal, and seen many fair prospects at home and abroad, always declared that the finest view he had ever set eyes on was that whereon he could gaze whenever he liked from the windows of his private room at the mill. There was the well-kept turf of the quadrangle; there were the statues of himself and his ancestors; there the old cottage in which the family fortunes had known their beginning; there the high wall of the great factory which his father had raised; there the high road along which the Marrashaw merchandise was carried on its way to every corner of the world; there the river whose stained and polluted waters bore testimony to the multiplicity of industry along its banks; then, closing in the view, the long wild frowning slopes of the hill which in every season of the year was as hard and grim and immovable as the character of the Haverthwaite folk who lived beneath the shadow. In Charlesworth's time the aspect of that hill had changed. He could remember it when there was scarce a house on its rugged, occasionally precipitous sides, scarce a pathway by which it could be traversed. In time the lower part of the town had begun to creep up its slopes; men had scraped and trenched, laid out roads, and built houses; now there were tall chimneys rising here and there from factories and workshops erected on what was once nothing but waste of ling and heather: Haverthwaite, on that side of the river, was gradually spreading toward the hill-top. And halfway up the steep, on a broad plateau which, from a natural configuration, had been levelled and widened by pick and spade, stood, very conspicuous from Charlesworth's office window, a small town in miniature, a place of some twenty or thirty regularly built and arranged streets, disposed about a great building which, like the smaller edifices at its foot, was built of the white stone of the district, and so, when the morning sun shone on it from one side and the evening sun from the other, gleamed bright and aggressive in its newness, and formed a noticeable landmark from far-off points of the surrounding country. There was a church, too, in this congerie of straight-lined streets, and an institute; the sharp spire of one and the square tower of the other stood out in bold relief against the never-varying dark grey of the hillside; the whole place, self-contained, was noticeable. And it was all the work of one man, Leeming, the dyer, whose imagination had been attracted by the plateau on the hill, and who had thereon built himself new works, with model dwellings and various accommodations for his people, and, the whole thing

finished, had proudly christened this addition to the glories of Haverthwaite after himself and called it Leemingville.

It was to the brand-new workshops and equally brand-new streets of Leemingville that Bright Marrashaw had betaken himself when he decided on cutting adrift from the old life and striking out a new line of his own. It was not a sudden decision: Leeming, an acute and thoughtful man, who kept a sharp eye on the chemical department at the Technical College, and had observed Bright's absorbed interest in synthetic dyestuffs, had been hinting for some time that the young man's true field of labour was with him, away up the hill: it would do Bright no harm, he said, to have a year or two of practical experience. And so, when Bright, feeling that a breach had opened between his father and himself, determined, being of age, to go his own way, he had had nothing to do but step into Leeming's town office and conclude an agreement arrived at with mutual satisfaction within five minutes of his entrance. Leeming cared nothing about Bright's ideas concerning labour and capital, and was indifferent to whatever Charlesworth Marrashaw might say about his son's doings: what he did care about was getting hold of a brainy young fellow whose mind was concentrated on his job, and who could and would talk by the hour about the various groups of basic dye-stuffs, di- and tri-phenylmethane, monazo, disazo, and trisazo; alizarin colouring matters; the phthalein group; the vexed question of aniline black; the hypotheses of chemical or mechanical theory. For such a man the big dyer had room and chance and opportunity.

"Bear one thing in mind, my lad," said Leeming, as he and Bright shook hands, after the fashion of those parts, when their agreement was concluded. "Whatever you want up yonder in pursuance of your work, ask for. You've only to say the word, and the thing's done—expense no object. Ask me for anything!"

"Good!" responded Bright. "I'll remember. We'll do big things."

Then, without saying anything to Leeming about his private intentions, he went off to the model settlement on the hillside, and found rooms for himself close to the dye-works. He was going to be a workman, and he wanted to keep in touch with the actual scene of his labours. And it was in the cottage of a workman, an elderly man with no family and a managing wife, that Bright found what he wanted—two simply furnished rooms and the promise of plain food, and thither, during the rest of the day, he occupied himself in moving his necessary belongings. For the son of a wealthy man like Charlesworth Marrashaw, they were few—despite Trissie's entreaties and sarcasm, Bright had never spent money on clothes and his shoe-wear was invariably more conspicuous for patches than for newness. His chemical apparatus and instruments, a score or so of his favourite books, his writing material and his piles of scientific memoranda, these were Bright's household goods; it seemed

to him strange that anybody could conceive of him as wanting more. From early boyhood he had always regarded the grandeurs of Marrashaw Royd with a species of disdainful wonder: puzzled that there were certain apartments in the house which were for the most part given up to silence and solitude, show-places to be proudly exhibited when there was company. He had looked on with a half-stupid, half-scornful amazement when some picture arrived for which his father had paid what seemed to him a vast sum of money: often he had felt a curiously rebellious, protesting indignation when, at Charlesworth's table, other rich men of the district being present, he had heard Charlesworth remark, casually, that such and such a wine had stood him in twenty pounds the dozen, or that the cigars which he handed round ran to so many shillings apiece. All that sort of thing, which was evidently meat and drink to Trissie, a born lover of display and luxury, was as poison to Bright: it was not in his nature to understand it. And nothing marked the difference between his father and himself so much or widely as the contrast between Charlesworth's library and his own. The father possessed a fine collection of standard works, arranged in the purple and fine linen of the binders' craft, morocco, and calf, and vellum, but as Bright well knew, no volume was taken down from its shelf from year end to year end—the library at Marrashaw Royd, like the drawing-room and dining-room, was for show: it was a proper thing to have in a rich man's house, and so it was there, as a matter of course. Now Bright's library consisted of about two dozen volumes, most of them cheap editions, and each was dog's eared, pencil-marked, and liberally disfigured with the imprints of thumbs and fingers fresh and unwashed from the handling of chemicals. But whereas Charlesworth would have been hard put to it to tell any foolishly pertinacious enquirer what lay behind the beautifully tooled and daintily labelled backs of his quartos and octavos, Bright knew most of his books by heart. It was not a wide range of reading that appealed to him—for some years he had confined himself to certain volumes of Ruskin and Carlyle and Emerson and Thoreau; it was significant of much that the remainder of his library consisted of books of a more or less Utopian nature, wherein the philosophy of the higher life was preached and a return to simplicity advocated as the one sure way of attaining it. Here indeed was the secret of Bright's nature and his strangeness, and of his contrariness to conventional thought and custom, a secret which Charlesworth would not have understood had he ever been able to recognise it—Bright was a natural idealist, and being so, was heartily sick and impatient of the real world.

There was a feeling of considerable elation in him as he moved about his plain little sitting-room that night, putting straight his few belongings. For the first time in his life he was his own master, and—relatively—under his own roof. So long as he paid his rent and behaved himself, those two rooms were

his. It was no matter to him that the walls were colour-washed instead of being gay with paper at fifty shillings the roll, nor that the furniture was such as a respectable working man can afford, nor that he had just made a modest supper off common earthenware: it was all clean and homely and simple, and he already loved it. He had before him precisely what he desired—days of employment in work which had a curious fascination for him, evenings in which he could do exactly what he liked without the necessity of occasionally putting on garments which he loathed, and sitting more or less silent at his father's table while Charlesworth and his guests talked money. He whistled for sheer enjoyment of the new life as he put his shabby-backed, much thumbed books in order on a shelf above his one easy chair, and that done he filled his pipe and lighted it and sat down to read, for the thousandth time, how Thoreau lived the superior and simple life on next to nothing a year amongst the solitudes of Walden.

Leemingville got the full force of the storm that night: the winds swept along its side of the valley with the fury of a hurricane. Yet loud as the howling of the wind and beating of the rain became, their united clamour failed to silence the throbbing of a motor-car which came along the little street just as Bright was thinking of retiring to his bed, and eventually pulled up before his lodgings. He thought this curious, and going to his window drew aside the blind, and saw two glaring headlights in the street, and a figure, dark and mysterious in the gloom, move rapidly across the glistening pavement towards the house in which he had settled himself. Presently there were voices in the little passage; it seemed to him that one at any rate was agitated. And then his landlady appeared at the door.

"There's a lady wanting to see yer, Mr. Marrashaw," she said hesitatingly. "It's Miss—"

But in spite of her cloaks and wraps Bright had already seen Milly Ellerthwaite behind the woman's shoulder, and he went forward, throwing aside the book which he had kept in his hand when he walked to the window.

"Milly!" he exclaimed, staring at her with wondering eyes in which a sudden suspicion of ill news was beginning to wake. "You! Why—what—"

Milly drew a little nearer to him. She was a kindly-faced, sympathetic-natured sort of girl, not without a certain amount of somewhat homely prettiness, and Bright, who had known her intimately ever since they were children, suddenly recognised something in her that in that moment of doubt and uncertainty made an appeal to him. There were unshed tears in her eyes: he saw them plainly: they were large, soft eyes, too, and he would have been less acute than he was if he had not realised that behind them there was a feeling of pity for himself. Unconsciously he put out his hand.

"What is it?" he whispered. "There's something wrong? Or else—"

Milly, just as unconsciously, pressed the hand that had taken hers.

"Bright!" she said in a low voice. "I'm so sorry, but—it's your father! I had to come—father couldn't, and Victor's out—with Trissie."

"Well?" demanded Bright. "What? He's—ill? Look here!" he went on, suddenly raising his voice. "I'm—I'm all right, Milly. Say it straight out—is it—is he dead?"

Milly nodded silently, looking fixedly at him: again unconsciously she pressed his hand. He stood staring at her for a moment; then, as if he wanted to detach himself from more things than one, he backed away from her, and plunging his hands in his pockets, walked over to the window, paused, turned, and came back again.

"But—how?" he muttered. "He was all right—"

And then he suddenly paused. Something seemed to be confusing his brain: he was trying to remember when he had last seen and spoken to his father. For the moment, he could remember nothing. Was it last night, or the night before, or the night before that?

"When I last saw him," he continued, falteringly. "All right!—except—"

He shook his head, still confused, and Milly realised that he had not yet got over the shock of her news, calm though he seemed.

"He came to our house, Bright," she said quickly. "An hour ago. He seemed to be out of breath—he'd walked through the storm across the moor. And he sat down as soon as he got in, and—and died immediately. We—couldn't do anything."

Bright nodded—once, twice, thrice. He might have been a consultant physician listening to a report.

"Heart!" he muttered. "Heart! I've suspected it, some little time. I warned him not so long ago, from something I saw, that he oughtn't to over-exert himself. But he said—said he reckoned to live twenty years! Walking across that moor, in this storm! Of course—heart! Well—I've heard him say that was—the way he'd like to go. Now—he's gone!"

"You'll come back with me, Bright?" said Milly. "The car's outside."

Bright was staring at the carpet. He seemed, she thought, to have forgotten her presence. And when he looked up his eyes were dreamy and his manner curiously abstracted.

"Yes, yes!" he answered. "Yes, to be sure—I'll go with you. There'll be—things to be done, of course."

He opened the door as he spoke, and from a peg in the narrow passage took down his old overcoat, a garment at which Trissie had exclaimed in disparagement for at least two winters. Carelessly thrusting himself into it, he turned to the open door of his landlady's living-room.

"Mrs. Greenwood," he said calmly. "I shall have to go with Miss

Ellerthwaite in her car, and I shan't be back to-night, so don't wait up. My father's dead."

The woman, who had already heard the news from Milly, gazed at Bright as if wondering at his composure. But something had to be said, and she said it.

"Eh, dear!" she exclaimed. "An' him such a fine, upstandin' gentleman—and such a colour!"

"Aye, well, but it was his heart," observed Bright. "Good-night, Mrs. Greenwood."

He opened the front door and hurried Milly across the wet pavement into Ellerthwaite's big, luxurious car. There were rugs in there, and an inside lamp by which things could be seen: he pulled one of the rugs from the front seat and carefully tucked it round his companion as if her comfort was the only thing to be considered at the moment.

"What a night!" he said, as he settled himself at her side. Then, as the car turned the corner of the street, and came out on the road that descended in long winding curves to the river and the town, he leaned forward, looking through the rain-dimmed window, and pointed to something far across the valley. "See that light?" he exclaimed suddenly. "That!—all by itself, right over there, at the far edge of the moor? That's your house! Queer to think that my father's lying there, just now—dead! He and I—we didn't look at things in quite the same light, but after all, he was my father. And he was a good one. Do you remember, Milly, when he gave me a pony, and you used to ride it—behind me?"

Instead of replying, Milly Ellerthwaite, for the second time that night, put her hand into his, and held it close, and Bright realised that she was crying. At that, he kept her fingers in his, and thus, hand in hand, they journeyed in silence, down the wind-swept hillside and over the black river, and through the glistening streets of the town, and so came, at its further boundary, to the wide moor beyond, where the storm that had beaten Charlesworth Marrashaw to his death was still howling and screeching as if in triumph over its achievement.

II

At about the time of Charlesworth's erection of the commemorative statues in the quadrangle of Marrashaw's Mill he had been fired with another excellent idea, and had lost no time in materialising it. The dead and gone of at least three generations of Marrashaws lay in the churchyard of Haverthwaite: there were some ten or twelve Marrashaw graves immediately facing the door of the south porch; each grave was covered by a plain slab of stone, laid flush with the ground, after the common fashion of those parts, where until the middle of the nineteenth century any erect monument bearing the usual Christian symbol was regarded as an emblem of Popery. To Charlesworth's thinking, this unobtrusive bestowal of his ancestors' bones was not in keeping with the Marrashaw grandeur and glory, and after certain negotiations with the authorities, he obtained permission to erect a mausoleum on the spot where those remains lay. After his usual fashion he spared no expense in this undertaking. He had once spent a week-end in Genoa, on his way to the south of Italy, and had passed the Sunday afternoon in admiring the Campo Santo wherein are so many wonderful and beautiful moments of the departed Genoese. Nothing would satisfy Charlesworth but a mortuary chapel of equal artistic merit to what he had seen there, and he despatched a local architect and a local monumental mason to Genoa to see for themselves what the Italians did, and what they must emulate. Arrived in Genoa, these worthies heard of the still more famous Campo Santo at Pisa, and the architect telegraphed to Charlesworth about it: Charlesworth immediately wired peremptory orders to visit not only Pisa, but any other place where ideas could be picked up. Eventually, the Marrashaw mausoleum in Haverthwaite churchyard took the form of a reduced replica of the famous *Capella Maggiore* at Pisa: it cost Charlesworth an immense amount of money, and became a show-place of the town. Herein he set up tablets to the memory of his forefathers; here he buried his wife, and by her side he himself was now laid to rest.

All Haverthwaite turned out at Charlesworth's funeral. From the gates of Marrashaw Royd to the centre of the town the roads and streets were lined with throngs of people: the procession which preceded and followed the hearse occupied some time in passing any given point. The Mayor, aldermen, and councillors walked in state; all the public bodies of the town and neighbourhood were represented: five hundred specially chosen employees marched as a vanguard; the number of private carriages which wound up the cortege ran into round dozens. It was eminently characteristic of the dead man that though, nominally, he had been a somewhat aggressive Non-conformist all his life, he had left express instructions that his funeral rites were to be

conducted by the Vicar of Haverthwaite, with all the pomp and ceremony that could be introduced into the Anglican ritual: there were those present, cynical, satirical folk, who remarked drily that Charlesworth was always fond of a bit of display, and was not going to be cheated out of a chance of it at the end. As for Bright, compelled to play the part of chief mourner, he loathed and despised the whole thing: could he have had his own way he would have laid his father to rest in quiet and unostentatious fashion. But Charlesworth had taken care to leave full instructions about his obsequies, and Bright was forced to pay due regard to them. He was miserable and ill-at-ease, and Trissie, as he and she, chief mourners, rode side by side in the first coach wondered wherever her brother had got his funeral clothes, which she contrasted, much to their wearer's disparagement, with the elegance and propriety of Victor Ellerthwaite's attire. Just before they reached the churchyard she uttered a cry, almost a scream, of dismay.

"Bright!" she exclaimed. "You—why, good heavens, you've come out with your old hat!"

Bright, who was staring gloomily ahead at the mass of flowers piled above the hearse, looked down at the disreputable slouch hat which, in his abstraction, he had picked up in the hall at Marrashaw Royd as he led his sister out. He had worn that hat for at least three years—and it was not even a black one.

"I—I forgot the hat!" he said humbly. "I—I'm so little used to finery."

"And your gloves!" said Trissie disdainfully. "The fingers are half off! And your tie's getting round under your ear. Whatever will people say?"

Bright dragged his black cravat round to the front: all his life he had never been able to manipulate ties and collars: when he was at work he dispensed with such things.

"Does it matter?" he said. "We aren't here to be looked at!"

"Matter?" exclaimed Trissie. "Of course it matters! Going to your father's funeral in an old slouch hat. It's—it's low!"

"We'll manage," said Bright.

He emerged bare-headed from the coach at the churchyard gate, leaving the offending headgear behind him, and Trissie breathed freely again. But all the time that the committal prayers were being read, and in spite of her grief, which was as great as a young woman of her essentially shallow nature could feel, she was conscious that Bright looked very insignificant and even mean in his mourning clothes, and not at all the imposing figure that should have been found in the new head of the Marrashaws.

Of all the thousands who followed Charlesworth Marrashaw to his vault in the luxuriously appointed mausoleum, there were none, outside the family, who mourned him more sincerely than Lockwood Clough. Lockwood and his

old employer had been intimately associated from boyhood. They had played together; gone birds' nesting together amongst the woods and crags outside the town; they had always been in touch with each other as young men; as man and master they had kept up a long and friendly intercourse. Lockwood had always felt proud of Charlesworth's doings: it afforded him a keen pleasure to see Charlesworth's greatness, and to watch him wax mighty in influence and wealth: he knew Charlesworth's weak points, small failings, and little foibles, but he also knew him for a big man in his way, and according to his lights, for a good and just, if a hard and exacting master. The news of Charlesworth's sudden death had come upon him as a great shock: it reminded him that he, too, was growing old. And as he stood amongst his fellow-workmen at the funeral, and looked across the gloomy churchyard in the direction of Marrashaw's Mill, from the roof of which a flag hung at half-mast, he wondered how things would go on now that the guiding spirit—a domineering, resolute, implacable spirit—had departed. He glanced doubtfully almost pityingly, at Bright, and shook his head: Lockwood was even more conservative in his ideas and sympathies than his dead employer, and in secret he considered young Bright to be poor stuff.

For more years than he could remember Lockwood had made a practice of resorting every evening between tea and supper-time to an old-fashioned tavern called the Flying Shuttle, where he drank a glass or two of ale, smoked a pipe or two of tobacco, and exchanged ideas on current politics with certain other frequenters of the bar-parlour, all, like himself, workers at Marrashaw's Mill. Still in his funeral clothes he wandered round to the familiar resort on the evening of Charlesworth's obsequies; half a dozen of his cronies were there already when he entered the low-ceilinged room; they too were still in the garb of mourning. And over their pots of ale and their long clay pipes they were talking of the events of the day.

"Ha' you heard t' particulars o' t' will, Lockwood?" asked the man by whose side he sat down in his accustomed corner. "I expect ye have?"

Lockwood picked up a clean churchwarden from the table in front of him and leisurely began to fill it.

"No," he replied with a quiet smile, "and nobody else, I should think: it's a bit early for that."

"Then you're wrong," retorted his neighbour. He pointed the stem of his own pipe towards a man who sat opposite. "Ben theer has heard 'em. T' will were read as soon as t' family got back to t' house, and as there were no secret about it, why, t' news were spread."

"Well—and what is t' news?" asked Lockwood, when he had lighted his pipe. He was thinking, somewhat cynical, of the eagerness always shown by people when a dead man's leavings were to be distributed. "It'll none affect

any o' us particularly, I should say, whatever it is."

Some of the other men in the room laughed slyly, glancing at the same time at the man who was in possession of information. He, a shrewd-faced old fellow, who wore an ancient top-hat perched on the back of his head, nodded at Lockwood with a look of superior wisdom.

"It affects more nor one 'at's present, if not all, mi lad," he said, oracularly. "And thee i' partiklar, so now then!"

"How me?" asked Lockwood, with a laugh. "I reckon ye know nowt about it!"

"Don't I!" retorted Ben. "Isn't my nevvy one o' t' clerks at Slater and Pilthwaite's, and weren't Slater and Pilthwaite Charlesworth's lawyers?—come, now! An my nevvy wor i' what they call attendance on Pilthwaite this afternoon when he read t' will to t' assembled company—so of course I know t' contents, as you may term 'em—i' a general way."

"Well?" said Lockwood. "What's he left thee, Ben?"

"Why, now then," answered Ben. "A hundred pound!—me an' every man 'at's been at Marrashaws five-and-twenty year gets that theer amount—a hundred pound each. Them 'at's been there fifteen years gets fifty."

Lockwood looked round the smoke-filled room. There was scarcely a man in it whom he had not known all his life.

"Why, then," he remarked quietly. "I should think all t' lot on us here present'll get a bit—we're all old stagers."

The other men laughed, and again glanced slyly at the giver of tidings.

"Tell him, Ben," suggested one. "Let it out!"

"He's done better by thee, Lockwood," said Ben, suddenly. "He's left thee a thousand! What's ta say to that?"

Lockwood started and his worn face flushed a little. The others watched him in silence.

"We'd known each other all our lives," he said at last. "We were lads together. I daresay he thought o' that. However—"

"An' ye were allus a bit of a favourite, Lockwood," observed one of his neighbours. "We all knew that. But favourite or no, it 'ud seem 'at he's remembered most on us—as far as I can make out, there's summat for every man and woman, lad and lass, 'at works i' t' mill, accordin' to t' length o' labour."

"Aye, that's so," assented Ben. "Everybody gets summat—down to five pound apiece for lad and lass. My nevvy, he says 'at him and Pilthwaite, as they rode home after t' will had been read, reckoned up 'at t' legacies, as they call 'em, to us workfolk'll run into thousands on thousands o' pounds! But that's nowt, I reckon, to what he's left—nowt!"

"And—how's it been left?" asked Lockwood. He was wondering what the

future of the great mill, at whose very gates he and his cronies were just then sitting, was going to be. “You’d hear that, Ben?”

“Aye, I heard that,” replied Ben. “I heard all t’ lot, and I’ve as good a memory as ever I had, and a bit better. There’s some money left to t’ town charities and institutions—a good deal. And as for t’ rest, t’ dowter has two hundred thousand pound, in a lump. That settles her—two hundred thousand pound she gets; no more and no less. That’s her portion, as they term it. And all t’ rest, t’ mill, t’ business as a going concern, t’ house at Marrashaw Royd yonder, all ’at t’ owd chap owned, everything, brass, property, all goes to young Bright. That’s t’ lot. An’ my nevvy, he says, ’at Pilthwaite said to him, on t’ way home fro’ t’ buryin’, at t’ owd feller were a deal richer nor what anybody imagined, and ’at young Bright is now t’ wealthiest man i’ Haverthwaite.”

A deep and significant silence fell on the room. There was not a man there who had not either heard Bright’s speech at the Independent Labour Hall or read the Guardian’s report on it. And now each was thinking, not of the wealth into which Bright had come by his father’s sudden death, but of what Bright himself had said about wealth. Presently a man spoke who had hitherto kept silence.

“There’s nowt alters a man like comin’ into brass!” he murmured. “A man ’at’s nowt at one time is varry different when he comes to ha’ summat at another. I’ll lay owt ’at all that fine talk o’ Bright’s ’at t’ Labour Hall a two or three nights ago’ll be relegated to Limbo, as t’ sayin’ is. It’ll be convenient to him to forget.”

Nobody made any remark on this, until one of the younger men opened his lips, with a somewhat uneasy glance at his companions, as if he were not quite certain of the reception likely to be given to his remarks.

“Well, I don’t know,” he said, diffidently. “Seemed to me ’at he were in earnest. I couldn’t like to think ’at t’ young feller talked all that just for t’ sake o’ talking. Besides—he were Charlesworth’ heir, then.”

“Aye—and Charlesworth were alive!” remarked another man, meaningly. “An’ might ha’ lived another twenty year, for all Bright knew. But now—now Charlesworth’s dead, and Bright’s stepped into his shoes, and, whatever he may think, there’s no denying t’ fact ’at he’s a capitalist and an employer—and all t’ rest on it. An’ he’s already denied t’ right of any man to be—what he is!”

“What’ll happen?” asked somebody.

A very old man who sat in the darkest corner, and until then had made no contribution to the debate beyond an occasional grunt, leaned forward and smote his hand on the table before him.

“What’ll happen, say you?” he exclaimed. “I’ll tell you what’ll happen! Nowt’ll happen! All’ll go on i’ t’ same old way. T’ owd maister’s dead—

theer's an end on him. T' new maister's stepped in—he's beginnin'. An' he'll be just t' same as his father wor afore him, and as his father wor afore him, and so on to t' very start o' t' chapter! Nowt'll happen. Is young Bright a Marrashaw? Is them mills his? Does three thousand on us work for him? Answer me that theer! If onny on yer's thinkin' 'at there's goin' to be a revolution, or 'at t' millennium's comin', or owt o' that sort, then ye've less reason i' yer craniums than what I hev! Nowt'll happen! We shall go on workin', and grum'lin', and addlin' wor brass, and t' new maister'll go on makin' his brass, and he'll dee a richer man nor what his pa wor! Never ye mind what he said at t' Labour Hall—he wor nowt and nobody then, i' a way o' speakin'. But now!—now he's t' richest man i' Haverthwaite, and howiver he wanted, it 'ud be as hard for him to carry out them principles 'at he wor so ready to preych as it is for a camel to pass through t' eye of a needle as it says i' t' good owd Book—Mark my words! Nowt'll happen!"

There was a further period of silence after this declaration: broken at last by one of the younger men, who observed, very quietly:

"I reckon it'll be summat like that—things'll go on as they allus have."

Lockwood went home rather earlier than usual that evening. He and his daughter lived in one of a better-class row of small houses which Charlesworth had built near the river for the benefit of his foremen and overlookers, and he reflected as he entered his door that what with his savings and his legacy he was now comfortably provided for as long as he lived: Bright, he knew, would never dispossess him of his house. And then he suddenly remembered that according to her own story, Hermione was engaged to be married to Bright.

Hermione, who was deft and quick about household arrangements, in spite of her book learning and student habits, sat reading by the fire in the living-room; at her elbow the supper-table was laid, and from the hearth came an appetizing smell of cooking meat. At her father's entry, she got up, and began to busy herself about the oven: she was always careful of Lockwood's comfort and never allowed him to wait for his meals. He dropped into his elbow chair and watched her curiously as she moved about.

"I've been hearing about his will, my lass," he said suddenly, and without mention of Charlesworth's name. "He's done very handsome by me, Hermie—he's left me a thousand pound!"

He watched her narrowly, wondering what she would think of this announcement. But Hermione's face remained unmoved.

"I'm glad for your sake, father," she said. "But there's no great credit due to him for that. You've put a good many thousand pounds into the Marrashaw money-bag in your time—you're only getting a bit of your own back."

"Why, why, my lass!" answered Lockwood, deprecatingly. "There's more ways than one o' looking at that. But we mun give him credit—credit! He's

done well by all t' workpeople—they're all remembered. And—Hermie!"

"Well?" she asked, going on with her operations at the cooking-range. "What?"

"You'll not ha' heard," said Lockwood. "Young Bright—he comes in for nearly all! All—except a big lump to his sister, and these legacies. All! T' mill, business, property, and money. They say—Pilthwaite, t' lawyer, says, and he'll know—'at by his father's death, Bright's become t' richest man i' Haverthwaite!"

"Well?" said Hermione.

Lockwood lowered his voice, as if he were entering on secret and shy things.

"Is it really right what you told me and his father t' other day?" he asked. "Is there an understanding between him and you?"

"We're engaged, father," answered Hermione. "I said so. So—it is so."

Lockwood shook his head and began to twiddle his thumbs. He was frankly perplexed and troubled.

"They say—and I've no doubt it is so—he's a millionaire," he muttered. "Just fancy that, my lass—a millionaire!"

Hermione conveyed a smoking dish from the oven and set it before her father's place at the supper table.

"Don't bother yourself about that," she remarked carelessly. "I suppose Charlesworth's money had to go somewhere. Come along—this stew's just right."

She flung aside her cooking apron as she spoke, and Lockwood, realising that his daughter's mental methods were beyond him, took down a glass jug from the delf-case and went into his larder to draw the supper beer.

III

While Charles Marrashaw was battling with the wind and rain on his way to Ellerthwaite's house and his own death, Simon Grew was going townwards, chuckling to himself with satisfaction. He would have sold his information, cheerfully, for far less than the mill-owner had so readily given him for it: he had been prepared, indeed, when he went to Marrashaw Royd, to do a little hard bargaining, and it had come as a surprise to him when Charlesworth gave him what he asked without demur. The cheque felt warm and comforting to his pocket—and next morning, as soon as he had breakfasted, he went along to the station and took train to Leeds, to turn it into cash.

Grew was at the bank within a few minutes of its doors being opened. No one but himself was on the public side of the counter when he entered. He made for a cashier, who at that moment talking to an important-looking personage, who, from the fact that he wore his hat and carried an umbrella and a newspaper, seemed to have just come in by a private door in the rear: Grew set him down as the manager. He laid his cheque on the counter and waited: the cashier, presently turning from the other man, picked it up, almost abstractedly and looked carelessly at the signature. And at that he started, glanced at Grew, and without a word handed the cheque to the important-looking person, who, in his turn, showed signs of astonishment.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed. "Just as we were talking of him!" He came to the counter, looking keenly at Grew, and leaned towards him confidentially. "Did Mr. Marrashaw give you this?" he asked. "Give it you himself?"

"Aye, to be sure!" answered Grew. "Himself! Paid it to me last night. What's wrong with it?"

"There's nothing wrong with it," said his interlocutor. "But—are you from Haverthwaite?"

Grew began to wonder, and to grow somewhat suspicious. The cheque was a bearer one; accordingly there had been no need for him to endorse it. What was all this talk about? A certain surliness manifested itself in him.

"Aye. I'm from Haverthwaite," he answered. "Mr. Marrashaw paid me that last night—money that was due to me—"

The manager leaned closer across the counter, at the same time pushing his newspaper beneath Grew's nose.

"Don't you know that Mr. Marrashaw's dead?" he asked. "Look there!"

He pointed to a space devoted to late news, and Grew's eyes followed his finger to it and read two or three lines of big print.

Mr. Charlesworth Marrashaw, a leading manufacturer and ex-

mayor of Haverthwaite, died very suddenly last night at the house of his friend Mr. James Ellerthwaite on Haverthwaite Moor.

Grew looked up, shaking his head.

"I hadn't heard a word of it!" he said. "The news hadn't come down our way when I set off this morning. Why, I left him at his house about nine o'clock last night, as right as could be!"

"Aye, well, there you are!" observed the manager. "He's dead—and I suppose you're aware that we can't pay out a dead man's cheque?"

Grew started for the second time, and his eyes clouded.

"Is that so?" he exclaimed. "Is that the law?"

"That's the law, my friend," said the manager, pushing back the cheque. "Mr. Marrashaw's dead, so his cheque's no good: our authority to pay on his behalf terminates with his life. But," he added, glancing Grew over, and taking him for some small tradesman, "it'll be all right, presently. You see the executors, or whoever's acting—they'll put matters straight for you."

Grew was not at all sure of that: it seemed to him that all prospect of realising his windfall had gone. He picked up the cheque, put it in his pocket-book, and made as if to go. But even then he lingered.

"No way at all of doing it, then?" he asked.

"None!" said the manager. "He's dead. Do what I suggest—go and see the executors. He's a son, hasn't he?"

"Oh—aye, there's a son," assented Grew.

"Well—go and see him," counselled the manager. "If the money's owing to you, he'll see that you get it."

Grew went away, and home to Haverthwaite, and for the next few days spent a good deal of time in considering his position. Like everybody else in the town, he heard of the terms of Charlesworth Marrashaw's will and that Bright had come in for almost the whole of his real and personal estate: it was to Bright, therefore, that he would have to go if he meant to handle his money. He felt doubtful about Bright. It was not because he had attacked Bright at the Independent Labour Hall, but because he believed Bright to be a sharper-witted man than Charlesworth, who, with all his business acumen, was essentially a simple-minded person. Bright, thought Grew, would want to know why Charlesworth had paid Grew a considerable sum of money: perhaps he would refuse to recognise the transaction: he might even go so far, the cheque being made payable to bearer, as to question the ownership, and insist on knowing how it came into Grew's possession. Altogether Grew felt that he had better have a straight tale for Bright Marrashaw if he hoped to get the money out of him. He let a few more days go by: then, when Charlesworth had been lying amidst the cold grandeurs of the Marrashaw mausoleum for a good

week, he went to the counting-house at the mill and asked if Mr. Bright could spare him a few minutes.

Bright, sorely against his will, was already settled at the head of the many affairs which had been thrust into his hands. He had been obliged to accept the inevitable; forced to bow to flint-hearted circumstance. The arrangement with Leeming had come to a sudden end: instead of being Leeming's experimental chemist he must now sit in his dead father's seat and superintend the affairs of a gigantic business. He realised in his first moments of reflection, that his own tastes and likings must needs go for nothing. There was an enormous body of trade to consider. There were three thousand work-people to think of. Charlesworth, the Marrashaw of the time being, had been, as it were, the motive-power of a tremendous engine; he had been removed: something equivalent had to be slipped, at once, into his place. That something was Bright. And now he was in, and the engine was running again—but he was not sure that he was equivalent to keeping it running as it had run under Charlesworth's vast driving force. Still—it was running, and for the time being he must keep it running in the old way. He was not without assistance and counsel. Ellerthwaite had talked to him like a father: even Victor, Vandiacal though he was, had given him shrewd advice, and proffered any help that he could render. The heads of departments had rallied round him to a man: the underlings had followed their example: when Bright, as new master, made his first round of the various rooms, sheds, and workshops he saw enough to assure himself that he was welcome to his people. And best of all, so far as he was concerned, Hermie Clough, getting free of the engagement into which she had entered after her unceremonious forsaking of Charlesworth's service, had come back to her old place: she knew the whole in-and-out of the secretarial part of the business and took a great weight of responsibility off Bright's shoulders.

Bright was busy with Hermie and the letters when an office-boy came to tell him of Grew's arrival and request. He turned from the lad to his secretary with a look of surprise and wonder.

"Grew?" he exclaimed. "What can he want?"

Hermie had no immediate idea: it seemed strange to her that Grew, being what he was, should come seeking Bright. But a possible suggestion occurred to her.

"He may want to see you about the business of that union that he runs," she said. "I can't think of anything else."

"Take him into the little waiting-room," ordered Bright, turning to the boy. "Tell him I'll be there in a few minutes." Then he finished the work in which he had been interrupted, and as he rose to leave the room, glanced meaningly at Hermie. "I don't want that chap coming round here," he said. "I don't

believe in him!”

“Find out what he wants,” counselled Hermie. “It’s probably nothing much.”

Bright went along a corridor and opened the door of a small room—to find Grew, polite and even obsequious.

“Well?” he asked brusquely, in answer to his visitor’s greetings. “What do you want?”

He did not ask Grew to sit down, nor did he sit down himself: instead, thrusting his hands in his pockets, he leaned against the mantelpiece, watching Grew with eyes in which there was no friendliness.

“A matter o’ private business, Mr. Marrashaw,” answered Grew, as he laid his hat on the writing table between them and pulled out a pocket-book. “I’ve left it until I thought you’d have time to attend to it, sir. I’m quite sure, Mr. Marrashaw, that you’ve no idea at all of the matter, but the fact is, the night of his death, just an hour or so before it took place, your father paid me a cheque for services rendered. I presented it at his Leeds bank next day, sir, as he told me to do and, of course, as he was dead, they wouldn’t pay it out. The manager advised me to see you about it, Mr. Marrashaw—he said you’d make it right.”

Grew took out the cheque as he spoke and laid it on the table before Bright. And Bright picked it up and started at the sight of the amount. Then he glanced at the signature. There was no disputing that. He laid the cheque down again.

“You say my father paid you—that!—for services rendered?” he asked. “Why—what services?”

Grew smiled. There was depth in the smile—and also a species of confidential, secret meaning. He looked fixedly at Bright.

“Well, you know, Mr. Marrashaw,” he answered, “there’s wheels within wheels! The fact is, sir, your father had for some time employed me to get a good deal of information for him—I’d a great deal of out-of-pocket expense, and, of course—there was time expended, and money laid out, and so on. When it came to settling, he fixed the amount himself, sir—I handed in my statement, and he added—generous enough, he was—a certain sum to it. The whole came to—that cheque.”

“But—what services?” asked Bright again. “What did you do for him? What information did you get for him? What about?”

Grew answered readily, with another confidential look.

“Trade and labour matters,” he said. “Information that he wanted—privately.”

Bright stood for awhile in silence, staring at the cheque. After all, he knew nothing about his father’s affairs. He had always been so absorbed in his own that he had heard little of Charlesworth’s during the last two or three years.

“I suppose you mean facts—statistics—that sort of thing?” he suggested at

last.

"That—and a good deal more," assented Grew. "I collected a lot of information for him—here, and in other places."

"And they wouldn't pay this?" said Bright. He took the cheque up again and looked at it, a little wonderingly. Until then, he had had no idea that his father had a banking account at Leeds: so far he had not found time to go through half Charlesworth's papers and effects.

"He was dead, you see, Mr. Marrashaw, before I could present it," said Grew. "They told me 'at a banker's authority to honour cheques terminates with a customer's life. So they said I was to apply to you."

Bright suddenly produced a fountain pen from his waistcoat pocket, and sitting down at the writing table, drew out a cheque-book.

"I'll give you a cheque of my own in exchange for it," he said. "Sorry you've had to wait."

"No matter at all, sir," answered Grew. "Much obliged to you." He took the cheque which Bright presently handed to him, uttered another expression of thanks, and turned to the door. With his hand on the latch, he looked back at Bright, who was picking up the other cheque.

"I hope you think none the worse o' me, Mr. Marrashaw, for that bit of a passage-at-arms 'at we had at the Labour Hall t' other night," he said, with a sly smile. "As I said to your father, that's all according to Parliamentary procedure—when you're in the position I'm in—paid secretary to a trades-union—you've got to say things."

"Oh, you talked to him about it, did you?" asked Bright.

"Aye, an' laughed about it!" answered Grew. "No harm meant, sir—all talk. Don't think naught personal, Mr. Marrashaw."

Bright put his hands in his pockets and looked hard at Grew.

"Oh?" he said. "Then—I suppose you could say a good deal on the opposite side—if need be?"

"I'm a paid servant," answered Grew. "So's a Cabinet minister. The only difference is that he gets his five thousand a year for serving his party, and I get three hundred for slaving for my bit of a union. A game, Mr. Marrashaw—all a game!"

"Then you've no very fixed principles?" asked Bright.

"Principles!" sneered Grew. He came back a step or two, and, the door being open, lowered his voice. "Principles? Do you think principles ever come in where present-day politics are concerned? What principles do you suppose all these folk 'at talk so much about the rights o' labour possess? They've one—just one—as I've said to your father, many a time. Self! They want to get as much as they can in pay for as little as they can give in work! And I'll tell you something else 'at I said to your father, that very night, about you. He wanted

to know if I thought 'at you were genuinely taken wi' t' Labour cause? I said, 'God help him if it be so!' I says. 'Why?' says he. 'What makes you say that?' 'Because,' says I, 'they'll break his heart for him if he is—I know 'em!' "

"You're candid, anyhow," said Bright.

"You're a gentleman," answered Grew, with a look that implied much. "I can say to you what I wouldn't dare say to a man that wasn't. Your sort keeps counsel."

He turned away without another word, and Bright, his father's cheque in his hand, went back to the private office, musing. Certainly he was not going to say a word to anybody about Grew's principles or lack of them—but the cheque was another matter, and as soon as he had closed the door on Hermione and himself he laid it before her.

"Here's a queer business—though it may be—probably is—all right," he said. "Listen to this"—and he went on to tell her the reason of Grew's errand. "Did you ever hear of my father employing Grew?" he concluded. "I never did!—but then, I certainly never knew anything at all about lots of his affairs."

"Your father had plenty of affairs that nobody knew anything about—except himself," answered Hermie. "It's quite likely that he did employ Grew. Grew goes up and down the country a good deal, in the factory districts."

"Well, he made no secret of the fact that he gave my father information," remarked Bright. "He was candid enough about that."

"Did he say what the information was?" asked Hermie.

"No—beyond a general reference to facts, statistics, and so on," answered Bright. "No particulars."

Hermie handed a pile of type-written letters over to him.

"Will you read and sign those?" she said. And then, as Bright settled down in his father's old chair again, she turned to her own work and went on with it in silence.

IV

During those early days of his sovereignty Bright had many things to attend to, not only at the mill but at Marrashaw Royd and at Slater and Pilthwaite's offices, and on this particular afternoon he went away at four o'clock, leaving Hermie still busied with her secretarial work. Hermie's mind, however, was not wholly fixed on her typewriter or her pen: ever since the event of the morning she had been thinking deeply. And soon after Bright's departure she took up the telephone and called for Allot Howroyd, making the same excuse for summoning him to the private office which she had made on a previous occasion. Howroyd came at once, carrying his big book: Hermie, with a significant glance, motioned him to lay it down, and to seat himself at her table.

"Allot!" she said, bending across and speaking in a confidential tone. "I've found out something that you ought to know—that we all ought to know. You remember what I said to you not long ago in this room—that there was a traitor amongst us? Well, there is!—and I know who."

Howroyd's deep-set eyes grew dark and his face stern.

"Who, then?" he asked.

Hermie bent closer.

"Grew!" she said. "Simon Grew! As sure as that we're here. Listen!" She went on to tell him the story of the cheque. "Now, piece it all together," she continued. "What other decision can one come to? My father tells Charlesworth that he can find a man who knows things and can be bribed to tell them. Very soon after that, Grew has an interview with Charlesworth—the very night of Charlesworth's death. Charlesworth gives Grew a cheque for a considerable amount. And just after they part, Charlesworth sets off to his friend Ellerthwaite's house. What to do? To tell Ellerthwaite what he's learnt from Grew! The whole thing is as plain as—as that ruler!"

"Seems so," agreed Howroyd. "But let's see—didn't Charlesworth die as soon as he got into Ellerthwaite's dining-room? He did—then, he never told Ellerthwaite anything. So that there isn'a a soul but Grew who knows what Grew did tell Charlesworth! And as far as we're concerned, we can't prove that Grew gave us away. He's a sharp fellow—he knows he's safe. He'd stick to it—if we taxed him—that all he did was to give Charlesworth some statistical information, just as he's said to Bright."

"Would Charlesworth Marrashaw have paid all that money for mere statistics?" exclaimed Hermie, scornfully. "Not he! As sure as fate, Grew told him all about—us! All about our schemes, our ideas—plans, and so on. Charlesworth was a keen man—he'd see the importance of knowing all about

the enemy's plan of campaign. Probably he engaged Grew to keep him informed. I've thought it all out, Allot. Why did Charlesworth give Grew a bearer cheque on an account that he kept in another town? Secrecy again! Grew's a traitor!"

Howroyd's worn face grew serious, and he drummed his long thin fingers on the table before him.

"What's to be done about him?" he said. "To have a man amongst us who'll reveal our plans for money is—fatal. But what can we do?"

Hermie pulled open a drawer and producing a box of cigarettes, picked one out, and pushed the box across to Howroyd.

"If we lived in any other country than this," she remarked presently, with a sudden gleam in her eyes which showed her earnestness, "we'd soon make short work of him! He ought to be—removed. I'd put a bullet through him myself without a second's hesitation or compunction. But—we cant!"

"That's certain," said Howroyd. "We can't! And as I said before, we can't prove anything against him, even if we accuse him next time there's a meeting. Yet—we can't have him hearing all our plans—"

"In future," broke in Hermie, "he must hear nothing. Whenever he's present, there must be nothing beyond generalities. You and I must warn the others—privately. And we must keep the actual work of the society in the hands of those who can be thoroughly trusted."

"There isn't one of us that isn't to be trusted, except Grew," remarked Howroyd, thoughtfully. "I'm sure of that."

"Very well, then—we cut Grew out," said Hermie. "But—we don't let him know it. If we arouse suspicion in him, then he'll do more treachery. We must talk to the others—then we shall all be prepared."

"Very well," agreed Howroyd. He puffed thoughtfully at his cigarette for awhile, and then laughed, a little bitterly. "It's unfortunate," he said, "but it's true that in every movement I've ever been in, there's always been a rat!"

"Well!" retorted Hermie. "Haven't I always said to you that it's a vast mistake to have too many members of a directorate? Three are plenty: perhaps two. And my advice now is—let's keep the really important things to ourselves—to you and me. In every cabinet there must be an inner circle. And if Grew's turned traitor, how do we know somebody else won't?"

"Can't think of any other who would!" said Howroyd. "Think them over! Now Grew, in my opinion, always was doubtful. He's a paid agitator—and, in my opinion, a man of no principles."

"Well, we know him, now, any way," remarked Hermie. "Forewarned is forearmed. And—it's lucky for us that Charlesworth Marrashaw died before he could spread the news. There'd have been short shrift for the lot of us if it had once got out in the town that we were secretly working for—what we are

working for!"

"That's so!" agreed Howroyd. He looked round, glancing at the desk and chair from which Charlesworth Marrashaw had controlled the big army of workers in the three great wings of the mill. "Well," he said, turning enquiringly to Hermie, "and—Bright? I know all about you and him. You're in his confidence. What's he going to do? What line is he going to take? After what he said that night at the Labour Hall, he can't, in honesty, carry on this business in the old Marrashaw fashion. Has he said anything?"

"Not yet," replied Hermie. "He's had a lot to do—there's a lot more to do. But—he will. Leave him to me, Allot. The old Marrashaw fashion!" she exclaimed, with a scornful laugh. "No—I'll take care that that's buried—deeper than Charlesworth is! But—give me time. I can do anything with Bright—if I go my own way about it."

Howroyd glanced at the clock, and rising, flung away his cigarette and took up his big book. He lingered for a moment, looking thoughtfully at Hermie.

"You've a rare chance," he said with sudden abruptness. "If, as you say, you can do anything with him, you've got it in your power, not only to right the wrongs of a hundred years, but to make him take a forward step that'll shake industrial matters in this country to their very foundations. Restitution!" he exclaimed, with equally sudden fervour, and a flash of his sombre eyes. "That's what's wanted! If we'd one example, such as we might have here—"

Hermie turned to her hat and jacket, giving Howroyd a meaning look.

"Leave it to me!" she said. "Leave it to me! You and I know each other, Allot, so you know that with me, through everything, the cause comes first. Wait!"

Howroyd bent his head, and went off in silence, and as he paced the long corridors leading to his own department he thought deeply, letting his mind go back into the chequered history of the past. He came of a stock of revolutionaries—grim, stern-natured resolute men who for many a generation had been rebels in religion and in politics and in social affairs, conventicle men, Chartiste, Luddites, anti-this, that and the other, Ismaels, resisters, strivers against authority; their record of fines and imprisonments and distraints was a long and continuous one: ever since a Howroyd of Haverthwaite had been flung into York Castle for conscience' sake in the days of Charles the Second, the family had been fighters for their own peculiar ideas of liberty and freedom, and Allot Howroyd himself was a fanatic. He was well read in the history of the movement to which he had devoted his energies, and now, as he walked the gloomy mill with bent head and tightened lips, he was wondering if there had ever been an instance in which such an opportunity lay in a woman's power as now lay in Hermie Clough's. And as he turned into the

door of his own department, he laughed, a little cynically.

"The whole thing is—has she the power over him that she thinks she has?" he muttered to himself. "She's as clever and shrewd and scheming as women well can be!—but she's up against the old, deeply engrafted need of the Marrashaws! Will she stamp it out?—or will it re-assert itself?"

There was no need to cudgel his brains for an answer to this question—he knew that only time could give one.

V

Spring came early and warm and prodigal of leaf and verdure that year, and by the beginning of April Bright and Hermie resumed their Sunday wanderings into the wild moors which stretched far and wide to the northward of Haverthwaite. There were nooks and corners in those moors wherein men rarely set foot; deep ravines lying far below the level of the purple heather; great masses of rock towering high above it; whether in fern-clad valley or on wind-swept bluff there was silence and the sense of peace which only comes amidst vast solitudes. Bright had cherished a passion for the moors ever since he could remember anything: one of the chief bonds between Hermie Clough and himself arose from finding that she, too, shared in this love of wandering; during the previous summer they had spent their Sundays on the moors, as far away from their accustomed world as if they had been in an African desert. Their haunts were easy of access: train or tram took them a few miles out of the town; a mile or two's walking brought them into country which had suffered little change since the days in which palæolithic man inhabited its caves and chipped his flints by the side of its rockbound streams. For these excursions little equipment was necessary: some simple food in a satchel, a couple of favourite books to be read leisurely when tongues grew tired, plenty of tobacco for Bright, and of cigarettes for Hermie, who smoked far more than was good for her, garments indifferent to rain—these were the things to be considered. And though they went together and returned together, these two, essentially individual in their tastes and likings, often spent hours in close proximity, yet in complete mental severance—Bright had a trick of throwing himself on his back in the heather or on some sun-warmed slab of rock, to stare in seeming idleness at the passing clouds or the shadows on the neighbouring hills: Hermie, another of sitting by running water, her eyes fixed on its swish and eddies: at these times neither interfered with the other, nor broke in on each other's meditations: in their opinion there was a companionship in silence which was at least as real as that expressed in speech.

On the first of these excursions after his father's death, Bright sat one Sunday afternoon at the foot of a grey crag which jutted out of a sharp hill-side, his hands clasped round his knees, his knees supporting his chin; his eyes fixed in sheer abstraction on the long range of mountains that rose, mistily-blue, far away in the west. Close by, Hermie lay full length in the heather, her eyes closed, the spring sunlight beating on her face and hair. For a good hour neither had spoken, nor moved; Bright looked as fixed and immovable as a bronze image: Hermie, for all he knew, was fast asleep. But suddenly she sat

up, and with a quick change from the passive to the active, spoke his name sharply, as a drill-sergeant might have called a squad to attention.

"Yes?" responded Bright.

Hermie pulled out her cigarettes and began to smoke. Smoking with her always indicated serious thought, and Bright was aware of it.

"What are you going to do about things?" she asked. "It's time we talked of them."

Bright came out of his abstraction: his ready nod showed Hermie that he understand her meaning.

"Things!" he said. "Yes, I was just thinking about them. I suppose it is time."

Hermie slid a little nearer to him in the heather.

"Do you know what they're saying in the town—amongst the people?" she asked. "Of course they talk—and I hear: I hear lots. They're saying that in spite of your speech at the Labour Hall, everything will go on in just the same old way."

Bright laughed. There was a note of contempt in the laugh, tinged with the superiority of knowledge.

"Well, let 'em say!" he retorted. "I don't care. It's quite sufficient for me to know that they won't."

"What do you intend to do?" asked Hermie, coming to the point. "You've got a scheme?"

"Vague—indefinite—shapeless," answered Bright, almost indifferently. "Wants working out yet. I'm working at it slowly. It'll come—in due time.

"Can't I help?" suggested Hermie.

"Afraid not," said Bright. "This is one of those things that a man's got to do by himself. Of course," he went on after a brief pause, "as soon as my father died, and I found that he'd so left things that I'd just got to step into his place, whether I liked it or not, I realised that as I was sole proprietor I'd rights of my own. Every Marrashaw that ever was has done as he likes with his own—so why shouldn't I? I'm not bound to follow my grandfather's policy, nor my father's—the entire business is mine, and I shall do what I please with it. Other men, other methods!"

"Well?" asked Hermie. She was secretly conscious that she was not too well pleased with what Bright said: there was more than a suspicion of the old domineering note which had never been wanting in any of Charlesworth's pronunciations: what if Bright, after all, was going to turn out to be chip of the old block? Somehow, his assertion of his rights and his proprietorship, even if he meant well, grated on her. "And—yours?" she added. "What are they going to be—your methods?"

"Tell you I don't know—yet," said Bright. "I said—they're vague. Want

an awful lot of thinking out, Hermie. And—I can't do my thinking—serious thinking—in company. Got to do it by myself! Anyway, there'll be drastic reform. As I said—other men, other methods."

Hermie again had recourse to her cigarette-case. She had smoked half-way through a cigarette before she resumed her attack.

"Well, I know what my notion of drastic reform is," she said at last. "It's the utter abolition of the present system! Root and branch!"

"Perhaps," remarked Bright. "But—by degrees. It wouldn't be very good policy to burn all your clothes till you've furnished yourself with new ones to put in their place, would it?"

"I've heard that argument till I'm sick of it," said Hermie. "If there's poison in your system, get it out quick and ruthlessly! That's drastic reform."

"A clean cut of the knife, eh?" suggested Bright with another laugh. "I'm afraid the analogy doesn't hold good, my dear!" He glanced at her with a half-teasing, half-indulgent smile. "You're a red-hot rebel, you know: I'm not. You're all for ending things—present things—by a glorious revolution. But I'm a believer in constitutional methods—didn't I make that plain to those Labour chaps? Asses!—they can get all they want through the ballot-box! Unfortunately they don't know what they want, neither separately nor collectively."

"I know what," muttered Hermie.

"Wholesale revolution!" laughed Bright. "Which would mean stoppage and starvation. Far better achieve success by my reasonable and sane methods." He laughed again, and twisting his fingers in a loose strand of Hermie's fair hair, gave it a pull. "Whatever made you, a pretty, delicate lass like you, such a spitfire as you are?" he asked. "I heard you spouting once at the Labour Hall, though you didn't know I was there, and I wondered if you weren't a reincarnation of one of the women of the French Revolution, or of the Commune—you'd make a good *petroleuse*, upon my honour! How is it—how did it come about? To look at you when you're clothed and in your right mind, anybody would think you were the most demure young person that ever was, but when you're on the political ramp—my faith, Hermie, but you are a hot 'un!—you know you are! And—why?"

Hermie listened, staring far out across the heather at the blue hills in the distance. She kept silence for awhile: then she suddenly spoke, in a lower tone.

"Do you want to know, Bright?" she asked.

"Interesting—from many points," replied Bright. "Psychologically—very interesting."

"I wonder if you remember my grandfather?" she said. "Old Ebenezer—Ebbie, everybody called him."

"Little apple-faced old chap," answered Bright, with youthful

thoughtlessness. “Very bow-legged, and walked like a crab, side-wise. I remember him.”

Hermie’s eyes flashed sudden fire.

“Why was he bow-legged, and why did he walk like a crab?” she demanded hotly. “Because he was sent to work in the mill when he was a mere baby!—he minded a machine when he was five years old!”

“Damnable!” muttered Bright. “What a hellish lot our forefathers were, a hundred years ago!”

The utter simplicity of this ingenuous remark cooled Hermie’s sudden anger: she gave Bright a side-glance that revealed her recognition of his crudeness: he had forgotten, she realised, or he had never thought of the fact that it was his forefathers who had exploited hers.

“If you want to know what made me think and feel as I do,” she continued, quietly, “it was old Grandfather Ebbie. When I was a little girl, and he a very old man, living with us, he used to tell me tales of the bad old times—as I got older and began to read, I encouraged him. He’d a wonderful memory, even when he was ninety years old, and he could remember things going back to long before factory reform. He’d got to that stage, Bright, when it was nothing but a memory: he’d survived, and he’d peace and comfort in his old days, thanks to my father and mother, and he could speak of the bad old times without anger or resentment: it was more of a curious interesting memory to him. But God!—what times they must have been, and what devils, fiends, vilest of the vile, the masters were in those days! If only one could tear them from their graves, and bring them to life, and slowly torture them as they tortured children—”

“Steady, old girl!” said Bright. He had seen Hermie in a passion of indignation more than once. “Come!—remember the old boy; he’d got to talk of it calmly. And what did he talk of?”

“It makes my blood boil!” said Hermie. “I hope there’s a hell, and that they’re slowly roasting in it—I wish I’d the turning of the spits! Talk of?—what couldn’t he talk of; what couldn’t he tell—first hand evidence, Bright. How he himself, a baby of five, was made to work sixteen hours a day, kept to his task by the overseer’s strap, forced to his work by his own father and mother, who, in their turn, were forced to such an inhuman proceeding through the sheer necessity induced by less than starvation wages—that was why he was bow-legged and walked like a crab, as you say. God!—can’t you yourself remember what a lot of old men and women we used to have here in Haverthwaite who were like that?—stunted, deformed, crippled, all because they’d been driven to those hellish factories as tiny children! I remember lots—and, by God, I’ll never, never forget—nor forgive!”

Bright knew that it was useless to attempt any stoppage of Hermie’s tongue

now—her eyes were blazing and her lips quivering, not with tears, but with passion: here, indeed, delicately formed and almost fragile as she looked, was a woman whose righteous indignation could turn her into a fury. Once, when there had been a trade dispute in Haverthwaite and the local labour leaders had gone on the stump, Bright had heard Hermie, a smartly gowned and hatted figure, speak at the corner of an obscure street, and had stood amazed at the prodigality of strong and vituperative language that she had poured out in the cultured voice which she had acquired in the course of her education. Once started, she was irrepressible—and he let her go on.

"Never forget!" she repeated. "Nor forgive! Who could forget who'd ever heard the catalogue of crime that I heard from that old man's lips? Am I not a daughter of the people?—do you think children ever forget the wrongs done to their parents, and to their parents before them? My God!—the wrongs that one has to revenge—the cruelties, iniquities, foul and abominable crimes, the harvest of evil that's ripening, ripening!—What sort of folk should we be, the people of to-day, if we didn't remember the vengeance that's our right? I wish that poor old man was alive now, so that I could put him up before men and women, and let him tell in his simple and artless fashion what was done to those from whom we spring. How under the apprentice system the masters used to take pauper children, fatherless, motherless, into slavery, amongst every twenty, by arrangement, one idiot; how they worked them to skin and bone; how they tortured them, starved them, riveted irons to their ankles lest they should run away, let them die like dogs, and buried them in secret! How children dropped asleep at the devil-invented machines, and were beaten into wakefulness with the buckle-end of the overseer's strap! How disease ran like wildfire through the squalid courts and alleys where the workers lived, brought about by long hours, poor miserable food, wretched clothing, bad ventilation, overcrowding, life in hovels that were immeasurably worse than dog-kennel or pig-stye!—while the capitalist master made his money out of blood and bone and brain and heart, and damnable hypocrites wept crocodile tears over the negro slave and hadn't one sigh for the slaves at their own doors! How do you suppose that anybody with one scrap of human feeling is ever to forget or forgive all that?" she suddenly demanded, turning on Bright with fierce energy. "Let those forgive and forget who can!—may I never know peace or happiness if I do!"

"It's over," said Bright. "Over! Gone—clean gone—and done with."

Hermie gave him a sharp look, and suddenly lapsed into one of the calm, cold moods in which, if Bright had only known it, she was infinitely more dangerous than when she became passionate and denunciatory.

"Hardly!" she said, with an enigmatic smile. "There's the bill to pay!"

"What bill?" asked Bright.

“The bill that folk like me have been running up against folk like you, Bright,” she answered. “Don’t let’s deceive ourselves—you’re a rich man, and a capitalist, and I’m a poor girl, of the people. We’ve got an awful account to settle!”

She began to smoke again, and Bright presently lighted his pipe.

“Hermie,” he said, after a while. “I think you’re wrong in your last sentiments—What have I to do with what my forefathers did a hundred or sixty or even forty years ago? Why should I pay for their—misdeeds, if you like to call them so, though I should want to know a lot more before I did. Why, now?”

Hermie laid a hand on his arm.

“Bright!” she said. “You no doubt know by now—how much money has come to you with your father’s death?——leaving out the mill and the business and all that? Come, now?”

Bright made a wry face. Try as he would, he could not avoid letting her see that the subject was unpleasant.

“As near as can be made out,” he answered, “I should think five or six hundred thousand pounds—can’t say exactly.”

“So that, with all the rest of it,” said Hermie, “you must be somewhere about a millionaire? They say you are, anyway.”

“I shouldn’t wonder if it is so—with one thing or another,” assented Bright. “It—it seems awful!”

“Bright!” she said, “where did it all come from! On your honour as a man, where did it all come from? Out of the labour of men and women and children! —you know it did! Sweep aside all the theories, and all the talk, and all the sophistries!—you know as well as I do that your Marrashaw money has come, during five generations, from your employment of so many fellow-creatures at wages which just enabled them to live: the profits of their labour have gone into your pockets. The enormous wealth that you’re master of doesn’t belong to you at all, Bright—it belongs to the folk who made it.”

“They couldn’t have made it without us,” said Bright.

“That’s pure and simple rot, boy!” declared Hermie. “But we’re not going into it. You know what I think about all these things. And oh! Bright, you’ve such a chance to do a real great stroke of justice! It was in your grandfather’s mill that mine worked as a mere baby—Your grandfather and his father were awful tyrants and grinders: their oppressions were iniquitous: they’re written in a big print in economic history, for anybody to read. And its their ill-gotten gains that you’re master of, Bright! Morally, you’re bound as a straight man, to right a wrong. Make restitution! Give back to the people what your family robbed them of!”

Bright drew his forehead into many wrinkles, and for a while sat gazing

fixedly at the shadows flitting across the distant hills.

"You must let me work things out for myself, Hermie," he said at last. "You're pretty well aware of my various standpoints in politics and economics and everything. Mind you, I don't agree with you about lots of things. I can't undo what was done. And, honestly, I don't know that there's any reason whatever why restitution should be made to the people of to-day for the wrongs done to those of yesterday. But I'll tell you this—no man, woman, or child shall ever be wronged by me!"

"Nobody doubts it, Bright," said Hermie. She realised that enough had been said just then: already she was wondering whether she had not gone further than she had meant to go, whether, in letting her strong feelings carry her away, she had not shown her hand too plainly. "Nobody, I'm sure, has any other thought, after what you said in public, than that you mean to do well."

But she had roused a train of thought in Bright's mind, and now he was following it.

"It's a terrible problem to put before a man who's fixed as I am!" he said, after a pause. "You don't mean to tell me—you don't really think that the people of to-day cherish any ill-feelings, any desire for revenge because of the past?"

Hermie shook her head, and not in dissent.

"I don't see how it could be otherwise," she answered. "Just as I've heard of the things I mentioned just now, so have they, all of them: there isn't a man or woman who doesn't know the story of the old factory days, and how their own people suffered under their abominations. Old Ebbie used to tell me of the starvation and privation that went on amongst the workers, while the factory owners were amassing fortunes and living in luxury. Is it in human nature for people to forget? If you knew that your people had been oppressed, ill-treated, starved, dealt with as slaves never were dealt with, don't you think it would rankle—aye, for many a generation!"

"Things are different now," said Bright.

"In one sense, yes," admitted Hermie. "In another sense, no. You put yourself in the place of an ordinarily intelligent working man for a moment. How would you like to see yourself kept to a wage of, at the very best, a few pounds a week, and, at the same time, watch the greater part of the profits—profits, mind!—of your labour going into the pockets of your master—hateful word!—and he, getting richer and richer thereby, every year, while you and yours never get appreciably better off? You know you wouldn't like it? Can you wonder if such men feel pretty bitterly?"

"It's the capitalistic system," muttered Bright. "System!"

"Yes, but it's men who make the system," retorted Hermie, "and what's more they'll keep the system up as long as they profit by it. The whole policy

of the capitalist is to keep the worker as poor as possible, as much in subjection as possible, so that he may profit by his poverty and his helplessness. And behind the system is that cursed shibboleth of competition! Why don't we call things by their right names and call it the war of the strong against the weak? What we want in this world, all of us, is not competition but co-operation, not striving for riches at other men's expense, but mutual help; not the aggrandisement of the few, but the comfort and well-being of the many. Competition!—it makes me sick to hear it advocated!"

"There are plenty of sound and sane reasoners who defend competition, anyhow," said Bright. "Plenty of good men who'll tell you that it's made England what it is."

Hermie turned her eyes on him with a look of astonishment.

"Yes, I can quite agree with that!" she said. "It has! And what is England? Has there ever been a time in its whole history when it was one-half as pagan, and as brutal, and as materialised and as utterly selfish as it is now? I think not, Bright—and I've read a fair lot of history. And this precious system of competition—which is nothing whatever but open and flagrant exploitation of the weak by the strong—will bring this country to ruin! You wait till we've had the big world-war that's not so very far off, and see where we shall be after it, when we're plunged into enormous debt, and we discover that the wealth which ought to belong to the state is in the hands of a few privileged individuals! Do you think it'll be easy to make them disgorge? I don't!—and then there'll be taxation of a sort never known before, and high prices, and shortage and a putting back of everything—all because individuals have been allowed to appropriate to themselves the wealth that should have been the reserve force of the nation."

"It's an enormous question," said Bright, somewhat doubtfully. "I've not worked it out, Hermie—Lord! I feel as if I scarcely knew anything, and here I am with all this awful responsibility! There's a terrible lot of spade work to be done, on all sides. But, by George, I'll try honestly to do my share—and if I fail, well, it won't be for lack of endeavour and goodwill."

"Nobody doubts that, either," assented Hermie.

VI

When Hermie Clough declared to Allot Howroyd that she could do anything she liked with the new master of Marrashaw's Mill, she was talking beyond knowledge. Bright cherished a distinct admiration for Hermie's talents and for her whole-hearted, if somewhat truculent devotion to the Labour cause. He knew that she had read and thought far more than he had, and he was content to learn from her in subjects on which she had more knowledge than he could pretend to. But he was, after all, a Marrashaw, and had all the stubborness of opinion which had characterised his forebears during many generations. And when, as on this particular Sunday afternoon, he let Hermie talk and occasionally rise into flights of denunciation, it was not with entire acceptance of her views and doctrines. Bright was one of those men who listen with close attention and give the impression of acquiescence by silence when, in reality, they either dissent entirely or secretly disagree in part. He had his own notions. They had been manufactured by himself, in seclusion. He was not the sort to walk into a political laboratory and ask to be analysed and labelled: his mind and outlook were too eclectic for that. And when he advised the Labour men at their hall to give more attention to clear thinking, unity of purpose, and greater use of the vote and the ballot-box it was not that he wished so much to identify himself actively with their cause as to tell them as a practical man what they lacked in practical politics: an enemy, Ellerthwaite, for instance might have told them the same thing, as a lesson in the art of political warfare. But he had no intention of becoming one of them; none of adopting the advice of the man from London and his chairman, to join the party and become its parliamentary candidate. Bright knew his own position—from inclination, from thought, from reading, above all from observation, his sympathies were with Labour and Democracy: he knew that the old system of things was doomed, and he was more than willing to give the slowly-expiring, wornout carcase a hearty, accelerating kick—but, as he had said to Hermie, he must do things in his own way. Somebody had once said of him, in Hermie's presence, that he was both deep and obstinate: his obstinacy and depth were far greater than Hermie knew, and they were carefully concealed.

He was not going to say so to her—it would have been no use—but he was not, and never could be profoundly impressed by Hermie's denunciations of the bad old days that preceded the efforts of Oastler and Sadler, and Feilden, and Shaftesbury and other pioneers to bring about reform in the working of the factory system. They were horrible days, those: he had read his fill about them in the economic histories and in the local annals. No intelligent young man or woman could possibly have been reared in that neighbourhood without hearing

lurid stories such as those which had burned themselves in on Hermie's receptive and highly-imaginative mind. But Bright knew that not all the old capitalist mill-owners were ogres and tyrants: that was unbelievable. He knew, too, that Hermie's theory as to how wealth gradually increased in the case of families like his own was one into which too much water had better not be poured. It was all very easy to affirm on Labour platforms and at street corners that men like Charlesworth Marrashaw had amassed their great fortunes through wholesale and long-continued exploitation and spoliation of the workers, but it was not so easy to prove it. Much as he sympathised with Labour, greatly as he desired reforms which would give workers more results of their work, Bright knew well enough that families like his own do not come to be what and where they are by purely piratical practice. He was as well up in the history of the Marrashaws as Charlesworth himself. He knew how the family fortunes had begun and how they had been built, generation after generation. For a long time, in the early days, the Marrashaw policy had been crystallised in two matters—self-denial and thrift. His ancestors had lived on coarse bread and salt meat that they might save: they had never spent a penny without shifting it from right hand to left and left to right, slowly considering if it ought to be spent, and, if it must be parted with, how it could be laid out to the best advantage. And, as far as he knew, so it was with every one of the wealthy manufacturing families in the town. They had all originated in some hard-working, self-denying, thrifty ancestor, who, while his compeers were grumbling away their time and their money in the pot-house, was adding pence to pence and shilling to shilling, always with the idea of making himself a man rather than a mouse.

History repeats itself—and Bright knew that in his own time there were men and there were mice. In spite of his innate sympathy with the proletariat—a thing for which he could not account on any ground of heredity—he was not blind to the fact that there are men in this world who have no desire to better themselves, never will better themselves, and could not be bettered were a whole army of philanthropists to descend upon them. Ever since he had known anything of it, good wages had been paid in the staple trade of Haverthwaite. Taking things as a whole, the folk were comfortably off. There was a vast amount of money of theirs in the savings' banks, the building societies, the friendly societies, the various lodges and clubs. But there was also a vast amount wasted in drink and in betting. Whoever went round the inns and taverns of a night would find them filled; on Friday and Saturday and Sunday nights they were crammed: money went in this way with a prodigality that was nothing short of criminal: it went in another with only less recklessness in the shape of half-sovereigns and half-crowns staked on horses by men who scarcely knew a thoroughbred from a roadster and had never seen a race-

course in their lives. Perhaps Charlesworth had exaggerated when he had declared, in a speech which Bright heard him deliver to the workpeople, that there wasn't a young man in all Haverthwaite who couldn't be what he was by thrift and energy and perseverance—but, after all, there was much in it. And so Hermie, with all her fiery eloquence and her bitter denunciations, was not quite right—it was not wholly by exploitation that the Marrashaw money had been made—great qualities had gone to the making of it, and these qualities were within the grasp of any man who cared to put out his hand.

Still, when all was said and done, Bright knew that the workers, as a mass, had a distinct grievance. Here was an industrial nation of over forty millions of people, producing vast amounts of wealth, the lion's share of which was a huge and always increasing one while the jackal's was, relatively, a miserable remnant in which there was more bone than meat. More equitable distribution of wealth—there was the problem. But how to solve it?—Would anything that one mere man, one isolated individual, could do, go any way at all towards a solution. Example—yes, there was that, but Bright was not so sure that example is such a valuable or compelling thing as the copybook maxims would have one believe. The world, in his opinion, had been casting its eyes on examples and exemplars for a long time—and it usually either turned a contemptuous back upon them or crucified them or stoned them to death. Truly, as he had observed to Hermie, there was a terrible lot of thinking to be done by a young man suddenly pitchforked into such a position as his.

There were many matters about which Bright wanted advice at that time. They were chiefly of a private nature. The well-oiled machinery of business affairs had been too long established for any hitch to occur through Charlesworth's sudden death: thanks to the heads of departments and the well-drilled army of subordinate managers and foremen, everything ran with its accustomed smoothness in the great mill: it was scarcely noticeable that Charlesworth's hand released the controlling lever and Bright's grasped it. And Bright knew that the whole edifice was so firmly rooted that he had nothing to do but keep an eye open for the need of small repairs—Marrashaws Mill was a sound, established thing. It cost him no anxiety: never would do, said wiseacres like Ellerthwaite, if he would leave things alone. But he was bothered about other matters, and one was Marrashaw Royd.

For some reason for which he would have found it difficult to account, Bright had an absolute and ineradicable dislike to the pretentious mansion in which his father had taken such pride. Outside his own bedroom, his workshop, and the morning-room, he loathed every inch and corner of it. The solemn grandeur of the state apartments, their pretentiousness, their ostentation, roused feelings of irrepressible anger in him; nothing, except sheer necessity, could induce him to set foot within them. And now that they were

his he felt something as a man might feel who, having a natural taste for a pint of ale, a crust of bread, and a slice of cheese, is set down to a banquet of rich food and floods of champagne. Live in Marrashaw Royd he would not: the two rooms in the Leemingville cottage had been far more attractive. Yet Marrashaw Royd and all its contents, rich furnishings, priceless objects of art, luxurious carpets; and all the rest of it, with its fine gardens, ornamental grounds, carriages, horses, motor-cars, was—his.

Oddly enough, Bright felt a curious reserve in talking about these things to Hermie Clough. He had an intuitive feeling that to remind Hermie of his wealth was pleasing to neither: also he thought it scarcely respectful to Charlesworth's memory to let Hermie know how much he disagreed with his father's taste. But going across the moor to Ellerthwaite's house one afternoon, and finding nobody at home but Milly, he suddenly unbosomed himself to her.

"Milly!" he blurted out, in the midst of a conversation about nothing. "I'm in a regular hole about something that's bothering me fearfully. Help me out! you're a managing sort."

"What is it, Bright?" asked Milly. "Something domestic? That's the only line I'm at all managing in."

"Well, something of that sort," replied Bright. "It's the house—Marrashaw Royd. I don't know what to do with it. It's a white elephant on my hands. Between you and me, I hate it—can't stand it. My father thought no end of it—he built it. But—well, there it is. I simply can't live in it!"

"Why?" demanded Milly.

"Why? Good Heavens!—do you think I want to live in a place that looks like—well, half like a museum and art-gallery, and half like an imitation of the inside of Buckingham Palace! I want something—home-like."

"It is a bit—magnificent," admitted Milly. She was fully alive to Bright's suggestions for she had known what it was to dine at Charlesworth's table in the gorgeous dining-room and spend the rest of the evening amid the splendours of the drawing-room, and had been thankful all the time that her own father, fond as he was of comfort, had never followed his friend's example and built a modern mansion. "But then—"

"What?" asked Bright.

"It's there—and I suppose it'll get—more home-like in time, especially if you used the rooms more," said Milly. "And besides—my father told me you were going to be married to Hermione Clough."

"Not for some time, anyway," replied Bright, hastily. "And—what's that got to do with it?"

"Probably Hermione would like Marrashaw Royd just as much as you dislike it," suggested Milly.

Bright laughed—almost derisively. The idea of Hermie as a centre-figure

in Marrashaw Royd was too much for him to imagine.

"Would she?" he exclaimed. "That shows how little you know of her, then! A plain cottage in Paradise Street would be more to Hermie's liking—she's the sort who thinks it's wicked to have servants!"

"Does she?" observed Milly, demurely. "That is interesting! Do you?"

"I?" said Bright. "Well, really, I—I don't know that I do. I suppose servants are—rather useful, aren't they? I don't know much about it."

"I should say you'd know a lot more if you were suddenly asked to do without them," said Milly, drily. "However—but do you really mean that you don't want to live in Marrashaw Royd?"

"Don't want?" exclaimed Bright. "I won't! I'll have to live there, I expect, till Trissie and your Victor get married—Trissie's got to be considered, you know. But when that's over—well, I just won't. What do I want with a place that size? I should feel as if I were living in the National Gallery—or in one of Maple's show-rooms!"

"Aren't you ever going to ask your friends to dinner or anything?" suggested Milly. "Your father was very hospitable."

Bright's face clouded and he groaned slightly.

"I never thought of that!" he muttered. "Shall—shall I be expected to do that sort of thing?"

Milly, who was busied with her needle-work, smiled, but as her eyes were bent on her needle, Bright failed to see it.

"Oh, well I suppose you ought to keep up the family customs," she answered. "People are sure to ask you to dinner, you know, and so—eh?"

Bright groaned again.

"The fact is," he said, almost pathetically. "I'm not cut out for all that business! My tastes don't lie in that direction. I always did like coming here—you're nice and quiet here, in a good old-fashioned way. But I don't like going out—and to think of giving a dinner-party in that dining-room of ours—I won't!"

"Very well," said Milly. "Don't! Why should you? And as for the house—why not let it?"

"No!" exclaimed Bright, suddenly. "I've an idea—splendid! I know what I'll do—I'll give the whole place, as it stands, to Trissie and Victor for a wedding-present! It suits Trissie all right—she knows what to do with it. That's an immense idea, Milly! And," he added, with a sigh of satisfaction, "it'll save me the trouble of thinking what to give them—I'd been cudgelling my brains over that already, and I couldn't think of anything."

Milly looked up from her work for an instant and took in a general sense of Bright's ingenuousness. She smiled again as she turned to her needle.

"An immense idea, is it?" she remarked. "I should say it's an immense

present. Have you any notion of what Marrashaw Royd's worth, Bright?"

"Not exactly," replied Bright. "But—a tidy lot, including everything."

"A very tidy lot, I should think!" said Milly, with increasing dryness. "And you're willing to give it—clear away!"

"But you see, I don't want it," urged Bright. "I don't want it at all. I'll give it to Trissie—she'll like it. And then—well, it'll still be in the family. Oh, I'm quite sure it's the very best thing to do!"

"You're very generous," said Milly. "And the next thing, I suppose—you'll be giving away the business?"

Bright, who occasionally suffered from lapses of his sense of humour, took this suggestion seriously.

"No," he answered, gravely. "I won't do that—there's too much at stake for too many people. No—but I'll certainly give Marrashaw Royd to Trissie and Victor. That is, if they'll accept it."

"I don't think you need bother your head about that!" observed Milly. "I should say—knowing Victor pretty well, and Trissie scarcely less—that they'll put out both hands for it. Really, Bright, you're a very extraordinary person, and I'm not sure that you don't need looking after! It's all very well to be generous, but, after all, you ought to remember that your father worked very hard to get what you so easily give away. However, as you say, it's to be in the family—and," she added, with another smile in the direction of the needlework, "I'm quite sure Mrs. Victor Ellerthwaite will take good care of it."

That, too, was Trissie's opinion. She received the news of her brother's proposed wedding-present with equanimity, and thanked him so gracefully and prettily for his kindness that Bright felt much more than compensated.

"But isn't it splendid and fortunate that the place is coming into our hands!" she said to Victor in communicating the tidings. "Bright!—why, he'd have just neglected everything!"

VII

In spite of the terrible weight of responsibility that had been forced upon him, things went easily for Bright Marrashaw during the first few months of his proprietorship of the business which his ancestors had founded, and built up and consolidated into a gigantic affair. His managers and foremen were always ready to take things off his shoulders and out of his hands: his workpeople, secretly glad to see a new and a young master amongst them were amicable; the well-oiled wheels of the huge machine ran smoothly and noiselessly. That summer Bright did certain things that made him popular. He organised and carried out a grand full-day trip to Scarborough, conveying his army of employees in a series of special trains, which set them down by the sea before breakfast and left them by it until sun-down: he provided breakfast, dinner, and tea for his three thousand hungry mouths, and wound up the festivity by announcing that what had been done that day would be continued in time to come as an annual event. Then, gazing one day from the windows of the private office on the smooth greensward of the big quadrangle, he determined to turn this fine open space to some practical use, and converted one half of it into lawn tennis-courts for the young folk and bowling green for the old ones. Already there were cricket and football clubs in connection with the mill: Charlesworth always thought he had done plenty for them if he gave each an annual subscription: Bright went further, amalgamated the two, presented the members with a fine new ground, equipped with pavillions and dressing rooms, and set them on a fine financial basis. Clearly, said the townsfolk, the young man was minded to be free with his money, and Milly Ellerthwaite, hearing, as everybody did, of his generous doings, thought of what she had said to him when he confided to her his troublous state of mind about Marrashaw Royd, and felt more certain than ever that Bright wanted looking after; if he went on as he was doing, he would give away all his money.

But in Bright’s opinion all these things were insignificant details in comparison with the scheme which had been working in his brain from the moment he awoke to the full realisation of what it meant to be Marrashaw of Marrashaw’s Mill. He had an instinctive feeling that because of his speech at the Independent Labour Hall, his people expected something of him—a new development, a startling, perhaps revolutionary departure: now and then he heard vague hints of their expectations. And keeping his thoughts strictly to himself, saying nothing of them even to Hermie Clough, he was steadily working out a plan whereby he meant to put the big business on an entirely new footing. When he had made announcement of his heresies to Charlesworth

on that eventful evening before his twenty-first birthday, Bright had said that his notions as regards a better understanding between the forces of capital and labour ran in the direction of profit-sharing, and had mentioned one Saylor, of Upper Cotley, a neighbouring manufacturer who had introduced the system into his business some years before, and had made a big success of it. Charlesworth had sneered at the notion—but now that Charlesworth was dead and Bright master there was an open field. Bright visited Saylor at Upper Cotley and carefully examined the results which he had achieved; he paid other visits to big industrial concerns in which profit-sharing or co-partnership was in force: anxious to know all he could on the point he even went abroad and studied the working of various systems in France and Germany. And before the end of the year he had evolved a scheme of his own, the results of many months of anxious and continued thought, and had written it out, and re-written it, and at last had got it all cut-and-dried. Like all enthusiasts he thought it perfect: it was beyond him to realise that it might not be acceptable; having looked at it from every point of view, he failed—being what he was—to find a flaw in it. He fondly believed that by its adoption, he and his workpeople would set up a model, and that Marrashaw's Mill would be pointed to from every quarter of the industrial world as an ideal to which masters on the one hand and men on the other would turn for light and leading.

In putting his notions before his people in particular and the world in general, Bright adopted methods of his own. Having arrived at his final and definite decision, he embodied his scheme in a short address to the workfolk of Marrashaw's Mill, wherein he set out his proposals in the plainest possible fashion and language, so that the least educated could read and understand. Taking a fair copy of this to the principle printing-office in Haverthwaite, he bound him and his compositors to secrecy in setting up of the address, which they were to make into a four-page tract in bold type. Four thousand copies of this were struck off. And one Monday morning, descending upon them like shafts from heaven, these copies were distributed to every man, woman, boy and girl in Marrashaw's Mill, and with each a pink slip of paper requesting the recipient to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the proposals, to discuss them seriously and candidly with fellow-workers, and to attend a meeting which would be held, a fortnight later, for the purpose of debating them in public.

Bright's scheme, on the surface, was simplicity itself. He set out with an axiom of his own, delivered with all the assurance of an infallible utterance—that the worker is justly entitled to a greater share of the profits arising from his work. It followed upon this, of course, that the workers of Marrashaw's Mill were entitled to more than they were getting. It followed upon that, that he, as an honest employer, desired to give them more and intended to do so.

And this was the way in which he would do it:— Here was the business, firmly established, doing excellently well, likely to continue its successful career as far as ever one could see in the future. He proposed to consider it as a standing affair, fully and sufficiently capitalised, on which every year there was a great sum of money made in profits. He had employed a leading firm of accountants to make a careful estimate of the average of profits for the past five years—that average represented a certain large sum: it was not at all likely to decrease; on the contrary, everything pointed to the probability of its growing bigger. Now, in future, starting from that year, he proposed to divide the entire amount of the net annual profit amongst the people connected with Marrashaw's Mill, on a definite scale. He, as owner, would take twenty-five per cent of it. Twelve-and-a-half per cent would be divided amongst the managers and foreman. Another twelve-and-a-half per cent would be divided amongst those workers, men and women, who had twenty years' standing. There remained fifty per cent to deal with. This would be divided amongst the remaining workers in relation to their length of service; five years' service being fixed as the minimum of eligibility. He wound up with a briefly worded appeal to all to consider his proposal in the spirit in which it was made—that of an honest attempt to place every employee in the position of feeling that he or she, in his or her degree had a sound and personal interest in the welfare and prosperity of the business.

Hermie Clough received her copy of Bright's proposals just as the other folk of the mill had received theirs—it was handed to her as she entered the precincts on her way to the private office. She was reading it at her table when Bright walked in. He coloured, with a certain shyness, when he saw how Hermie was engaged. And Hermie laughed, and let the all-important tractate flutter from her fingers.

"Well?" demanded Bright.

"Just like you, Bright!" she said, with another laugh. "There's a vein of Quixotic feeling in you!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Bright. He had been expecting words of warm praise from her. "Don't you like my scheme?" he went on, with some anxiety. "I've worked hard enough at it!"

"Profit-sharing schemes don't appeal to me in the least," replied Hermie, almost indifferently. "You did well to keep yours to yourself, Bright, until you'd hatched it out: if you'd told me of it I should have deluged it with cold water."

"Why?" asked Bright. He was genuinely surprised: it seemed to him that his action verged on the magnificent. "Cold water on a scheme that puts seventy-five per cent of the profits of a business like this into the hands of employees! What more can anybody desire?"

"That's not it," said Hermie. "I'm dealing with principles. Profit-sharing and co-partnership are all—rot! But here's to-day's business to attend to—hadn't we better get on to the letters?"

Bright turned to his desk feeling as if a cloud had suddenly descended upon the fairness of his morning. He tried to lure Hermie into discussion, but she steadfastly withstood him.

"No!" she declared, when he had re-opened the subject for the third time. "I'm not going to say a word, now. Wait a bit—and see what the people have to say to your proposals. I daresay you think they'll jump at them?"

"I think they'll be fools if they don't," said Bright.

Hermie laughed again.

"We'll see!" she said.

Bright purposely went amongst his folk that morning, hoping to hear warm encomium, or at any rate intelligent appreciation. To his surprise he heard nothing of the sort. The few men who mentioned the proposals to him said no more than that the thing needed careful thinking about: no one but Lockwood Clough seemed inclined to discuss it.

"You needn't be surprised, sir, if there doesn't seem much enthusiasm," remarked Lockwood, talking with Bright in a quiet corner of one of the sheds. "You must remember that plans o' this sort are none very popular in these parts. They've been tried, and they've mostly failed, and the folks are shy of 'em. They always think there's something behind 'em."

"What d'you mean by behind 'em?" demanded Bright.

Lockwood's answering smile was born of the shrewdness and wisdom of close upon seventy years of life and observation. He jerked his thumb in the direction of the people working at a little distance from where he and Bright stood.

"You know as well as I do, sir, that all folk of this part are naturally suspicious," he said. "It's born in 'em! They don't understand anybody—especially a Yorkshireman—giving something for nothing. I'll lay aught that what most of 'em's saying to themselves, and their neighbours this morning, about your proposals, is—'What's behind 'em? What's it for? What's he going to get out of us for what he gives us?' You know t' old saying, Mr. Bright, 'at's so common wi' Yorkshiremen—'If tha does owt for nowt, do it always for thi sen'.' "

"I've heard it," assented Bright. "And I always considered it a vile libel!"

Lockwood laughed and shook his head.

"Aye, but it's like a deal of other things, sir," he replied. "There's a foundation o' truth in it. It's a fact, Mr. Bright, that most of these folks, as I said, literally don't understand anybody giving something for nothing. I tell you, they'll be saying—especially the women—amongst themselves: 'If Mr.

Bright's going to give us seventy-five per cent o' t' profits, what's he reckoning to get i' return?' For they know very well, sir, 'at your father 'ud never ha' given 'em aught i' that way."

"Do you mean to tell me that they haven't got sufficient sense to understand a plainly-worded proposal?" demanded Bright. "If they really do say things like that, it would look as if they'd not read what I've written?"

"Oh, they've read, sir, and they'll read again—a dozen times!" answered Lockwood. "They'll know it by heart before long!"

"Well, I shall want to know what the general opinion is," said Bright.

"You'll be sure to hear that, sir," replied Lockwood, drily. "They're not without powers of expression, any of 'em!"

VIII

The editor of the Guardian became possessed of a copy of Bright's profit-sharing proposals during the course of that day, and his next morning's issue contained a leading article on them. It was non-committal, but it drew attention to the matter, and before noon their creator was the most talked-of man in the town. In factory and workshop, club and bar-parlour his four-page tract was handed about and discussed, and the general opinion of him and it was that he had taken leave of his senses and that his scheme was a first excursion into the realms of lunacy.

Bright knew nothing of all this. But he was soon to know a good deal of it. Since stepping into his father's shoes, he had taken to lunching at the Crane, an old-fashioned hotel in the centre of the town: it stood within a few minutes walk of the mill and was therefore conveniently near to the business with which, whether he would or not, he found it necessary to keep in close touch. Unaware of the leading article in the Guardian and of the chatter and gossip which it had occasioned, he walked into the dining-room of the Crane at his usual hour that day, and, abstracted and unobservant though he was by nature, became immediately aware that his entrance caused an unusual effect amongst the men gathered around the various tables. As he entered the rattle of conversation ceased: he had heard plenty of talk and laughter as he hung up his hat in the lobby outside, but a dead silence fell over the room when he appeared in it, and glancing round he saw, much to his astonishment, that every man there was looking at him. There was amusement in some faces, and in others a sneering contempt: in two or three undisguised dislike. And suddenly he realised what all this meant—he and his proposals had been the subject of discussion amongst these men, all of them connected, in one way or another, with the trade of the town, and his coming had stopped their talk.

The dining-room was very full, for this was a market-day, and for a moment Bright stood in its centre looking about him for a vacant chair. Then he felt a tap on his elbow and glancing round saw Victor Ellerthwaite, who, with two other young men, was seated at a table just behind him.

"Here you are, Bright," said Victor. "I kept this for you."

Bright dropped into the chair which Victor pulled back, and looked from his future brother-in-law to his two companions. He knew them as well as he knew Victor: they, he and Victor had all been at school together: like Victor and himself they came of old manufacturing families. One of them, young Mallinson, had the reputation of a wit, and he turned his talents on Bright as soon as he sat down.

"You're a lucky chap, Marrashaw!" he said, with an excellently assumed

air of envy. “It takes some men half a lifetime to attain a literary reputation. You’ve done it by the publication of a single work! You’re on the same shelf with that chap—wasn’t it Byron—who put out a book at night, went to bed, and got up to find himself famous! Marvellous! And he doesn’t look any different, does he?”

“What’s it all about?” laughed Bright. He turned to a waiter who had come up to his side and ordered his lunch. “What’s the joke?”

“Joke!” exclaimed Mallinson, lifting his hands in mock horror. “He calls it a joke to give nearly all his money away! I say, Bright—while you’re on at that game, what about your old near and dear ones? Me, for example? My governor doesn’t make me such an awfully grand allowance that I couldn’t do with a few thousands a year from a real, genuine, copper-bottomed philanthropist like yourself. Of course, I ain’t a poor, downtrodden working man, but——”

“He’s pulling your leg, Bright,” interrupted Victor. “That’s one result of your rush into print. It’s a good job you’ve got the courage of your convictions—chaps like Mallinson will pester you to death. They think it’s funny!”

“I’m still asking what it’s all about,” remarked Bright. He had become indifferent by that time and was looking about him as if nothing had occurred. “What bee has he got in his bonnet, this time?”

“He’s referring—in his way—to your profit-sharing proposals,” said Victor. “Come, now—none of your seeming innocence!—you know very well that all the town’s talking about ’em. This room was buzzing with it when you came in just now—that’s why a dead silence fell on it. Talk of the—eh?”

“It was just like a celebrated passage in some poet or another,” remarked Mallinson. “The guests are met and the feast is set and lo! a terrible apparition appears and all is silence. The chilling effect is still evident—old Burtonshaw, over there, hasn’t spoken a word nor eaten a mouthful since Bright came in—Bright’s very presence has poisoned his mutton and turned his claret to gall.”

“It just happens, then, that I don’t know what all the town’s talking about,” said Bright. “And whether old Burtonshaw’s eating his mutton or not I’m going to eat mine. Why do I cause a sensation?”

“Haven’t you seen the Guardian?” asked Victor. He had his own opinions about Bright’s Utopian schemes, but he was going to be Bright’s brother-in-law, and he owed a fine house and grounds to him. “There’s an article in it about your scheme, and of course everybody’s discussing it.”

“Let ’em!” retorted Bright. “It’s mine.”

“Heights of sublime indifference!” exclaimed Mallinson, with mock admiration. “How I wish I could attain to them! They suit Bright down to the ground, though—he perches on them like Jove on the top of his mountain. The small fry—like us—walk about at the base and wonder. Tell us how you do it,

Bright."

Bright laughed and began to eat his lunch. But he had not taken many bites at his roast mutton before old Burtonshaw, rising in his corner, and taking his hat from an empty chair at his side, came lumbering across the room and tapped him on the back. Bright looked round in surprise, and the other three young men, winking at each other, became silent. So did the other men around them.

"I've read them proposals o' yours in the newspaper this morning, young fellow!" said the old man, glaring at Bright from a pair of angry eyes. "And I said to myself when I read 'em that the first time I met you in a public place I'd tell you what I thought! You're a traitor to your own lot, and you're a mischief-maker an' all, and a right job it'll be if every man in this room turns his back on you. Them's my sentiments!"

"Thank you for the great courtesy with which you express them, Mr. Burtonshaw," answered Bright. "You'll excuse me, I'm sure, if I now turn my back on you."

"Good!" muttered Mallinson. Then, as somebody came hurriedly forward and led the angry old man away, he leaned across the table. "I say, Bright!" he whispered in tones that became as serious as his previous one had been bantering. "Look out for yourself, old chap!—there's a pretty stiff feeling afoot already."

"All right!" answered Bright. "I expected something of the sort."

He went on with his lunch, and his three companions, tactfully avoiding further reference to the incident which had just taken place and to the subject that had occasioned it, turned the conversation to other matters. They stayed at Bright's side until he had finished eating, and went out with him when he left the hotel. And Bright was observant enough to see that they did this of set purpose—most of the other men present averted their faces as he passed, or gave him no more than cold glances.

"So I'm to be sent to Coventry!" he mused, as he turned off in the direction of the mill. "But—did I expect anything else? Of course, I'm a heretic, from their standpoint, and so I'm to be a pariah."

Just then he caught sight of Victor's father, signalling to him from the opposite side of the street. Bright turned and crossed over: he had a good deal of respect for Ellerthwaite, whom, in spite of his Toryism, he believed to be a man of broad and fair principles. Ellerthwaite took his arm: there was something of fatherliness in the action and in the pressure of his hand.

"Now, my lad!" said he. "Going back to the mill? Come in to the club with me first and have a cigar—I want a word or two with you."

Bright hesitated. To walk into the club seemed equivalent to walking into a lion's den. But he reflected that it was no part of his policy to show fear or

diffidence and he turned.

"Don't smoke cigars," he answered with a laugh. "But I'll smoke a pipe."

"Smoke aught you like!" said Ellerthwaite. He led Bright into the club, and to the corner once sacred to himself and Charlesworth. "If I'd as many pounds as your father and me has sat here minutes," he said as they seated themselves, "I should be richer nor what you are, my lad! However——"

He motioned to a steward and told him to bring coffee; then drew out his cigar case and turned to his companion.

"I've read those proposals o' yours, Bright," he said, going straight to the point, after his usual blunt fashion. "I saw the article in the Guardian this morning, and you got a copy of your pamphlet, or tract, or whatever you call it, from one o' your men, an hour since. And I want to say a word or two about the whole thing. You'll not object to criticism."

"Not to yours," assented Bright. "Say anything you like. I shall get plenty —of all sorts."

"You will!" said Ellerthwaite. "And most of it'll be unpleasant. But you can't expect aught else. You want to be a reformer—all right, reformers should have skins like elephants' and skulls like bulls'. Folk like these, for instance"—he waved his hand towards the other men in the room, all moneyed men, representing privilege and monopoly—"they'll consider you a young fool for making proposals such as yours. But that's neither here and there—I want to point out to you certain facts, which, in my opinion, you've overlooked."

"I'm open to hear anything you say," answered Bright. "I know you."

"Well," continued Ellerthwaite, "to start with—I'm willing to grant that in past times workers have been badly done to: that's a fact that there's no denying. I'm willing to grant, too, that even now-a-days they're justly entitled to far more share in the general distribution of wealth than they get. That, however, is a very big economic question, with as many sides to it as a fly has eyes, and it's not going to be settled by paper theories and fanciful schemes. And I question if a scheme like yours is going to do any good, though I daresay you've worked it out to a successful conclusion—in your own mind."

"I've worked at it in all sorts of ways," said Bright, thoughtfully. "I've visited ever so many places, here, and in France, and in Germany, where profit-sharing's in active existence: I've read everything I can lay hands on about it, and I've spent a good many anxious months perfecting my own scheme. I say it's a good scheme and workable—if the people whom it concerns are willing to fall in with it."

"Aye!" exclaimed Ellerthwaite. "But—will they be? You'd think that folk who got an offer like that would jump at it!—but you don't know the labour world as I do. You think you've set sail on a smooth and safe sea, but there are rocks ahead, my lad, and you'll soon come in sight of 'em."

"Well?" said Bright.

"There were several points struck me in reading your proposals," continued Ellerthwaite. "I'll go through 'em, one by one. First of all—in all, or most, of those books that you mentioned just now, about profit-sharing, there's a fallacy: at least, it's always been there in all that I've read, and I've carefully read several. These book-writers and lecturers always assume that the incentive of profit stimulates the worker to more conscientious performance and generally increases his efficiency. Now what's that assumption based on? The fallacious supposition that profits depend exclusively or mainly on labour, or, to put it in another way, that you can measure profit by the value of labour. All wrong!"

"What's the second point?" asked Bright. "Tell me all of 'em—I'll think them out later on."

"The second's this," answered Ellerthwaite—"up to now, profit-sharing's been no great success in this country. It's been tried a good deal—at least one-third of the attempts to make it answer have been dead failures. Here and there it has answered to some degree, but as a system, it's been neither successful nor popular."

"No reason why it shouldn't be—yet," said Bright.

"True!" agreed Ellerthwaite. "So I lay no great stress on that point. But I wonder if my third point has occurred to you. I should say that pretty nearly every one of your people belongs to the trades-unions: I know that there's scarcely one of mine that doesn't! Accordingly, they're under the thumb of the trades-unions—we know what particular trades-union it is in our quarter. Well, now, point three is this—the trades-unions regard profit-sharing schemes with chilly looks, if not with absolute dislike."

"Why?" asked Bright.

"How," replied Ellerthwaite, with a laugh, "how do you expect any well-regulated trades-union to approve a scheme which can scarcely fail to weaken the solidarity of workers against employers? Not likely!"

"Why should it?" demanded Bright.

"Ah, that's point four!" said Ellerthwaite. "The trades-unions apprehend of any profit-sharing scheme that it might tend to a reduction of wages in consideration of the allurements held out under it—d'you see?"

"It wouldn't in my case, anyway!" declared Bright.

"You can't be sure of that, my lad!" replied Ellerthwaite, with a dry smile. "You don't know what may come in trade any more than I do. Things are all very well just now, but it's always on the cards that we may have a period of bad times, and no profits at all, and that wages'll go down—and so on. But—I'm telling you what the trades-union apprehension is. And that leads to point five—rightly or wrongly, trades-unions hold that profit-sharing schemes are

nothing of the sort, that the workers do not really share in the profits but merely get a bonus in the shape of an addition to their normal wages—and, as the trades-unions say, at the price of their liberty."

"Why at the price of their liberty?" asked Bright.

"Point six, that," answered Ellerthwaite. "Nobody can deny the truth of what the trades-unions affirm in respect to profit-sharing schemes:—that under them there's a tendency to the setting-up of a general atmosphere of suspicion. Every man gets to be a sort of spy on his fellow-workman—watching him to see if he does his best and helps to the making of the profit in which he'll share. Moreover they contend that workers under profit-sharing schemes are frightened of doing anything that would risk their chances of benefit, and will endure any sort of harshness from employers rather than incur dismissal. Liberty and freedom, they urge, are not compatible with a scheme which is, after all, a sort of giving away of prizes—you've got to behave or you'll get naught."

"That's all from the trades-union point of view," remarked Bright, after a pause. "My scheme's between my people and myself."

"Aye!" said Ellerthwaite, shaking his head. "But I'm afraid there's no such thing now-a-days, my lad, as direct dealing between master and men. There's naught behind you, Bright—but behind your folk there's their trades-union! It's that, my lad, that you've really got to deal with. But," he continued, edging himself a little nearer to his companion with a gesture of confidence, "there's yet another point, and perhaps the most important of the lot. Let's suppose that there is no trades-union influence at all—suppose it, I say. Suppose that there is, as you seem to think, only two parties concerned in this scheme; you, and your people? You've already put into that scheme the very principle that's bound to wreck it, even if, as I say, there wasn't any trades-union influence to interfere!"

"What principle?" demanded Bright. He was very proud of his schemes, and could not for the life conceive what Ellerthwaite was driving at. "Explain!"

Ellerthwaite drew the printed copy of Bright's proposals from his pocket. "Look at it!" he answered. "Consider it a bit more carefully. You're dealing with three thousand people. Well, you start out by differentiating between 'em! Some of 'em you prefer to the position of most favoured: some of 'em you leave clean out. Managers and foremen are to be on top: employees of twenty years standing to come next; those of fifteen, ten, and five years a bit lower: a considerable number are to get nothing. That'll never do, my lad!—in your workpeople's opinion."

"There must be differences!" said Bright. "It isn't reasonable to expect that managers and foremen should be treated without regard to their superior

positions, or that a man who's only worked five years should get as much as a man who's worked twenty!"

"Reasonable!" exclaimed Ellerthwaite with a cynical laugh. "I think you'd best not use that word, lad! These folks reckon nothing of what's reasonable nor what isn't. No!—you've forgotten the first principle of the New Labour—Equal shares for all; skilled and unskilled. No preference; no favouritism; no difference. The man who washes dirty wool in your sheds is entitled to just as much shares as the man who's responsible for a whole department!"

"That's absurd!" muttered Bright.

"Not in the opinion of the New Labour!" said Ellerthwaite, with a grim smile. "As you'll find out. And mind you, the principles of the New Labour have gained a bigger hold, a deeper footing than you think for! There's some underhand influence going on in this town now that's spreading those principles," he continued, reflectively. "I don't know where it is, nor where it hails from, but it's there—it's amongst my men, and it's amongst yours, and every other employer's. Quiet and persistent permeation!—that's it. And I'll tell you what you'll find about this scheme of yours—that instead of being an olive-branch, it's a sword! There'll be opposition to it from three directions. First, the whole lot of your workers will object to the managers and overlookers being placed in a separate and favoured class. Second, the project being for present and future, the man of five years' standing will contend that his labour is just as profit-making as the labour of the man of twenty years' standing. Third, the folk who have not yet been in your employ five years will say—using the argument of point second—that they are just as much entitled to share, whether they've worked one year or two, so long as they work the full year in question, as the folk who worked five. See?"

"Questionable!" muttered Bright. "Position and length of service must count!"

"Not with these folks!" affirmed Ellerthwaite. "You'll see! This," he continued, shaking the proposals, "has been thrown down into the arena by you—well, they'll fight round it like a lot of sparrows round a crumb. They'll go for each other—and they'll go for you!"

Bright knocked the ashes out of his pipe, put it in his pocket, and rose to go.

"Every scheme's capable of improvement," he said, holding out his hand. "I'm honest enough in putting mine forward, anyway. You admit yourself that the workers are entitled to more share than they get."

"In national wealth, yes," agreed Ellerthwaite. "So are a good many other people—who are never considered. What about underpaid parsons What about folk who live lives of decent poverty? What about the clerk who's got to look like a gentleman on a salary that one of our men in full work would turn up his

nose at? Don't you get the impression, Master Bright, that the poor working man is the only object of compassion in this old country of ours! He isn't!—there are plenty of worthy and decent folk who'd be glad of half-a-crown where he'd sneer at a sovereign. And if he has his wrongs, and if he ought to get more out of his labour than he does, I'm not at all convinced that yours is the way to help—it's piece-meal work anyway, a hole-and-corner business. What's wanted is wholesale reform and readjustment of the entire economic system—and that needs bigger brains than either yours or mine. You mean well, my lad—but you're a baby-in-arms when it comes to these things!"

"Somebody's got to make a beginning in all reform," muttered Bright.

"And I'm not so certain of that!" said Ellerthwaite. "Reform's like all else in this scheme of creation—it's got to be evolved out of itself: it's not to be tinkered at. The seed's there—let it grow: it will grow, and in its own way, in spite of everything. But no seed'll grow if a man uncovers it every now and then—to see how it's getting on."

"I don't understand," said Bright. "You're a bit too allusive, Mr. Ellerthwaite!"

"Well, that's better than being elusive!" laughed Ellerthwaite. "All right, my lad—we've had our talk, or, rather, I've had mine, and as I say, you mean well. And when you want a word of advice, or somebody to take counsel with, you know where to find me!"

IX

Bright took counsel with nobody during the next fortnight. Hermie Clough steadfastly refused to discuss the profit-sharing proposals: let Bright wait, she said, until he had heard what the workpeople had to say to them. There was something in her silence which made him uncomfortable: up to that stage in their affairs she had always been ready enough to discuss anything, but now he could get nothing out of her. Clearly, so it seemed to him, she disapproved of his scheme—but, in that case why did she not give him reasons for her disapproval? In Bright's opinion, he had gone to considerable lengths in his desire to make things easier for the workpeople: without any undue praising of himself he thought he had been generous.

So evidently, thought Milly Ellerthwaite, who, meeting Bright accidentally in the High Street one morning, gave him a half-sly, half-amused smile.

"Still walking in the way of the benefactor, Bright?" she said, in rallying tones. "Why don't you be done with it, and give 'em the mill and the whole business as it stands?"

Bright, whose sense of humour had certain limitations, regarded Milly's smiling face gravely.

"That might perhaps suit me better than anything," he answered. "I should be able to have then what I haven't now!"

"What's that?" demanded Milly.

"Liberty! Freedom!" said Bright. "Do you think it suits me to be pinned close to that mill all day and all the year? It doesn't!"

"What would suit you?" she asked.

"To be able to do the things I like," he answered promptly. "I'd have been far happier experimenting in dye-stuffs at Leeming's than I am keeping a hand—both hands!—on the helm of that big business. I'm not cut out for commercial life, Milly."

Milly let the bantering tone drop out of her voice.

"Bright!" she said, seriously. "If you don't like it, why don't you get rid of the business? Sell it!"

Bright shook his head.

"No!" he answered. "It's got to be carried on. Even if it crushes me under it, it's got to be carried on. Marrashaw tradition!—and all that. Rooted things, you know. Might as well try to lift the Parish church there clean out of its surroundings as root the Marrashaw tradition out of Haverthwaite. And—I'm it!"

"All the same," said Milly, "if I were a man—and a young man—and not dependent on it—I wouldn't stick in a business that I didn't like. And you're

such an awful Radical, Bright, that it astonishes me to hear you talk about traditions as if they were sacred. But my father always says that you Radicals are the biggest old Tories of the lot!"

"Shouldn't wonder!" assented Bright. "He's a wise man, your father. But I've had the Marrashaw tradition drilled into me ever since I was old enough to use a spoon—rather! And it would take some drastic medicine to get it out of my blood. Lord bless you, Milly, if my father thought that his name would ever cease to be associated with that mill—why—he'd be out of his grave in no time! No!—I've just got to remember that I'm Marrashaw the—is it fifth or sixth? I've got to go on—and so's the tradition."

"Well, don't give away everything to the people," said Milly. "Keep a bit! You never know what may chance."

"I haven't given 'em anything—much—yet," answered Bright. "As to this new scheme, it seems a very queer thing, but I'm hanged if I can make out if they really want it."

"Do they ever know what they want?" suggested Milly. She had never bothered her head about politics, social or economic, in her life, but she was Ellerthwaite's daughter, and bred to his opinions. "They're all children yet! Don't give them the best silver to play with, Bright!"

"I tell you again—I'm hanged if I know if they want anything to play with," said Bright. "Best silver or best china! But I shall know soon."

He was thinking of the meeting, almost due then: he expected to hear the views of his three thousand folk, men and women, old and young, expressed at that. He confidently believed that there would be a full attendance, and he caused the biggest shed in the mill to be made ready. But here again he was moved to wonder and perplexity. When the evening arrived, and he walked on to the extemporised platform with Lockwood Clough, whom he had named as chairman, in view of his long connection with the business, there were not five hundred people in the place, and the majority of the audience was made up of managers, foreman, and old employees who, like Lockwood, had been at Marrashaws all their lives. The rank and file of the people were conspicuously absent.

Bright felt sore, nettled, disappointed. It afforded him no pleasure to hear encomimums of his scheme from the men who would chiefly profit by it. Managers and foreman, whose share in the division of profits would considerably augment their annual incomes would naturally be in favour of his proposals: so, too, would the old hands who would also benefit very handsomely. And after listening to several speeches from men of this sort, all of which might have been made in support of some vote of thanks, Bright grew restive and whispered to his chairman. Lockwood listened, nodded comprehendingly, and rose to his feet.

"Mr. Marrashaw wants to hear some discussion of his proposals," he said, looking round the audience. "Up to now we've heard naught but agreement with 'em. Mr. Marrashaw, as their author, wants to hear 'em criticised! Is there nobody 'at's got aught to say i' t' way of criticism? Come, now!"

There was a moment's silence: then, from amongst a group of men at the rear of the hall, one rose.

"Are we at liberty to say owt we choose to say, Mr. Chairman?" he asked. "Are we free to speak straight?"

"Free as air!" answered Lockwood. "Say owt you like, my lad, and the straighter the better. Mr. Marrashaw's here for criticism—he'll welcome aught you like to put before him. Straight, sharp, and to the point!—that's the ticket!"

"Then I would like to ask Mr. Marrashaw some questions, if he'll have t' kindness to answer 'em," said the intervener. "I'll make 'em as plain as I can."

"Mr. Marrashaw'll answer i' t' same way," declared Lockwood. Then, with a sly smile, he added "That is, as far as he can! Some o' you's a bit i' t' past master style at putting questions, you know."

"Simple enough, these'll be," retorted the questioner. "All right then—" he braced himself by a glance at his companions. "To start wi'—Why does Mr. Marrashaw differentiate between t' folk in his employ, preferring t' managers and t' foremen to t' old hands, and t' old hands to t' younger uns?"

"Hear—hear!" exclaimed several of the audience. "Hear!"

Bright got to his legs.

"I'm not going into elaborate details," he said. "You all know well enough that certain work is more valuable than other work. Wages of superintendence have always been at a higher rate than other wages. So much for one point. Surely, as to the other, a man who has twenty years' steady work to his credit is entitled to a bigger share than the beginner? That's common-sense."

There was no appalling acceptance of this declaration, and the questioner faced the platform again.

"Then Mr. Marrashaw holds that in a big business like this the particular work of one man is of more value than the particular work of another man?" he demanded. "To put it a bit plainer, he thinks that a foreman is of more value than the man under him?"

"Of course!" replied Bright.

The questioner glanced at his satellites and smiled.

"Well, I don't!" he retorted. "A big business like this here is just like one o' our big machines—there's big wheels and little wheels, and great parts and small parts, but t' little is just as important as t' big, and if t' littlest were removed, t' machine 'ud come to nowt! Every worker in a mill like this is of equal importance, man or woman, lad or lass, old or young, and all, therefore,

has equal rights."

"I don't agree," said Bright. "And I won't argue it!"

"Well, it's as well to know that, sir," replied the questioner cheerfully. "So now I'll pass to another point. Why does Mr. Marrashaw exclude from his scheme all his workfolk who haven't as yet served five years?"

"There must be a line drawn somewhere," replied Bright. "Our object in this firm has always been to keep our workpeople. I'm glad to think that—as far as I know that object has been well attained. Outside the boys and girls, there are only a few hundreds—three or four hundreds—of our workpeople who are outside the five years' line. They would come within, very soon, most of them."

"Begging Mr. Marrashaw's pardon, Mr. Chairman," said the questioner, "that's not the point. Mr. Marrashaw's scheme is for the division of profits for a certain year. It may be for this year—or for next year—or for a year twenty years off. But whenever it is, it's for the past twelve months trading. Now, the man who's only been two years in employ has done as much towards making the profits for any given past twelve months as the man who's fifteen or twenty years to his credit! That's certain! Therefore, he's just as much entitled to benefit as t' other man. If he doesn't then you're robbing him in order to increase t' other man's share. That's favouritism!"

Bright reflected a little before rising again.

"Well," he said. "Perhaps there's something in that. But the scheme's not final. I want it to be discussed and criticised, freely. Plain, outspoken opinion! —I don't mind how much there is of it."

"Why, then, Mr. Chairman," continued the questioner, meticulously particular about the rules of debate, "perhaps I may be allowed to say what my plain opinion o' Mr. Marrashaw's scheme is. It's no doubt well and honestly meant on his part—I for one gi' him every credit for his good intentions. But it comes to this—it's just like all t' rest o' th' schemes 'at comes from t' top: it's a scheme 'at'll benefit them that are at t' top, and'll do little for t' bottom dog. I've taken t' trouble to go into t' figures o' t' matter. As Mr. Marrashaw's proposals stand, they'd put several hundred a year each into t' hands o' t' managers and foremen, who are all very well salaried already. T' owd hands o' twenty years' standing 'ud benefit considerably: they've nowt to grumble about now, most on 'em. But as for t' majority on us, we should get next to nowt!—what we should get wouldn't be appreciable—it wouldn't compare wi' a substantial rise in wages. As I say, Mr. Marrashaw's scheme is one for benefiting such as is sitting on that platform, and on t' front benches below it —t' big pots o' t' business. If he wants us small fry to fall in wi' it, he mun revise it!"

Before either Bright or Lockwood could make any reply to this plain

declaration of opinion, another man rose, a younger man, whom Bright recognised as a recent arrival at the mill, and knew from his speech to be a native of those parts.

"If I may respond to your invitation to speak plainly and straightforwardly, Mr. Chairman," he began, "I should like to preface what I have to say by joining with the last speaker in an expression of cordial belief in the honesty—and I will add, kind-heartedness—of Mr. Marrashaw's intentions. Nobody, I am sure, can disagree on that point! But that is no reason why we should agree with Mr. Marrashaw in his proposals. In my opinion—and, as far as I have been able, I have studied this question—Mr. Marrashaw is on absolutely wrong lines. I gather, from his action, that he believes in profit-sharing, as a theory—and, more, as a theory that can be reduced to practice. Very good—then he should establish it on the right basis. And what is that? It is this—under our present system, there should be a certain standard of profit on the capital concerned—we needn't fix it at five, or ten, or twelve and a half per cent: we needn't fix it at all: suffice it to say, we're agreed—as things are—that the capitalist employer is entitled to it. But—if he once grants the principle of profit-sharing at all, he's committed to this:—that all profits—not a part of them, but all! beyond that defined standard, belong to his workers! All increases in profits should go to employees. And they should be shared by the workers in equal proportions, with no preferences, and no favouritism! I agree with the last speaker in his simile drawn from the machinery: I hold that the small cog in the wheel is just as important as the wheel itself; if, then, there is to be profit-sharing at all, it should be in equal shares for every worker in the business, whether he be the head of a department or the lad who picks up waste from the floor!"

There was sufficient applause after this to bring Bright to his feet again.

"I've already said that my scheme is not final," he remarked. "Every scheme is capable of improvement. What I wanted to find out was—what do my workpeople think of it?"

There was a sudden laugh at the rear of the hall. A man rose, and waved his hand suggestively at the empty benches.

"If Mr. Marrashaw wants to know what his workpeople think of his scheme," he said, almost contemptuously, "let him look here! There's scarce anybody come to hear about it—except those who'll profit by it!"

When it was over, Bright realised that the meeting had been a failure and that his proposals were not popular. In his innocence and small acquaintance with things he was astonished: knowing, from his figures, that even the smallest beneficiary would have received a very comfortable addition to his or her yearly earnings, it amazed him to find such apathy and lukewarmness. But he was still more amazed to get a chance sidelight on the situation from one of

his women workers, with whom he chanced to meet on the outskirts of the millyard. She was a shrewd, knowing, middle-aged woman, who had worked at Marrashaws from childhood, and now had sons and daughters in Bright's employ.

"Some of you people don't seem much impressed with this profit-sharing proposal of mine, Mary," observed Bright. "I thought you'd have jumped at it! But I get nothing but cold water!"

The woman looked round. She and Bright had met in a narrow street, wherein, at that moment, nothing in the form of human life was to be seen except in the presence of an old man or two, sitting at a cottage door or a child playing about the pavement. Nevertheless, she lowered her voice.

"Aye, an' no wonder, Mr. Bright!" she said, meaningly. "It 'ud be a wonder if you did get aught but could water considering what's going on i' t' mill! You mustn't think that there isn't hundreds of us—especially t' women—'at wouldn't be only too thankful if them proposals o' yours was carried out—I know I should! But—t' folks is having their minds set again it—they're being poisoned, as it were, Mr. Bright. Ever since you printed them papers, there's been quiet and steady talk again t' whole thing—it creeps fro' one to another. It's like that there passage i' t' Bible, sir—somebody's sowing tares i' your wheat?"

"Who?" asked Bright.

"Nay!" exclaimed the woman. "That's more nor I can tell! But there it is—t' proposal's none welcome to somebody or other, and him, or her, or them, is poisoning and persuading all t' lot again it. There's a deal o' secret work among working folk now-a-days, Mr. Bright—plotting and planning, and such-like. And quiet bodies like me—"

"You've no idea who it is, then?" interrupted Bright.

"I haven't, sir," said the woman. "I tell you—there's planning and plotting. And it's all done i' t' dark. Like them mouldy wasps, 'at you see i' t' fields—scratting and tunnelling underground."

Bright went away, wondering. Whose was this secret influence?

X

At this time of indecision and perplexity, Bright was conscious, in a vague, indefinite way, that something had come or was coming, between Hermie Clough and himself. Despite the fact that they now saw more of each other than they had ever seen in their lives, some curious difference seemed to have arisen in their relations. They were not and never had been demonstrative lovers: the bond which existed was more that of mutual interest and affinity of interest than of passion or even of warm affection: Hermie, despite her youthfulness and good looks, was of an essentially cool and well-balanced temperament, and Bright too much of a self-centred dreamer to be ardent in his love affairs. But up to that stage they had reposed great and constant trust in each other, and if Hermie had kept from Bright the more intimate particulars of her propagandist notions, Bright had kept little from her, saving the exact details of his profit-sharing scheme. But now, when he found disapproval and reticence on her part, he, too, withdrew into his shell, and instead of telling her what the woman employee had said to him about secret influence being at work in the mill, he kept it to himself. And the more he kept it to himself, the more he wondered. Whose was this secret influence, and what was his, her, or their object! Naturally, he thought that the opposition to his proposals must come from the trades-unions, for the reasons which Ellerthwaite had suggested that afternoon at the club. But—who were the people, amongst his own folk, who were active agents? It seemed to Bright, the inheritor of certain old-fashioned notions, that whoever they were, their conduct was of the nature of treachery. His father had taught him to regard Marrashaw's Mill and its three thousand workers as a big family, bound together by common interests and ties: there might be dissensions in it, and black sheep in it, as in the case of all families, but after all, it was a family, full of tribal feeling—or ought to be—and for any member of it to sow seeds of dissension in secret appeared to Bright's way of thinking, a base and dishonourable thing. He found himself repeating what the woman had said—"It's like that there passage i' t' Bible—somebody's sowing tares i' your wheat." And being, like all folk of those parts, familiar with the wording of Holy Writ, he repeated to himself, with a grim smile, the text of which his informant had spoken—"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."

"Only—he hasn't gone his way!" mused Bright. "He seems to be still at work."

It was while he was wondering about the malign influence which, as far as he could see, bade fair to upset his plans for the betterment of his workpeople, that Bright once more came across Simon Grew. Grew came up to Marrashaw

Royd one night, to ask Bright's charity in aid of the widow and family of a man who had met with a fatal accident: the circumstances were sad and appealing, and Bright willingly added his name and a handsome donation to the list which Grew produced. And then an idea struck him, and he turned on Grew with a speculative glance.

"You're the sort of man who knows a lot!" he said, suddenly. "You told me that you supplied my father with information of various sorts. Did any of it happen to be of a secret nature?"

Grew looked round the room. He and Bright were sitting in the very chairs in which Grew and Charlesworth had sat on the night of the revelations, and they were alone, as Charlesworth and Grew had been. He laughed quietly, and gave his questioner a suggestive glance.

"Aye, all of 'em!" he answered. "As secret as the grave!"

"So I guessed," said Bright. "He wanted that sort of information?"

"He was rare and glad to get it, Mr. Marrashaw," replied Grew. "You may be sure o' that from what he paid for it—willingly."

"What was he going to do with it?" asked Bright.

"Well," answered Grew, "we talked o' that, to be sure. I gave him permission to tell what I'd told him to his friend, Mr. Ellerthwaite. I knew it 'ud go no further. He's an honourable man, that—I'd no objection to your father's telling Ellerthwaite. But, beyond that, I don't know what he'd ha' done with it. Anyway, he was glad to be forewarned."

"Forewarned?" said Bright. "Against—what?"

"Against what's coming," replied Grew, with another sly look.

"Is there something coming?" asked Bright.

"Oh, aye—if the folks that want it to come can engineer it!" declared Grew. "It'll come, right enough, if—if, mind you!"

"Well—what?" demanded Bright.

"General strike," said Grew, laconically. "All t' lot—miners—railwaymen—transport workers, textile workers—all the boiling. Paralyse trade—that's the ticket!"

"Do you mean that there are people here in Haverthwaite who are working for that?" asked Bright.

"I do!" said Grew. He laughed, with a cynical turn of his lip which showed Bright that he knew what he was talking about. "You can lay your last penny on that, sir," he added confidently. "It's a fact!"

"Trades-unions, I suppose?" suggested Bright.

"No!" said Grew. "T' trades-unions ha' naught to do with it, Mr. Marrashaw. The folks that have 'ud give their two eyes, all on 'em, so to speak, if they could capture t' trade-unions. Happen they will—some day. It'll not be for want o' trying," he added, with a shrewd glance. "They're all triers."

“Who are they?” asked Bright.

“Ah!” laughed Grew. “That ’ud be telling!”

“You told my father?” suggested Bright.

“I told him—yes,” assented Grew.

Bright became silent for a while. He was thinking. There was in him a thoroughly English dislike of underhand and secret methods, and he had now no longer any doubt that such methods were in force amongst his three thousand workpeople. Suddenly he turned to his visitor.

“Look here!” he said. “You know all about my profit-sharing scheme?”

“I do!” answered Grew.

“You’re probably aware that it’s not regarded with any great favour by the employees?” continued Bright.

“Aye!” said Grew. “Of course!”

“Do you know anything about that?” asked Bright, emphasising his last word.

“Lots!” replied Grew. “Lots! All about it!”

“Then I’ll do what my father did,” said Bright suddenly. “Tell me what you know and I’ll make it worth your while. I’m not going to have secret influences at work in my business!”

“They are at work, Mr. Marrashaw,” remarked Grew, quietly. He drew his chair nearer to Bright’s. Already he knew that he would go out of that room richer than he had entered it: very well, he would give Bright full value for his money. “They are at work!” he repeated. “They’ve been at work for a long time—before your father’s death—and they’ve been particularly busy since you put out your profit-sharing scheme. Your plans wouldn’t suit their policy at all—they’d interfere seriously with it. They don’t want people to enter into partnership with the capitalists in any way whatever—what they want is to stamp the capitalist clean out of existence. They look on schemes like yours as sops to stave off the growing hunger—well, they don’t want sops!—they want the dish all to themselves!”

“Particularise!” said Bright. “Plain words, now!”

“All right!” assented Grew. “There’s a certain society in this town, with only a few members, but all brainy and clever. They’re apostles o’ this new Syndicalism—you know what that means, as well as I do, happen better than I do. Their policy is quiet spread of their principles—all in the direction of that general strike that I mentioned just now—a big, final strike in the great industries, one that’ll literally paralyse all trade and commerce, force a complete capitulation from the government of the day, and establish Syndicalism on the ruins of the old, thoroughly-wrecked system. And I tell you their notions and ideas and principles and theories are gaining ground—they’re more powerful than you’d think. And it’s from them that the opposition to

your scheme arises: it wouldn't pay them to let you establish it and get your folks on your side through it—their game is to get your folks not for you, but against you!"

"Who are they?" demanded Bright.

Grew hesitated a moment.

"Well," he said, at last. "There's no need to give you the names of every one. It's sufficient for your purpose if I tell you that you've three of 'em in your employ. It's those three that have engineered the opposition to your scheme ever since you printed your proposals. Quietly, you understand?—they're devils at underground work, all three of 'em!"

"Who are they?" repeated Bright. "Those three?"

"Well, there's Allot Howroyd—one o' your clerks," answered Grew. "You know him, of course."

"He's been with us a long time—to my knowledge," remarked Bright. "You're certain of what you're saying?"

"I'm certain about everything," replied Grew, with quiet assurance. "I could prove it, easy enough, if need be. Then there's one of your overlookers, Jubb—Lister Jubb."

"Another old hand!" said Bright. "Did you tell my father of this—give him these names?"

"Aye, I did!" replied Grew.

"What did he say?" asked Bright.

"He was taken aback," said Grew. "Astonished! Now that I come to think of it, I fancy he exclaimed that they were two of his most trusted men."

"Well?" enquired Bright, after a pause. "You said there were three—Who's the other?"

Grew looked narrowly at his questioner. There was something in his glance that aroused Bright's wonder: it was full of meaning.

"A woman!" said Grew. "And t' most dangerous and influential of t' lot! You know her well enough, Mr. Marrashaw. Hermie Clough!"

Before the name left Grew's lips, Bright had anticipated its coming. In spite of himself, he felt the colour mounting to his cheeks, and in order to cover his confusion he rose and went over to the cupboard in which Charlesworth had kept his private store of good liquors and prime cigars. It still remained as Charlesworth had left it: Bright, who scarcely knew whiskey from gin, or port from claret, had rarely looked within. But now he produced a decanter of whiskey from its shelves and a box of cigars, and fetching soda water and a glass from the sideboard, set his burdens down by his visitor's elbow and bade him help himself.

"You're absolutely sure, you say, of the truth of all these allegations?" he asked, leaning against the mantelpiece with his hands thrust in his pockets.

“They’re not suppositions?”

Grew, who was quick to notice that Bright carefully avoided mentioning Hermie Clough, smiled.

“It’s all absolute truth, Mr. Marrashaw,” he said, almost carelessly. “There’s no doubt whatever about it! My best respects, sir.”

“How do they carry this work on?” demanded Bright.

“That’s easy enough,” replied Grew. “You know what opportunities your people have of talking amongst themselves. Well. Well, these three, they instil their ideas into a chosen few. The chosen few talk to a few more. The few more go on spreading the thing. A word here—a word there—Lord bless you! Mr. Marrashaw—it’s easy work to spread sedition amongst people who are already half-disposed to it. You know that there’s a rebel strain in all the folk o’ these parts—it’s been bred in ’em ever since they took sides wi’ the Parliament against Charles the First, and sided with the first nonconformists again the Church. They’re always willing to rebel. And when three clever, plausible-tongued propagandists like those I’ve told you of get to work among ’em—Lord! you don’t know what they can do!”

“What do they promise the people?” asked Bright.

“They promise ’em—when Syndicalism’s triumphant—something akin to t’ millennium!” answered Grew, with a sneer. “Utopia! Land flowing wi’ milk and honey! No oppressions! No wars! A new earth! Happen,” he added, with another sneer, “a new heaven!—but I doubt if any on ’em believes i’ either heavens or hells! It amuses me,” he went on, nodding at Bright over his glass. “I don’t know how it strikes you, Mr. Marrashaw, and you’re far more of a scholar than I am, but all this is naught but anarchism—sheer anarchism!”

“You don’t believe in it?” said Bright.

“I’m an orthodox, evolutionary Socialist,” replied Grew with a knowing look. “I believe that society can be reconstructed by the peaceful co-operation of the working-classes with all other classes. That’s my belief as an individual—in private. In public, I’m the paid servant of a trades-union, and I know how to do my best for it.”

That Grew also knew how to do his best for himself was shortly proved by his going away with a substantial recompense for his information. He was well satisfied with his evening’s work: as for Bright, he felt as though he had been transformed into a fly and inveigled into a web dominated by three extraordinarily astute spiders.

XI

Since his succession to the chair of government at Marrashaw's Mills, Bright had made it his rule to present himself at the private office at ten o'clock every morning; Hermie Clough always turned up about the same time. But on the morning following upon his interview with Simon Grew he was at the mill by half-past nine. Passing along the corridor which stretched between the pilastered entrance-hall and his room, he signed to an office-boy to follow him: the office-boy, young as he was, wondered why Mr. Marrashaw looked so very grave and even angry.

"You know Allot Howroyd and Lister Jubb?" said Bright, as he laid aside hat and coat.

"Yes, sir," answered the lad.

"Go straight to them, just now, and tell both that Mr. Marrashaw wishes to see them in his private room," commanded Bright. "And then, when you've been to them, go to Mr. Walshaw, the chief cashier, and tell him to come to me, here, in ten minutes. Got that clearly? Off you go, then."

The office-boy went away, and Bright sat down in his father's old chair, and waited. There had never been any very close likeness between him and Charlesworth, but any very keen-eyed observer who knew both intimately would have seen one now. Bright's face was set, determined, masterful—the old Marrashaw strain had come out in it during the night, fierce and strong. He had sat plunged in deep thought for two hours after Grew's departure: he had awoke in the night and lain awake, thinking again; he had done more thinking since his final awaking that morning. And all his thoughts centred to a stern determination—he would have no underhand work, no treachery, on his premises. Fight in the open men might—as hard as they liked—but secret stabbing, secret plot-work, he would have none of. And now he was going to set down his foot, once for all.

Presently Howroyd and Jubb came in, together. Bright knew next to nothing about either. As far as he could remember he had never exchanged a word with Jubb and very few with Howroyd. And he had no intention of bandying words just then. Motioning them to shut the door, he looked steadily from one to the other.

"I want to ask you, Howroyd, and you, Jubb, certain questions," he said. "I shall be obliged if you'll give me plain answers. What I want to ask arises out of certain information which has been given me. Is it true that you are both members of a society or group formed in the town for the purpose of spreading the principles of Syndicalism?"

Howroyd looked at Jubb, and Jubb looked at Howroyd. It was Howroyd

who presently replied to Bright's question.

"Without answering that in direct terms, Mr. Marrashaw," he said quietly, "may I point out that we're at liberty, as private individuals, to belong to any group, any society, any movement we like?"

"As private individuals, you are," answered Bright. "So we'll leave that. I'll go on to a more pertinent question. Is it true that since I put forward my profit-sharing scheme you have both done everything you could, by influence and persuasion, to prevent your fellow-workpeople from falling in with it? Answer me that, if you please!"

Again it was Howroyd who spoke. His usually pale face had grown paler since he entered the room, and his deep-set eyes were beginning to glow. He glanced at Jubb: Jubb nodded.

"It's perfectly true that we've spoken against your scheme," answered Howroyd. "We don't agree with it! It's not in accordance with our principles: we don't want to see it, nor any such project, adopted, here, or elsewhere. As to influence and persuasion, you use both terms in a way I shouldn't. What we have done has been to criticise and speak against the scheme whenever it has been discussed in our presence; to point out its weaknesses, fallacies, dangers to the class it's supposed to benefit. Why not? you invited criticism and even opposition. As free men, we've a right to say what we think!"

"Why did you not come out in the open, then?" demanded Bright. "Neither of you were at the meeting."

"That's not our method," replied Howroyd. "Our method is to teach our principles by quiet conversation and gradual permeation. Once more—we have a right to it."

"In plain words—you think it honest to take my money, and set my people against my plans!" exclaimed Bright. "Is that it?"

Howroyd's pale cheeks assumed a faint colour, and his sombre eyes flashed.

"That is not it!" he answered. "As to setting your people against your plans, we, like all other men and women in your employ, have a perfect right to criticise any plan, project, proposal which affects our well-being. As to taking your money, you know as well as we do—indeed, far better—that for every penny you pay us, we give you much more than an equivalent. You've admitted that already, in the printed proposals for profit-sharing which you sent out."

"You contend then that if I, as proprietor of this business, formulate certain schemes, you, as employees, have a right to counteract them?" demanded Bright.

"So far as they concern ourselves—yes," assented Howroyd. "Decidedly so!"

“And you intend to go on advising my workpeople not to agree with the profit-sharing scheme I’ve devised for their benefit?” asked Bright. “I want a plain answer!”

“We intend to stand by our right of free speech,” replied Howroyd. “I shall say precisely what I please about your scheme, and whenever I please, and wherever I please!”

“And I shall do the same!” said Jubb, resolutely. “I’m a paid man, but that doesn’t make me a slave. Nothing’ll do that, and—”

The door opened, and the chief cashier, an elderly, spectacled man walked in, and looked a mild astonishment at what he saw. And at the sight of him, Howroyd and Jubb exchanged significant glances.

“Mr. Walshaw,” said Bright, “how are these two men paid—monthly, weekly, or what?”

The cashier glanced wonderingly from master to men.

“Howroyd monthly, and Jubb weekly, Mr. Marrashaw,” he answered.

“Give Howroyd a month’s salary, and Jubb a week’s wages,” commanded Bright. “Both in lieu of notice. They’re dismissed.”

Then, with a wave of his hand, he signed to all three to leave the room, and as the door closed upon them, he rose from his chair and crossing to the window beyond it, looked out on the quadrangle. The first object on which his eyes fell was Charlesworth’s statue, massive and imposing in the morning sunlight. Bright’s lips met in a tight grip as he looked on the marble effigy: in that moment he began to realise and to understand his father better than he had ever done when Charlesworth was flesh and blood.

XII

Twenty minutes ticked themselves away before Bright's door opened again. Then Hermie Clough burst in, and Bright, turning slowly from the window, saw that her face was aflame with indignation and her eyes hot with anger: she was quivering, too, from head to foot of her slight figure. She came to a stop by the side of her writing-table, and resting the tips of her fingers on it, faced him.

"Bright!" she exclaimed. "You've turned out Allot Howroyd! And Lister Jubb! It's—tyranny! The meanest, most abominable tyranny! Where are all your promises? All your good intentions! To dismiss men for—"

"I've dismissed both men for gross and lying treachery!" interrupted Bright. "Just as I shall dismiss any man, woman, boy, girl, who carries on the same game! I'll never do a thing, Hermie, to interfere with freedom, nor with liberty of speech, but I'll have no mean, lying spies about my premises! If they can't come out into the open—"

"Mean? Lying?" cried Hermie. "They? Then—"

Suddenly she paused, looking fixedly at Bright.

"The meanness and lying and spying are in the man who's led you to this!" she said. "You've let yourself be deceived—"

"No!" said Bright, firmly. "Both men acknowledged that they used their best endeavours to defeat my scheme: they gloried in it, I think! Frank and candid enough, anyway."

"And you—you turned them off for—for that!" exclaimed Hermie. "For opposing your scheme?"

"Precisely!" retorted Bright. "I'm not such a fool as to employ people who thwart my projects. Let 'em go and do it outside!" He laughed, a little bitterly. "While I'm captain of this ship," he went on, "I'll have a loyal crew! Otherwise—"

Hermie suddenly interrupted him with a strange, searching glance.

"Are you going to call these two men back—and re-instate them?" she demanded. "Answer—Bright!"

"No!" replied Bright. "I am not!"

He plunged his hands in his pockets and looked at her: something in her eyes told him that it was now or never between her and him.

"Neither for you, Hermie, nor for anybody!" he said, suddenly. "I'm master! And," he added, "you'd better realise that—as well as the others. I've a crow to pull with you, yet!"

Hermie gazed at him a moment, as steadily as he was gazing at her. Then she lifted her left hand and slowly drew from its third finger the engagement

ring which Bright had given her just after his father's death. She laid it on the table before him, picked up her gloves and umbrella, and walked out of the room, silently. Just as she had left Charlesworth, so now she turned her back on Bright.

END OF THE SECOND PART

Part the Third: THE SON OF HIS FATHERS

I

When Hermie Clough closed the door and went away from him, Bright realised that she also closed a chapter of his book of life. It was neither from instinct nor through intuition but by sure knowledge that he now felt everything to be over between her and himself. He made no effort to call her back: he had no wish to have a last word with her. The thing was done: she had done it; perhaps he had helped to do it. For a moment he felt a little dazed: it was just as if he had experienced a sudden fall from an inconsiderable height or been unexpectedly submerged in ice-cold water. But presently he pulled himself together, thrust his hands in his pockets, and turning to the window, looked out across the quadrangle. His gaze on its familiar objects was abstracted; he was thinking, and not of the events of the last half-hour. Rather, his mind was running over the story of his relations with the girl who had just left him. Perhaps they had been unusual—odd, some folk would have called them, he supposed. Some folk, too, would have seen little of what was commonly considered love-making in those relations. Hermie and himself had been brought together by their work at the Technical school: interchange of opinion had revealed a mutual sympathy and community of interest: they had discovered that they shared common notions about things in general and about the future: each an idealist, he and she had come to think that their ideas might run on closely parallel lines and perhaps fuse in the end. But all along, spread across a two years' intimate acquaintanceship, Bright had felt vaguely conscious that he had never quite understood Hermie Clough, nor got at her real inner self: he knew, intuitively, that she went far beyond him in many of her ideas and conclusions, and experience had taught him that temperamentally she was elusive and secret. Now, however, she had been open and candid enough; as she had dealt with Charlesworth, his father, so she had dealt with him, the son. And Bright knew, when she laid her engagement ring on his desk, and walked out of the room, indignation quivering in every line of her slight figure, that he, after all, had only occupied a second place in her scheme of life—uppermost with Hermie, then, always, was this vague, shadowy thing, the cause. Evidently, she was the sort that would sacrifice everything to her devotion to that, to the Ideal—he was not quite sure that she might not have in her the stuff that lay in Joan of Arc, perhaps in Charlotte Corday: he could easily imagine her going to the stake, defiant and implacable to the last, in defence of her opinions, and he had a half-amused idea that her slender fingers

would be steady enough if circumstances impelled her to stick a knife in the throat of a tyrant.

But there were other matters than this, his own personal affair, to think of at that moment. He realised that he had come to a definite cross-road; a plain and unmistakable parting of the ways. It was well for him that he had by that time arrived at a clear knowledge of his own position. He had not given up, nor had he the slightest intention of giving up, any of his ideas about the relative positions of employed and employer, of labour and capital: he was not only as anxious as ever, but as determined as ever to re-adjust those positions in the light of his own reading of modern necessities. But circumstances had made him both capitalist and employer: he was Marrashaw, of Marrashaw's Mill. His own tastes might make him dislike his job: he did dislike it, but it was his job, and therefore he had got to do it. However deeply and sincerely he might sympathize with his people, he was master, and he was not such a fool as to believe that mastership could as yet be done away with. And a master was a master, and Bright knew well that he must now either make a firm, uncompromising, resolute stand for his rights as master, or become the victim and tool of a secret, dictating cabal which would prove more exacting and arbitrary than any tyrannical autocracy. He looked round the room in which he stood, at the old Marrashaw pictures and portraits, and out of the window, at the queer old birthplace of the family and the statues of his ancestors which it had been his father's odd whim to set up for all men to see. After all, there was a great deal to be proud of: perhaps he had always been prouder of it than he knew, or had ever let Charlesworth know. Certainly he had never meant to forswear the family traditions: what he had meant was to alter its workings in accordance with his own views of what the modern relations should be between capital and labour. He knew that his own intentions in regard to his carefully-evolved profit-sharing scheme had been sincere and genuine: even now, in spite of everything, he could not believe that the majority of his three thousand workpeople really wished to reject his offers. Surely the sensible and far-seeing folk amongst them would rally round him at the right moment!—but he would have no underhand work, no treachery; what angered him in his thoughts of men like Howroyd and Jubb was the knowledge that, as the woman had said to him, theirs was moles' work—underground, beneath the surface. Bright, in spite of his modernity, was old-fashioned enough to believe that there is no honest fighting unless in the open: had he been a soldier, he would have felt distinct qualms of conscience if commanded to sink mines under an unconscious enemy.

A diffident tap at his door heralded the entrance of Lockwood Clough. Bright bade him come in and sit down: like his father, he had a genuine respect for this old servant and there was no man in all Haverthwaite, not even

Ellerthwaite, that he would have been better pleased to see at that moment. He sat down himself and looked at Lockwood half shyly.

"You've heard what I've just done?" he said. "Dismissed Howroyd and Jubb."

"I heard," answered Lockwood, laconic as usual. "It's all over the place."

Bright's face grew determined and even threatening.

"That's a thing I won't have!" he declared. "Secret intriguing against me! Nobody could stand that, Lockwood. There'd be an end of all government if that went on. Any sensible man, or woman, must see that nobody can carry on a business if there are people in it who secretly oppose the head of it! Absurd!"

"That's not their idea," remarked Lockwood. He shook his head. "I'm only telling you what they say—not my notions, of course."

"Who are they?" demanded Bright.

"Them!" said Lockwood, nodding towards the big wings of the Mill, seen through the windows behind Bright's desk. "The folks, in general. Not business at all, they say. Naught to do with business. They say—will say—that chaps like Allot Howroyd and Jubb—as they claim themselves—have a right to criticise, to give their opinions."

"Hang it all, who says they haven't?" exclaimed Bright. "Not I, anyway! Haven't I been inviting criticism, asking for opinion? Didn't I ask 'em all to come to that meeting? Did these two come? Not they! Instead, they sneak about, poisoning the other folks' minds. I won't have that—let 'em come out into the open and speak straight out, as I've done. I'd respect 'em for that, and I should know what I had to deal with. But this is all part of a conspiracy. Look here, Lockwood!—there's a secret society in this town that wants—hanged if I know what it does want!—a universal strike or something—anyway, it's dead against my scheme and all such schemes, and Howroyd and Jubb belong to it, and that's why they've been at work. Now, I'll have no secret societies and agents at work here—if I know it. I'm genuinely anxious, as I've made abundantly clear, to make immense changes—changes that my father would have been just horrified and scandalised at!—in the way of benefiting the workpeople, but I'll do it in my own way—I'm not going to be a puppet in the hands of a clique!"

"I understand!" said Lockwood. "But I've known there was some such influence at work for a long time—I warned your father about it. He got some information from Grew, Mr. Bright."

"Well, so did I—last night," remarked Bright. "Grew's a rat, of course—but useful. And we'd better keep his name to ourselves, Lockwood."

"I don't know what he told your father," said Lockwood. "Nor what he told you. What I know is, there was some such influence at work for a long time. And what I came in to say is—this morning's work'll lead to trouble, Mr.

Bright, and you'd best be prepared."

"You mean—the workpeople will side with those two men?" suggested Bright.

Lockwood gave his young master a keen, knowing look.

"I mean this, sir," he answered. "As you know, every man and woman, lad and lass in Marrashaw's Mill is a trades-union member. Well, so's those two men—Howroyd and Jubb. We've scarce anybody in the place that doesn't belong to the union—nobody, indeed, except the managers and such-like: all the workfolk do: I do. And now—you'll have the union against yer!"

"On what grounds?" asked Bright. "I suppose even trades' union officials have some sense of proportion and recognise reason and common-sense?"

"They'll take high grounds," answered Lockwood. "They're over sharp and subtle to do aught else! They'll completely disregard your reasons for dismissal. They'll say that Howroyd and Jubb have been dismissed for exercising an Englishman's right of free speech! That's a good ticket. And you know what our folks are, sir."

"What?" asked Bright. "I'm not sure—having regard to what's happened lately—that I do, Lockwood! What are they?"

"They're Haverthwaite folk!" answered Lockwood, with a quiet smile. "Born rebels and radicals! They'll be up in arms as soon as it's dinned into their ears that men have been turned off for daring to say what they think. Whenever has there been a time in all t' history o' t' town, Mr. Bright, when interference with a man's liberty and freedom o' speech didn't rouse 'em same as a red tag is said to rouse a bull?"

"Yes," said Bright, after a moment's thought and reflection. "I suppose that's so."

"It is so!" asserted Lockwood. "You'll not remember them, but I've seen two or three strikes in this town that arose out of what sensible folks would call storms in tea-cups. All out o' naught!—'cause Tom thought his liberty was at stake, or Dick considered his tongue tied. And as for pig-headedness!—well," he added, with a laugh, "I've heard 'at Irishmen's noted for obstinacy, but if there's aught can beat Haverthwaite folk, I would like to see it!"

"You think we shall have a strike—here?" asked Bright.

"I think you'll be hearing from t' trade-union, sir," answered Lockwood. "Most likely, they'll be asking for t' re-instatement o' those two men."

Bright's face grew dark.

"They can ask!" he muttered. "But they'll not get! I shan't go back on my word, or action. That's no good. What else could I do? You don't mean to say that you disapprove it?"

"It's not for me at all," said Lockwood. "You've your own ideas. But there's things that might have been remembered. Both Howroyd and Jubb are

old hands—they've been in their respective departments a good many years. It might ha' been better, Mr. Bright, if you'd talked to 'em, and asked 'em to throw off this underneath business, and come out into open warfare—"

"I as good as did!" exclaimed Bright. "They retorted that that wasn't their way of fighting. They told me to my face—plainly enough—that what they stood for was in direct opposition to what I stand for. What else could I do? The fact of the case is this, Lockwood," he went on, warming to his subject. "I realised that Howroyd and Jubb and myself were merely representing two utterly different camps, and that it was impossible to get at a mutual agreement. I'm all for co-operation in industry: they're revolutionists: they want syndicalism, out and out. How could I, with this enormous business and three thousand workfolk on my hands, keep in my business a couple of active, clever men who are secretly intriguing to drive me clear out of it? It's as if a man built a house at infinite labour and expense and then calmly allowed another to live in the basement with the express intention of blowing the whole structure to pieces!"

"I see your point, sir," said Lockwood. "And I agree with you more nor you'd think. But I'm telling you to be prepared. Of course, the news has spread all round—such news always does—and there'll be trouble. These two men happen to be very popular with all t' rest, in a personal way, and you know that Haverthwaite folk are as clannish as they're obstinate. I see no way for it but trouble, Mr. Bright."

"That's begun already," remarked Bright. He pointed to Hermie's ring, which still lay where she had flung it. "Your daughter's done with me, Lockwood!" he went on. "She gave me my choice—between taking these men back or losing her, and she didn't, or wouldn't listen to anything I'd got to say. She—left me! This cause," he continued, with a bitter laugh, "is evidently more to her than I am."

Lockwood looked at the ring; for some time he kept his eyes on it, in silence.

"Then that's over and done with, Mr. Bright?" he said at last.

"So she said!" answered Bright. "You know your daughter."

Lockwood shook his head, slowly and thoughtfully.

"That's just what I don't, then!" he said. "I don't know my daughter! She's beyond me. A good girl enough, and's done well for me ever since her mother died; I haven't one word to say against her. But I neither know her nor understand her, and I don't believe anybody does. She's either born too late, or too early—that's as near as I can reckon it! But—I'm glad it's over between her and you."

"Why?" asked Bright.

" 'Cause I never approved of it!" replied Lockwood, frankly. "I'm an old-

fashioned chap, and I don't believe in a working-man's lass wedding with a rich man—it's not in accordance with my view o' things."

"I can assure you that neither your daughter nor I ever once thought of the thing in that light!" said Bright. "It never even occurred to us."

"I know it never did," assented Lockwood. He laughed quietly as he rose and made for the door. "But—it ought to have done. However—now she'll have a free hand, and—in my opinion—"

"Well?" asked Bright, seeing him pause. "What?"

"If I know aught about our Hermie," continued Lockwood, thoughtfully, "she'll rise to the occasion over this! If it comes to a row, she'll be in it. She'll have no regard to you. She'd take sides against her own father if it suited her policy. I'd rather have every trades-union in England against me than have her i' t' van of any opposition! If she once lets her tongue loose—"

"I've heard it," remarked Bright.

"Then there's no more to be said," concluded Lockwood.

He went away, and Bright, suddenly remembering that he was now secretary-less as well as jilted, began to make shift towards doing his correspondence. He summoned a clerk from the counting-house, and attacked the pile of letters. There was some relief to the situation in that, and he worked steadily on until noon. Then, when twelve o'clock struck and the mill-hands began pouring out of the great wings of the quadrangle on their way to home and dinner, he chanced to look out of his windows and saw that hundreds of them were hastening towards the open ground which lay between the river and the ornamental gateways of the Mill. Evidently, there was something afoot there: and presently he made out one or two figures above the heads of the gathering crowd, as if a platform had been devised, and speakers were already busy on it. There was a field-glass on the mantelpiece, left there since Charlesworth's days; Bright took it down, polished and adjusted it, and brought it to bear on the throng three hundred yards away. Then he saw what was happening—three or four prominent labour leaders of the town stood on a dray that had been drawn up by the riverside, and under their support, Hermie Clough, arm outstretched and finger raised, was haranguing the workfolk, men and women, who thronged around her: lifting the sash of his window, Bright heard the cheering which greeted her every sentence. So . . . it was going to be war . . . war to the knife, forced upon him, who was essentially, as he believed, a man of peace!

II

For that day, however, war remained in the air. Bright felt that it was all about, as one feels that thunder is in the sky, with the possibility of storm and rain, long before a quiver of lightning flickers on the horizon or a faint rumble is heard far off. But there was no breaking-out. The folk came back to their work when the dinner hour was over, and the labours of the day went on as if nothing had happened in the morning. And Bright made no reference to his action, and got no comment on it from any of his underlings, and at his usual time he went home, wondering what the next day would bring forth.

He was still living in the big house at Marrashaw Royd: it was his intention to live there until Trissie married Victor Ellerthwaite in the following spring; then he meant to hand it over to them, just as it stood, and betake himself to a residence more in keeping with his own taste. At Marrashaw Royd, as at the Mill, everything was going on just as things had gone on in Charlesworth's days. Except that Charlesworth's sturdy and dominating figure was no longer seen about house and grounds, nothing was changed. Brother and sister remained on just the same footing, except that Trissie, conscious of Bright's generosity to her and Victor in the matter of the house, was somewhat more affectionate and thoughtful than in the old days. And Bright had got into the habit of talking to her about business, and had discovered that she possessed a considerable strain of the Marrashaw instinct: more than once she had given him advice which proved to be sound. It was natural, therefore, that he should tell her of the events of the day as they sat alone after dinner that night. Trissie's first remark, after hearing the bare facts, was characteristic of her.

"Father wouldn't have stood that!" she said. "You did right, Bright, just what he would have done!"

As if by instinct, Bright's eyes turned in the direction of Charlesworth's chair. By tacit consent, neither Trissie nor he ever sat in that chair. It had remained precisely where it stood when Charlesworth last sat in it—at its own particular place at the end of the big hearthrug: the servants had received strict orders from both Bright and Trissie that it was never to be moved: close by it, also in its usual place, stood the ancient table whereon lay the family Bible on the fly-leaves of which was inscribed the history of the Marrashaws. That corner of the favourite room looked as if Charlesworth was expected to materialise in it at any moment.

"Yes," agreed Bright. "I think it is what he'd have done."

"There was nothing else to do, Bright," said Trissie, severely conscious of rectitude. "I'm glad you did it."

"Well," observed Bright. "I felt there was nothing else to do! I don't know

what—what, say, James Ellerthwaite, or Leeming, or any other employer would have done, but I'd got to do it! If I'd gone on, feeling that there were secret doings, treachery, underhand work, I—well, I couldn't have gone on, and there it is!"

"Anybody would have done what you did," declared Trissie. "There'd be no system or authority in a place, if men were allowed to circumvent employers in that fashion! All that sort of thing wants rooting out."

"Aye!" said Bright. "But—the next thing is, what'll follow? Lockwood Clough reckons there'll be a strike."

"Well, then we'll see who'll be master," observed Trissie, with the calm assurance of one born amongst the dominating class. "It's only a question of who can hold out longest. They can't! There have been strikes in the town before—the people have always had to give way. Don't you be frightened, Bright. Father wouldn't have been."

"I'm not frightened about anything," affirmed Bright.

Then, actuated by a sudden thought, he rose from his chair, and picking up the family Bible, laid it on the big table in the centre of the room. Trissie stared at him.

"Whatever are you doing?" she exclaimed. She had never seen her brother handle the Marrashaw muniments before, and it astonished her. "What do you want—with that?" she demanded.

"Wait a bit!" replied Bright. He turned back the heavily tooled and gilded cover, and with an outstretched forefinger began to run down the carefully tabulated lines wherein Charlesworth had epitomised the story of the family ventures. "Trissie!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Do you know that there's never been a strike at Marrashaw's Mill since the business came into existence? If one comes now, it'll be the first—the very first!"

"Some things can't be helped," remarked Trissie. "It won't be your fault. If they're foolish enough to strike, let them strike—and starve! That's my idea of it. All their own fault—not yours."

Bright made no answer. He was familiar enough with his sister's uncompromising notions where the workpeople were concerned. To Trissie, the three thousand folk of the mill were just as much machinery as the intricate things they tended: every one of them, in her opinion, ought to feel abject gratitude to the Marrashaws for providing each with work. And he was not thinking just then about the apportionment of blame if a strike did come off: he was curiously interested in the fact that whatever disputes had ever arisen between employers and employed in the Marrashaw business they had never come to open rupture. His eye ran along the various entries made in the Bible—there were records of various differences, now and again, but each appeared to have been settled on amicable terms. He closed the book with a bang of its

heavy cover, and put it back in its place.

"No!" he repeated. "There's never been a strike at Marrashaw's Mill. Pity it should come now!—after all those years."

"You're not going to give way, Bright?" said Trissie.

Bright laughed—in the odd, queer way which she did not understand.

"I'm not going to give way, Trissie," he answered quietly. "Not that sort! As you say—it won't be my fault. I'm not intending to give way at all—I'm only wondering how on earth it is that the people can't see my standpoint."

"They don't want to!" declared Trissie, contemptuously. "Besides, they're so ready to be pulled by the nose. Those paid agitators, who've got the gift of the gab, can lead them anywhere. That's what father always said. And if there never has been a strike at our mill, didn't he say, many a time, that there was sure to be a fight between master and man, once for all, sooner or later?—he knew it— Well, you've come in for it, instead of him. Stick to it, Bright—or you might as well close the place!"

Bright made no answer to that, either. His ideas were not his sister's—yet he knew that Trissie's small brain had got a certain modicum of truth and common-sense in it. After his cavalier treatment and summary dismissal of Howroyd and Jubb, he had either got to stand to his guns or be swept clean away in the rush of an oncoming enemy. He meant to stand to his guns—how, otherwise, would he ever build up that ideal industrial community wherein there was to be absolute trust and complete understanding between employer and employed? Bright cherished dreams and was unworldly enough to believe they could be materialised in the practical actualities of everyday business life—he dreamt of a great business wherein the humblest lad at the base had relatively as keen an interest and as substantial a share as the man at the apex, and in which everybody concerned laboured with mutual goodwill and unselfishness, the general good a more important thing than individual aggrandisement. How was that to be accomplished if one man here and another there used unusual talents and skill to spread poisonous sentiment?

"Once give way, and there's no holding them!" said Trissie. "That's what Victor says—and Victor's head is screwed on quite straight, Bright."

Bright laughed at this dutiful sentiment, made in sober seriousness: Trissie's sense of humour was not remarkably deep.

"Yes," he answered. "I don't think Victor's much amiss in that respect, Trissie—they screwed him up all right in the making. However, I've no intention of giving way."

"Don't!" said Trissie, approvingly. "After all, we've got to remember father."

Two men who called on Bright at the mill next morning and were shown into the private room with little delay, remembered Charlesworth Marrashaw

well enough when they came face to face with his son. Little alike as father and son had been in outward appearance, there was in Bright very much more than a reminiscence of the dogged and unbending spirit of Charlesworth, and as these men had known Charlesworth during many years they were quick to see that it would be no easier to deal with his successor than it had ever been with him. Pleasant and cordial in manner, Bright at the same time suggested adamantine resolution: the very set of his jaw warned his visitors that he was proof against threat or argument.

Bright knew these men—one was the elderly man who had taken the chair at the lecture in the Independent Labour Hall and had suggested that he, Bright, should join the party and be run for Parliament; the other was the local representative of the big trades-union to which the workers at Marrashaw Mill belonged. And he knew, too, what they had come for, and said so, with a laugh.

"And so I suppose," he continued, "it's a question of my hearing what you've got to say, and your hearing what I've got to say. Now then!—which of us is to say first? Just as you like."

"There's no desire on my part for aught but friendliness, Mr. Marrashaw," said the elder man.

"Nor on mine for aught but the same thing," said the younger.

"I'm friendly enough!" declared Bright. "I've shown it. What you're here for, I take it, is this—I've summarily dismissed two of my men, Howroyd and Jubb, who are members of your union. You want to know what's going to be done—in view of my arbitrary, tyrannical conduct? There have already been indignation meetings—I know about them. There was one at noon yesterday; another last night—there are to be more to-day. There's a strike threatened—you want to know if it can be averted by my climbing down, eh? Well, I'll just tell you the plain truth in plain words. No! I'm not going to recede one inch from the position I've taken a firm stand on. That's—final!"

The two men looked at each other: clearly, they had not been prepared for so much of definiteness at the outset. The elder man glanced from his companion to Bright and his face grew troubled.

"Well, of course, if that's so, Mr. Marrashaw," he said, falteringly. "I—we—why, I don't know what to say! We thought you'd be inclined to talk matters over—"

"I'll talk 'em over from now until night, if you like," interrupted Bright. "But I shan't budge from my position. Look here!—I said I'd hear what you've got to say, and of course, you'll hear what I've got to say. Very well—which first?"

"Perhaps you'll say your say, then, Mr. Marrashaw," suggested the trades-union man. "We've heard the other side—plenty! Put it from your standpoint,

sir."

"I'll do that as briefly as possible," responded Bright. "You try, both of you, to put yourself in my place. As you know very well, I succeeded to this business quite unexpectedly, through my father's sudden death. I found it absolutely in my hands—a gigantic business in which three thousand people are employed. Now, with the way in which it had been conducted in the past, by my father, and his father, and his father before him and so on, I'd nothing and have nothing to do—I'm not, and won't be, responsible for anything they did. I—"

"You've inherited their wealth, Mr. Marrashaw!" murmured the younger man.

"True—I'm responsible to that extent," said Bright, "and I've my own ideas as to what to do with it. But I was saying—I came into this business and found it absolutely mine: to do what I liked with. Now I refused to be bound or trammelled by the traditions of its previous owners—the business became mine—mine!—and I resolved that in future it should be run on lines that would also be mine, and in accordance with the requirements of this age. I had an ideal—I've got it now. I want to establish an absolutely ideal business, in which the relations of capital and labour, employer and employed, shall be such as not to leave one flaw!—I want to see every man, woman, girl, boy satisfied, and more than satisfied, feeling that he and she, old or young, is one part of a thoroughly united whole. In brief words, I wanted and want to make Marrashaw a model establishment, with which nobody could find any fault. Do you see that?"

"There's nobody questions your good intentions, Mr. Marrashaw," said the trades-union man. "You can rest assured of that."

"Glad to hear it," said Bright. "Whoever did would be singularly blind! Well—I set to work with that idea before me. I've always been a staunch believer in profit-sharing in industry. I work hard to formulate a scheme which shall be comprehensive, fair, just. I evolve one at last, which, as I work it out, will considerably augment the incomes of the vast majority of my workpeople and ensure that every man and woman who sticks to Marrashaws will be handsomely provided for, for life. Perhaps the scheme isn't perfect: I don't say it is: it's like all other schemes, capable of improvement and readjustment, and I'm only too willing to correct its errors. But what happens? From the moment I put it forward there's secret, underhand, malicious—"

"Question about malicious," interrupted the younger man softly. "Matter of opinion, sir."

"Well, leave the word out, then," continued Bright. "—secret working against it; so much so that when a public meeting's called to discuss it, there's scarcely anybody there! Instead of its opponents being honest and coming out

into the open to discuss, criticise, and suggest, they work against it, and against me, by methods that are curiously un-English, doing all they can to poison the minds of their fellow-workers. I become conscious of this—I get to feel, nay, to know that there are people in my employ who do not want to help me towards establishing a model business, but rather desire to foment dissension and bring about what would be nothing less than anarchy. Well, I find out who these people are, and, being a plain, common-sense, straightforward man, I dismiss them. And now look you here!" he concluded, suddenly thrusting his face forward towards his visitors with a searching, somewhat cynical look. "If you were in my place, anxious to settle this business on model lines, entirely in the interest of the workpeople themselves, and you found you'd men in your employ resolved on circumventing you in your schemes, would you do aught different to what I did in showing Howroyd and Jubb that door? Come, now!"

The elder man, who had listened to Bright with great attention and evident sympathy, looked down at the carpet, as if at a loss for an immediate answer. But his companion smiled—and his smile was satirical.

"I should think you know as well as I do, Mr. Marrashaw, that wherever there's three thousand workers there's bound to be some that'll do what you call underground work," he said. "You can't stop it, sir!—men will talk, and criticise—aye, and plot, too! It's always been like that, and always will be."

"I don't deny it," replied Bright. "All I say is this—if I'm endeavouring, as sole proprietor of this business, to put it on the model footing I've just spoken of, I'm not going to have any man secretly working to thwart all my good endeavours. Criticism, strong, vigourous, drastic as you like, I'll welcome—gladly!—so long as it's open and above-board. But I'll have no secret work—if I can stop it."

"You can't!" said the younger man. "Nobody can! We aren't in Utopia, and this isn't the Millennium, Mr. Marrashaw. You might have been certain that in addition to those who would oppose openly, there'd be those who'd oppose secretly. It's one man's way to come out into the open—another's not to. And of course, we know well enough where the secret opposition to your scheme came from. Syndicalism's afoot in this town, sir!"

Bright gave his informant a knowing look.

"Do you think I'm not aware of that?" he asked. "Of course it's afoot in this town, and in a good many other places. And—since you've mentioned it—it'll either capture your trades-unions or smash them to pieces! But—that's neither here nor there, in relation to this present matter, except that both Howroyd and Jubb are out-and-out Syndicalists. Now—what do you want? I've had my say—you know quite well where I am. Where are you?"

The elder man stirred himself and looked at Bright almost pleadingly.

"Mr. Marrashaw!" he said. "We don't want a strike! It'll be a sore trouble

to me, personally, to see a strike start—I don't want to get across with your people. I'm inclined to agree with you a good deal, I can see your point. But you know what Haverthwaite folk are—"

"I'm beginning to!" interrupted Bright, with a grim smile. "Just beginning!"

"Well, they are," said the elder man. "And they always were, and they always will be! Now these two men, Howroyd and Jubb, are very popular, and I should say that most of your people'll side with 'em. And besides, sir, you've touched the whole lot in the tenderest spot of all in dismissing these two men—you've interfered with liberty of speech. They're all saying that if a man isn't free to exercise his own tongue he might as well ha' been born wi'out one."

"I gave them a chance to exercise their tongues as much as ever they pleased," retorted Bright. "If they'd come to my meeting, they could have talked for seven nights on end, if they'd liked! And—I'd have listened, patiently."

"That's not it, Mr. Marrashaw," said the younger man, quickly. "They claim the right to talk when they like, where they like, and how they like. They don't make fine distinctions, either. In their opinion—and you know how stiff-necked they are when they once form an opinion—you've turned off Howroyd and Jubb for free speech, and they argue that if you'll do it to one you'll do it to another."

"I didn't dismiss Howroyd and Jubb for any such reason," said Bright.

"No!—but that's how your folk take it," replied the younger man. "And that's the difficulty. They've already got it firmly fixed in their heads that Howroyd and Jubb are martyrs—and," he added, drily, and with a look that was half a wink, "if Haverthwaite folks once start making a martyr of one of their own lot they'll not half do it—they'll elevate him into a saint before they've done!"

"Well?" said Bright. "I asked—what do you want?"

The younger man glanced at his companion.

"Mr. Marrashaw!" said the elder man. "I'm all for compromise in these matters—I'm an old-fashioned man, and I am!—I believe in compromise. It's better to settle than to split, any time. Now, you're just starting out on lines of your own, and I would like to see you develop 'em—I'm sure, always have been sure, that you mean well by your people, and I want to see it go on. Couldn't you, now—I'm putting it to you—couldn't you agree that there's been a misunderstanding; that you've no desire whatever to shut Allot Howroyd's or Lister Jubb's or any other man's mouth, if only he'll come out in the open and be frank about it, and—and take these two back? Then there'd be peace. Come now, Mr. Marrashaw?"

“I’ve already said I haven’t any desire to curb anybody,” replied Bright. “And there’s no misunderstanding. If these men will give me their word that they’ll stop secret methods of propaganda amongst my workpeople, they’re welcome to come back to their jobs, and they can criticise my schemes and plans as much as ever they like—if only they’ll do it to my face. That’s been the position all along. But,” he added, with a significant look, “they won’t!”

“What makes you think that, Mr. Marrashaw?” asked the trades-union representative, quickly and with a certain look of half-suspicious enquiry.

“Because what’s behind them won’t let them,” answered Bright. “And they’ll pay no attention to you. It’s as much your quarrel as it’s mine, if you only knew it. These people are out to do one of two things, so far as you trades-unions are concerned—it’s as I said just now; they’ll either capture or smash you. If they see that they can advance their cause by getting up a strike against me, they’ll do it, in spite of anything you can say. In their opinion trades-unionism, as it exists at present, is a back number: it’s no use. You trades-unionists would leave men like me, employers, a normal rate of profit, wouldn’t you?”

“Well?” assented the younger man.

“These people—syndicalists—wouldn’t leave me or my like anything,” said Bright. “There’s as deep a gulf between you and the syndicalists as there is between them and me! And I tell you that if it’s going to suit the purposes of the group that’s in this town to make mischief between me and my people, they’ll do it, and nothing that you can say or urge will have any effect.”

“You’ve no objection to our trying, Mr. Marrashaw?” suggested the elder man. “We don’t want to see trouble arising at the beginning of winter.”

“You can try whatever you please,” replied Bright. “My position’s just where it was.”

His visitors left him, and he went on with his work, and worked through the day with no further interruption. But just as he was about to go home that afternoon, they came back to him. The elder man looked downcast: the younger appeared to be exceedingly puzzled.

“You’ve had no luck?” said Bright.

The trades-union man shook his head; evidently his perplexity deepened with every added moment of reflection.

“Well, I can’t make it out, Mr. Marrashaw,” he answered. “Seems to me that this underground work that you spoke of must have been going on a good deal more than I’d ever known of! And it seems to me, too, that this Howroyd and Jubb business is now naught but an excuse—just a pretext. Things have gone—so it would appear—beyond that. I’m fairly puzzled by it! I should say, as far as I can make out, that the best part of your folk have been permeated by these new notions. I’m beginning—as a trades-unionist—to feel out of date, as

it were!”

“Didn’t I tell you?” said Bright. “Of course you are!”

“Still,” continued the younger man, “they’re sharp enough to make use of that pretext. It’s no use making offers to ’em—such as seem to be leaders. It’s the old spirit—so long as they’re free men in a free land, they’ll use their tongues as, when, and how they please—that’s all we can get out of ’em. But—there’s a lot more behind it. I don’t know what they’re after.”

“Are they going to strike?” demanded Bright.

“I don’t know—we can’t make ’em out, such of ’em as we’ve talked to,” said the younger man. “There’s going to be another meeting to-night—we shall talk to some of ’em again before that. But it’s my opinion that all this has been gathering for a long time, amongst your people. I don’t think there’s another mill in the district where these new ideas are so much to the front as I find ’em to be in yours. There’s been more than one mole at work in your garden, Mr. Marrashaw!”

“I’m aware of it, now,” said Bright. “Look here!” he added, after a moment’s thought. “If you’re going to see these folk, whoever they are, you can give ’em a message from me. If there’s a strike at Marrashaw’s Mill, it’ll be followed by a lock-out at Marrashaw’s Mill! Let ’em understand that. And no man, woman, lad, or lass will ever enter these walls again except on a proper understanding with me. I’m willing to do all and everything for my people that a man can do; I’m willing to make this a model of industrial concerns—but I’ll have no traitors! Whoever walks out of my door will find my door locked on him! That’s dead sure fact!”

With that he nodded a farewell and went away, conscious that he had said his last word.

III

Of what went on at the meeting of which the two would-be intermediaries had spoken as being about to be held that night, Bright learnt nothing. He could easily have sent spies to it, and so have acquainted himself with its full details: instead, he went calmly homewards and for once spent an entire evening in playing billiards with Trissie, upon whom he laid a solemnly humourous charge that nothing in the shape of business should be mentioned to him. But he was up and dressed and away from the house long before the light came next morning: for the first time in his life he meant to be at Marrashaw's Mill in advance of the workfolk. The truth was, he wanted to know if they were coming: some instinct persuaded him that the day on which he and they were entering was to be a critical one.

Haverthwaite, save for the lamps burning here and there in the streets, lay all in darkness as Bright passed through it. Once or twice he met a solitary policeman who stared at him with wonder and curiosity. In the heart of the town he expected to meet nothing beyond these guardians: it would be hours yet before the principal thoroughfares awoke to life. But when he came to the rows of cottages behind the mill, in the district which he had always regarded as an eyesore and cherished intentions of sweeping clean away, he walked more slowly, observing things with a keen and knowing eye. It was then within half an hour of the beginning of the day's labour, and under ordinary circumstances these streets would already have roused to life: there would have been lights in the windows and the opening of doors and the first clatter of the wooden-soled clogs on the pavements—all signs that the folk were setting out on another day's toil. But the streets were dark and gloomy; there was only a light here and there; it was only occasionally, as he passed along, that, glancing through some uncurtained window, he caught sight of man or woman busied about the newly-lighted fire on the hearth. And he was quick to note another sign. In the working-class districts of the town, the knocker-up was for six days out of the seven, a highly-important functionary. Armed with a rod long enough to reach the top-story windows of the cottages, he went his way of an early morning, rousing the sleepers by tapping at the casements. He was the herald of the day's obligations—and that morning he was not in evidence. For all that Bright saw to the contrary, this might have been Sunday.

But when he turned a corner and came in full sight of Marrashaw's Mill he saw that whatever the workers might be doing or not doing, the opportunities of work lay ready waiting for them. The hundreds of windows blazed with light, and from the great chimney which towered high above the far-stretching roof a column of white smoke was rising thick and massive against the grey of

the breaking dawn. The folk who were responsible for the starting out of the day's labour, then, were there; all was in readiness for the beginning of another spell of effort on the part of the huge industrial machine in which hands and engines, brains and material were all so inextricably mixed up. Bright knew how things went, ordinarily. The great wheels of the engine-house, centre point of the whole affair, began to revolve at a certain moment; machinery started into action all over the huge mill; men and women, lads and lasses, were at their posts—all began and went on as if it had never left off, running as smoothly as a big liner on a placid sea. But as Bright walked slowly towards those long rows of lighted windows, a thought struck him with compelling force. Within that great mill, behind its high walls, pretentious and imposing in architectural effect, lay everything that human ingenuity had been able to devise in the way of machinery; although he was sole owner of it, he knew well enough that he would have found it difficult, almost impossible, to estimate the money value of that machinery, from the gigantic controlling engine, of enormous horse-power, to the most delicately fashioned and latest invention. And—here was his thought—it was all useless, all of no practical purpose, wanting human brains and human hands: without the live men, it was a dead giant.

"So we get down to human labour when all's said and done!" reflected Bright, with a cynical laugh. He had a momentary vision of a cleverly-designed, highly-ingenious machine, controlled by the mere touch of a girl's finger. "Hand and brain!—they lick all the contraptions that ever were made. And if they fail—"

He cut off his train of thought at that, and passing into the mill by a side entrance, made straight for the floor over which Lockwood Clough exercised control. He found Lockwood at once—alone. The old overlooker had thrown open a window, and stood by it, looking out on the dark morning: when Bright caught sight of him, he had his watch in his hand. And Bright knew what he was thinking of—it was then close upon time for the great buzzer to sound; its deep, booming note, heard all over the district, and re-echoing from the dark hillside beyond the river, would be followed by that other sound which once heard is never forgotten—the clatter of clogs on the pavements as the factory folk pour out of the streets and make for the scene of their labours. For both these sounds Lockwood was listening, and his face, as he turned to his young master, was anxious.

"Yes," said Bright, as he went up to the overlooker, "I know what you're thinking about, Lockwood. I'm wondering that, myself. But you know more than I do." Lockwood put back his watch.

"There was a big meeting last night—in that old circus building," he said. "A lot of speaking! I was there—in a quiet corner. Seems to me, reckoning

things up, that there must have been a deal of disaffection amongst our folks for a long time. Underneath, like. I'd suspicions of it, Mr. Bright—I warned your father, long since. And now—taking this as a chance—they're for having it out, once for all. This Howroyd and Jubb business is just a peg to hang things on."

"What's the chief grievance—the real grievance?" asked Bright.

Lockwood made a gesture which indicated something akin to despair.

"Nay!" he exclaimed. "I don't know!—couldn't make out. I don't think they know. Five out o' six, anyway. It's all vague talk—general dissatisfaction. They don't want putting off with profit-sharing schemes. As far as I could make out—"

He paused, as if uncertain and puzzled, and looked at Bright with a smile which seemed to suggest that it was mere folly to repeat what he had heard.

"Go on!" said Bright.

"Nay!" exclaimed Lockwood. "They seem—the out-and-outers, anyway—to want everything for themselves! There was one chap—a stranger that they'd fetched in from somewhere, Manchester, I think—who said straight out that the time was come for workers to take over all the big industries themselves, and that now was an opportunity—if our folk would lead, others would follow."

"The immediate thing is this," said Bright. "Was anything decided? Are we going to have a strike?"

"I heard nothing definite," replied Lockwood. "But there was a general feeling, and they were all talking amongst themselves. And," he added, with a half-amused, half-concerned laugh, "if the way I dropped in for it as I was coming out means aught, I should say the feeling's pretty high!"

"What happened to you, then?" asked Bright.

"Oh, a bit of a demonstration!" replied Lockwood, laughing again. "Some of 'em set to hustling and booing, and that sort o' thing—naught serious, but it showed how the wind blew. Nasty remarks about that legacy your father left me, and so on—I expected it."

"Was your daughter on the platform?" asked Bright.

Lockwood gave his master a shrewd look.

"Aye—t' worst o' t' lot!" he answered. "Her, and Howroyd, and one or two more out o' t' town: not our people. Seems to me," he went on, reflectively, "that what's happened is this—this inner circle lot, whoever they may be, all of 'em, at any rate, they've been taken a bit unawares—things are happening quicker than they'd meant, but, as they are happening, why, they're going to take advantage of the situation. What amazes me, Mr. Bright, is this—they've more influence amongst our people than I could ha' believed!"

"It doesn't amaze me—now," remarked Bright. "They've been working for

it—Permeation! Well?—did you have any talk to Hermione, later on?"

Lockwood shook his head knowingly.

"Me!" he exclaimed. "No fear! I took good care to go to bed before she came home! No!—I wasn't going to have any argument wi' my own daughter. We agree well enough as long as we keep to home matters, but when it comes to politics and that sort o' thing I'd as soon think o' arguing wi' a hyaena as wi' our Hermie! In my opinion, she's as mad as a March hare when she gets on to that game, and—"

Lockwood suddenly stopped, and he and Bright looked at each other. The deep, booming note of the buzzer suddenly broke out, and the quietude of the grey morning was sharply stirred by its resonance as its persistent whirring smote on the streets and re-echoed from the over-hanging hill.

The two men moved to the open window, as if by instinct. They leaned on the sill, looking out on the great quadrangle. Day was breaking over the long dark range of hills on the east of the town, and by the grey light which was slowly stealing into the open space beneath them, they saw little knots of figures, most of them the shawled figures of women, making for the doorways of the various departments. But as the boom of the buzzer suddenly died away, leaving silence behind its last echoes, Lockwood's quick ear detected the absence of a sound familiarised to him by many a long year's experience and he turned to his master with a meaning look.

"They're out!" he said in low, significant tones. "There's no clatter o' clogs this morning! First time since ever I set foot i' Marrashaw's Mill!"

He drew down the sash of the window, and Bright noticed that his hands trembled. At that he laid a hand almost affectionately, on Lockwood's shoulder.

"All right, Lockwood!" he said. "All right! Don't take on about it—it'll perhaps be all the better to have it come on and to get it over. Nothing like letting things come to a head! We shall get it over, and things'll right themselves. And the thing now is to decide what to do for the present. Come on—we'll go round the whole place and see how many loyalists we've got."

An hour later, when Bright and his managers had visited every department of the big mill, they knew exactly how matters stood. Out of a total of some three thousand workers, less than three hundred had braved the opinion of the malcontents and come to work. And they were, almost without exception, the old folk—men and women who had worked so long at the mill that absence from it would have seemed to them equivalent to laying down all life's responsibilities, obligations, and pleasures. Most of them, like Lockwood Clough, had entered the Marrashaw service in childhood, in the old half-time days, and had remained in it ever since: to them, the new-fangled notions were vain and chimerical; the very name Marrashaw in their view of life meant good

wages for steady work.

But there was to be no work that day. Bright had already made up his mind as to the course he would pursue. He marshalled the faithful into the main hall of the building, and in the presence of his managers and foremen, addressed them in brief, plain sentences, making his own feelings and position clear, and outlining the causes which had led to the present effect. Then he spoke about the future. As nine-tenths of his employees had absented themselves without notice, there would be no more work done at Marrashaw's Mill until he and his workpeople came to a full and proper understanding and arrangement of a definite and final nature, no matter if it took a year, or five years, or ten years to come at. They had deserted him: now they would have to seek him; never, under any circumstances, should he seek them. But as regards the folk before him, who had remained faithful, every one of them, man and woman, would have his or her wages, regularly paid, according to custom, every week, whether the trouble lasted a month or a year: they could take the forced abstention from work as a holiday, sure of their money without delay or deduction. And let them carry this message from him to the disaffected outside —whoever amongst the revolutionists liked to come to him, personally, and give his or her word of honour to serve him loyally in the future, would be at once put on the same footing as the faithful. As for the rest, no man or woman, lad or lass, who had broken away from Marrashaw's under the influence of the present agitation, would ever be allowed to set foot in Marrashaw's Mill again except by direct personal contract and understanding with its owner. Then, with a sarcastic reference to the fact that war was a game at which two can play, and with a humorous allusion to the undoubted fighting qualities of his family, folk who had carved their path to prosperity with the sword of perseverance, the spear of persistence, and the shield of foresight, he bade them go away and keep quiet until their fellow-workers came to their senses and a new and better condition of things was established.

There was much to do when these folk had trooped out, and for the next three hours Bright was busily occupied with his staff in doing it. At last all arrangements were completed for the due care-taking of the great mill, for the time being at any rate, and Bright began to think of breakfast. And then an idea struck him. From the windows of his private office he had already seen that the entrance gate at the end of the quadrangle was thronged by hundreds of the disaffected workpeople: there, on the very edge of the battlefield, they were, of course, discussing the situation. He went down to the caretaker's lodge at the entrance to the counting-house, and asked for the key of the big gate: the caretaker stared at him in wonder and handed it over timidly, as a nervous man might hand over a weapon to a determined one. All alone, Bright marched across the quadrangle and approached the big gate: the folk without thronged

to meet him. Regarding them with no more concern than if they had been so many flies, he swung the massive ironwork together, turned the key in its lock, and dropping it unconcernedly into his pocket, strolled away through the crowd in the direction of the town, intent just then on nothing but a much-needed breakfast at the *Crane*.

IV

Bright spent the rest of that day in retirement at Marrashaw Royd. To all appearance he did nothing but potter about the grounds and gardens, giving an eye to the doings of the gardeners, just then busy with certain improvements which Trissie wanted carrying out, in view of her coming reign over the property to which Bright had so handsomely presented her. But in secret he was revolving his plans: he knew that he was in for a big and serious fight, which might be a long one—long or short, he meant to win it, as much for the sake of his workpeople as for his own. What those plans might come to, he intended to keep to himself; he said nothing of them to his sister, and when, during the day, certain newspaper reporters came up from the town, seeking news and information from him, he sent them away unsatisfied—he had nothing to say, he told them, about anything, to anybody. Let them watch the course of events.

But that evening, after dinner, he went across the moor to Ellerthwaite's. He was aware, though only in a vague, somewhat uncertain fashion, that he wanted some sympathy, and of a sort which he could not get from Trissie. Instinctively, he turned to Ellerthwaite. Ellerthwaite was everything that he himself was not—a conservative in politics and in religion and in economics, in everything, generally, yet ever since their talk at the club, Bright had felt that between himself and the big, loose-limbed, dry-humoured man behind whose cynical demeanour lay a rare fund of common sense there was a bond and an affinity of purpose stronger and more real than most folk would have imagined. He was sure of getting what he vaguely wanted from Ellerthwaite.

The home-like atmosphere of Ellerthwaite's dining-room made a strong appeal to Bright when he entered it. He found Ellerthwaite and Milly just as Charlesworth had found them on the night of the storm—Ellerthwaite's slippered ease, Milly's placid needle-occupation seemed to him, in whom the memory of his early morning affair at the mill was still vivid and disturbing, the most delightful thing to be encountered just then, and he dropped into an easy chair with a sigh of relief which Milly at any rate was quick to notice.

"Well, young man!" said Ellerthwaite, regarding his visitor quizzically. "You seem to have been having a lively time of it since yesterday! Making history, eh?"

"You've heard, then?" asked Bright.

Ellerthwaite pointed to the evening newspaper, which he had thrown aside on Bright's entrance.

"Plenty about it, there," he said. "Big black type, too—Sudden Surprising Strike at Marrashaw's Mill. Done full justice to details, too, these reporters!"

“They didn’t get anything out of me,” remarked Bright. “There were three of ’em up this afternoon—I wouldn’t say a word to them. So, if they have given details, they’re all from the other side—their account of things.”

“What’s yours, then?” asked Ellerthwaite. “Not that I can’t guess it. Simple enough!”

“Not as simple as it seems,” said Bright.

Then, feeling it a relief to tell his story, he gave father and daughter a full account of all that had befallen him since his interview with Grew, carrying it on to the events of that morning. Nor did he omit to furnish them with a full, naively worded account of the dramatic fashion in which Hermie Clough had thrown him and her engagement ring to the winds: he was so ingenuous about it that Milly bent lower over her work in order to hide her smiles, and Ellerthwaite laughed aloud.

“So you’ve not only broken with your men, but broken with your young woman!” he chuckled. “General breakage, my lad!”

“I did no breaking,” declared Bright, innocently. “She broke with me.”

“Are you breaking your heart over it?” demanded Ellerthwaite, with a shrewd glance at his visitor. “I think not, eh?”

“Well, no, I’m not,” assented Bright. “I—you see, I’ve had time to think things over a bit since yesterday morning. No—I think Hermie and I didn’t quite suit each other. I daresay I’m a queer lot—and so is she, without doubt.”

“Obvious, that!” remarked Ellerthwaite. “But I thought you were hand-in-glove?”

Bright studied the pattern of the hearthrug for awhile.

“I don’t think we were ever in love with each other—in the usual sense,” he answered at last, with a candid look at father and daughter. “It was—a sort of political alliance, I think. Something of that sort, anyway. We got on very well together, talking politics and that sort of thing. But I’d always an uneasy feeling that she was miles away from me, and that I never quite knew what she was driving at. The fact is,” he added, with a sudden burst of conviction, “Hermie Clough’s a red-hot revolutionist! I’m not. That’s about it. And, as events proved, what she’s really after is what she calls the Cause. I wasn’t in it when it came to a question of me or the Cause—the Cause won, hands down.”

“Well, anyhow, the young woman isn’t mercenary,” said Ellerthwaite. “We’ll say that much for her.”

“Oh, dear me, no!” exclaimed Bright, with simple acquiescence. “No, she’s not at all that way.”

“Strikes me,” observed Ellerthwaite, regarding Bright with a sly sidewise glance, “strikes me you’re not sorry to be out of that—what?”

“I don’t think I am,” assented Bright, candidly open. “We had notions—dreams, I suppose—of doing big reforms. But you see she wanted to do ’em

her way, and I wanted to do 'em mine—so there you are! No—I don't think it would have done at all. It's best that it came to an end."

"So now you're enemies!" said Ellerthwaite.

"Not on my side," protested Bright. "I'm enemy to nobody."

"Save in the political, or economic sense," retorted Ellerthwaite, satirically. "Well, she'll fight you like a fury, my lad! And what're you going to do about this strike? It's a serious affair, Bright."

"Do you think I don't realise that?" asked Bright. "Do! I shall wait till the bulk of 'em come to their senses! Nobody's going to make me believe that the majority of 'em won't come round to my side and see the benefit of my schemes for the future of Marrashaw's Mill, in time."

"Then you're going to stick to this profit-sharing scheme?" asked Ellerthwaite.

"I'm going to stick to my profit-sharing scheme!" affirmed Bright. "Modified and improved, of course. I see flaws and mistakes in the original idea: I shall correct 'em. But I stick to the principle. I'm going to re-organise that business on modern, up-to-date lines, on a profit-sharing basis, and I'll make it a model for all employers and employed—in time. And I'll convince everybody of that—also in time. Time!—that's the thing. It's on my side, anyhow."

"Aye—but what about the present affair?" suggested Ellerthwaite. "Your folks are out. Seems to me, from what one reads there, that they've gone out on their own responsibility: it's not a trades-union affair."

"It isn't—yet, at any rate," assented Bright.

"Is the trades-union going to back 'em up?" asked Ellerthwaite.

"I don't know," replied Bright. "I should say it'll have a scrap with the syndicalist lot."

"But if it doesn't back 'em up, where are they going to get their funds?" asked Ellerthwaite. "Strike pay, now?"

"Don't know—doesn't concern me," answered Bright, airily.

"They'll force the union into it," said Ellerthwaite. "Of course! They'll make your dismissal of these two men a test question. And if the trades-union comes in, the thing'll probably spread. It may become a district affair."

"I don't think so," said Bright. "My opinion is that it's a personal matter between me and this group. They've got their knife into me, and for the present they've got the ears of my people. You see," he continued, "it seems like this—this group knows now that its existence and its doings are known—very well, it throws aside the veil and comes out into the open: it's going to fight. I reckon that the district all round Marrashaw's Mill will be just humming with these new syndicalist notions for the next few weeks!—they'll be preached at every street corner."

“Aye, well, and what’re you going to do, to fight that?” demanded Ellerthwaite.

Bright shook his head, as if in doubt. He hesitated, seeking a reply. And while he hesitated, Milly, hitherto silent, looked up, letting her needlework rest.

“Bright!” she said, almost eagerly. “Why don’t you fight them with their own weapons? I should!”

Bright suddenly turned on Milly with newly-aroused interest.

“How?” he asked.

“If they’re going to talk at street-corners, preaching their ideas and doctrines, why don’t you?” she answered. “You’re full of your own schemes, you’re well up in them, and you’re a ready speaker—why don’t you counter-balance all their weight with some of your own?”

“Go on the stump?” suggested Bright.

“Why not?” she said. “You can borrow an empty soap-box, and get an audience round it at any street-corner. If I were in your shoes, for every speech the others gave, I’d give two! And—you’ve nothing else to do.”

Bright looked at Ellerthwaite and smiled.

“Not a bad idea!” he said. “Thank you, Milly.”

“After all,” declared Milly, “Haverthwaite folk, however self-opinionated and obstinate they may be, are always ready to hear two sides of a question.”

Ellerthwaite grunted: a sound of doubt and disbelief.

“Are they?” he muttered. “I never knew ’em ready to hear mine!”

“That’s neither here nor there,” retorted Milly, with calm superiority. “They heard yours years ago, father, and they don’t want to hear it any more! You’re a back number in politics—you belong to a bygone age, and these folks don’t want fossils—they want something they can bite. Bright’s a modern light—he’s of a piece with themselves—the only difference between him and them is one of particular method. Let him show them that his method’s better than theirs—that’s it!”

“Egad, she speaks truth!” murmured Bright. “I’ve a good mind to try the soap-box trick. After all, I don’t see why they should have all the talk to themselves. Maybe if I took to propaganda work with my tongue I’d do things! I don’t mind talking all day long—if they’ll only listen.”

“They’ve naught else to do, now,” observed Ellerthwaite, drily.

He looked at his daughter with an equally dry smile when Bright had left them half-an-hour later.

“He’s a queer chap, that, Milly, my lass!” he said. “I don’t know where he’s going, exactly. But it’ll not be his fault if he doesn’t get there!”

Milly laughed, too, but she made no answer. She was more deeply interested in Bright Marrashaw’s doings and in Bright himself than her father

knew.

V

Bright went homeward across the dark moor pondering deeply over Milly's suggestion; he pondered till he went to bed; he pondered again next morning while he dressed and breakfasted. And when breakfast was over, he went out to the stables and sought Crowther, the coachman, who, since Charlesworth's death had found little to do, save for Trissie, Bright having a curious prejudice against the use of horses and carriages.

"Crowther," he said, "put a horse into the dog-cart and drive down to Lockwood Clough's house—you know where he lives. Tell him I want to see him, and bring him back with you, here. If he's out, find him. How long will it take you to go down there?"

"Oh, about ten minutes, sir," replied Crowther. He looked doubtfully at his master, and then cast an anxious glance into the stables, where three handsome horses were in waiting for whatever might turn up. "You don't think there's any fear of aught happening down that way, sir?" he asked. "Them strikers, now?—our horses is worth a good bit o' money, you know—your pa gave a deal for that last pair, and there's no knowing what them fellers'll do when—"

"Nonsense!" laughed Bright. "You'll find it as peaceful down there as it is here."

Crowther shook his head, at the same time regarding Bright with some little wonder.

"I don't know about that, sir," he answered. "You haven't heard about what went on last night, then?"

"Last night?" said Bright. "Heard nothing! What did go on last night?"

"There was a bit of a do last night, sir," answered Crowther, brimfull of news. "I heard it first thing this morning—I thought it 'ud ha' reached your ears, sir. They'd a big meeting, our folks, on that waste ground, front o' the mill, sir—lighted it up with naphtha lamps and such-like. And when it was over, a regular body of 'em went to Simon Grew's house—"

Bright whistled. He had never thought of that!—he saw suddenly that his curt dismissal of Howroyd and Jubb had placed Grew, as the probable informer, in danger.

"Well?" he said. "What then?"

"Smashed every window in the place, sir," replied Crowther with alacrity. "And, some say, tried to set fire to his house, and all, though I can't say that that's true. But it is true 'at they didn't leave a whole pane o' glass! And if they started throwing things at one o' our horses, sir—"

"They'll not do that," said Bright. "They've nothing against you or the horses, Crowther—they had something against Grew. You'll be all right. Find

Lockwood Clough, and bring him back with you."

He went back to the house, to await Lockwood's coming. So the folk had gone for Grew, had they? Well, he saw how it had been—the group in which Howroyd and Hermie Clough were the controlling elements had sought for the traitor in its membership and had fixed on Grew. And it was well that there was nothing worse than broken windows, for spies and informers of any sort were not likely to meet with much mercy at the hands of Haverthwaite folk. But—would it stop at broken windows?

He had to wait some time before Crowther drove up to the front door with Lockwood perched on the seat beside him. Bright, glancing out of the morning-room window, saw that the old overlooker looked worried and perplexed, and he hurried out to meet him and bring him in.

Lockwood, without ceremony, dropped into the first easy chair he came across, and looking at Bright with a half-dazed air, wagged his head.

"Eh, dear, eh dear!" he said. "Such doings I never knew i' my life before! I dunnot know what things is coming to! First one thing and then another—seemingly, there's no peace for a quiet-disposed man!"

"What's the matter?" demanded Bright. "Anything happened this morning, down there? I heard about last night's affair—Grew's windows."

Lockwood pulled himself erect, as if ashamed of his momentary weakness.

"I reckon naught o' Grew's windows!" he said. "That was t' work o' some o' t' more riotously disposed. There is such, at times like these, and they'll have to be reckoned with. But a bit o' window smashing's neither here nor there."

"What's upset you, then?" asked Bright. "I saw you were looking bothered when you drove up. What is it?"

Lockwood gave his master a queer look.

"It's yon lass o' mine—Hermie!" he answered. "My daughter!"

"Well—what now?" demanded Bright. "What's Hermie done?"

Lockwood kept silence for a moment: his silence seemed eloquent of many emotions.

"Done?" he muttered at last. "She's gone and got wed!"

Bright's lips opened in sheer amazement: he actually felt his jaw drop: it would not have surprised him if, turning to the mirror over the mantelpiece, he had seen his shock of hair standing on end. It seemed a long time before he found his tongue.

"Married!" he exclaimed. "Hermie?"

"This morning," replied Lockwood. "I'd just come away from t' church when Crowther came."

"Good Heavens!" said Bright. "Married? Whoever to?"

"Yon there Allot Howroyd," answered Lockwood. "There's two birds of a

feather there, anyway! It's my opinion she'd ha' married Lister Jubb, an' all, if t' law allowed a lass to take two husbands at once!"

Bright began to laugh: the temptation was irresistible. And a smile began to display itself round the corners of Lockwood's bearded lips: he laughed, too.

"Bless us!" said Bright. "What next?" Then an idea struck him. "Well, anyway, Lockwood," he continued, with another laugh, "We'll drink their healths! I don't know what it's all about, nor how it's come about, but there's no harm in wishing 'em good luck, I think, and I daresay it wouldn't offend 'em, even if they knew of it."

He turned to the cupboard in which Charlesworth had kept a private store of luxuries; its contents remained just as Charlesworth had left them, and Bright, after a thoughtful inspection, took out a bottle of champagne, fetched a couple of glasses from the sideboard, and began to cut the wire: Lockwood, twiddling his thumbs, watched him with interest.

"I've never supped champagne since your father gave me a glass one night when I come up here to see him about summat or other, two or three year since," he observed suddenly. "I never thowt what nor when t' next occasion 'ud be!"

"Well, it's no use making a fuss about weddings," declared Bright, philosophically. "When it's done, it's done—and in this case—well, we both know Hermie! But," he added, as he poured out the wine, "how did it all come about? So suddenly—if it really was sudden."

"I knew naught about it till this morning," answered Lockwood. "She told me as soon as we'd had us breakfasts 'at her and Howroyd had concluded to wed, and 'at they'd got a special license, and were going to be married at t' Parish Church in an hour. She said 'at they were resolved to give their lives to t' Cause, and they felt 'at they could do it a deal better as husband and wife, and as there was work to be done at once, they were going to be united immediately. Solemn as a judge, she said all that!—it's my belief 'at however clever t' lass may be, she's one o' them unfortunate folks 'at has no sense o' humour—she never had."

"And what did you say?" asked Bright.

Lockwood gave him a shrewd glance.

"Say?" he answered. "What's t' use o' anybody saying aught to a woman o' that sort? T' least said, t' better. I said nowt, except 'at if it was to be, it mun be, and then I put my best clothes on and walked over to t' church wi' her, and see'd her wed."

"And the bride and bridegroom—where are they?" asked Bright.

"They parted at t' churchyard gate," said Lockwood. "Howroyd, he went off to address a meeting o' men somewhere or other, and Hermie, she went to spout to a meeting o' women and lasses. They're beyond me!—I don't

understand such like. When I got wed to Hermie's mother, her and me, we'd a reight do on it—we went to Manchester for t' day, and enjoyed wersens proper—I mind it cost me two or three pound! But these here young folks—nay, as I say, they're clean beyond me!—I can't reckon 'em up, neither one way nor t' other."

"Well, we'll drink their healths, anyway," said Bright. He handed a glass to Lockwood and lifted his own. "Good luck to them!—I daresay they'll suit each other better than anybody'd reckon, Lockwood."

"Oh, I wish 'em nowt but what's reight and proper," affirmed Lockwood. "I don't know what sort of a chap Howroyd may be about managing a woman, but he's gotten a rare handful i' our Hermie!"

"I think they'll suit each other," repeated Bright. Then he turned to his own affairs. "Well?" he said. "Now about this strike, Lockwood—what's best to be done? I heard of the meeting last night—how did it go? What was said?"

"As far as I can make out, t' usual sort o' stuff was talked," replied Lockwood. "Now was the time to make a bold stand against tyranny, and all that sort o' thing. Howroyd spoke, and our Hermie, of course, and Jubb, and two or three fellers 'at have naught to do wi' t' mill—that parson chap 'at married Howroyd and Hermie this morning—he spoke: he's one o' t' red-hottest o' t' lot—a Socialist."

"Is that Coleflower—the curate?" asked Bright.

"T' same," assented Lockwood. "I reckon nowt o' him—he's a windbag. They're all windbags—it's nowt but talk. All t' same, they've got a rare big following, and summat owt to be done. What, I don't know."

"I'd a suggestion made to me last night," said Bright. "It was that I should hold some open-air meetings round about the mill, and personally talk to the people, explaining things, and especially the profit-sharing scheme."

"You're going on with that?" enquired Lockwood.

"Of course!" replied Bright. "Just as if nothing had happened. Things are bound to right themselves, sooner or later. Yes, I'm going on with it—modified and improved. I'm thinking how to improve it, now."

"Then I can tell you," said Lockwood, eagerly. "Make it so 'at it brings 'em all in!—never mind no five years' qualification, nor naught o' that sort. Let everybody share 'at's done twelve months' work. That 'ud go a long way to settling matters. It was that five year qualification 'at set their backs up. And another thing—don't give so much preference to t' managers and overlookers and such-like, nor to t' workers o' long standing. It smacks o' favouritism. And if you knew as much o' our folk as I do, Mr. Bright, you'd know 'at if there is one thing they cannot away with, it's preferring one before another!—they mun be treated as equals."

"Well," said Bright, after a moment's reflection. "All that can be done. But

now—about these meetings?"

"I don't know what to say," replied Lockwood. "They're that busy wi' their own meetings 'at I reckon they'd not have much time to attend yours, and whenever you had one, they'd get up another in opposition to it. And there's no doubt that there's a certain rough element among 'em—that lot 'at smashed Grew's windows last night. They'd think naught o' trying to break up your meetings. And then it 'ud come to fighting—and that's t' last thing 'at we want. If you once get violence started, there's no knowing where it'll end."

"But we must do something," urged Bright.

He kept Lockwood talking for some time, and at the end of their conversation strolled out into the grounds with him. As they neared the entrance gates, a woman came through them—a big, solidly built woman, shawled and clogged in the prevalent fashion of the district—and seeing Bright made straight for him. Bright thought he recognised her broad face and keen eyes.

"Isn't this one of our hands?" he whispered. "I've seen her, somewhere."

"Aye—Mally Watki'son," answered Lockwood. "She's worked at Marrashaw's over thirty year, to my knowing. Decent, hard-working woman, an' all."

Mally Watkinson came steadily in Bright's direction, eyeing him all the time. As she drew near, Bright smiled and nodded to her: she responded by drawing the hood-like shawl a little further back from her face.

"Morning, Mr. Marrashaw," she said, with simple directness. "I come up to hev' a bit o' talk wi' you. You see," she went on, as Bright nodded his acquiescence, "I didn't go t' mill yesterday morning, 'cause my little Ebenezer Arthur he wor bad wi' t' belly-ache, and I had to bide wi' him. But if it hadn't been for that, I should ha' been there, as usual—I'm not one o' these good-for-nowts 'at's makin' all this trouble!—not me! Lockwood Clough there knows me well enough, and he can speak to it 'at I never brok' a day's work sin' I first went to t' mill, unless there were good cause for it."

"Aye!" said Lockwood, laconically. "She never did."

"So, you see, Mr. Marrashaw—which you don't know me as well as your poor father did, and him and me's oft had a bit o' talk together—as you let it be known 'at all them 'at sided wi' you 'ud be kept on," continued Mally, "I thowt it best to come straight here, to t' fountain head, as it were, and let you know 'at I'm none goin' to join these here strikers!—I've been a decent, hard-working woman all my life, and t' mother o' nine childer, and's buried three on 'em, which there's six to keep, now, and—"

"All right, Mally," said Bright. "I understand. You'll get your wages every week while the trouble lasts—I'll see to it, so don't bother yourself."

The woman uttered a hearty expression of thanks, and was turning away

when suddenly she faced round again, and spoke more earnestly than before.

"Mr. Bright!" she exclaimed. "You'll excuse me—we'm plain-tongued folk down there i' t' bottom o' t' town—but I would like to ax you summat. What's it all about? For most on us—them 'at I've talked wi', anyway—we don't know what it is about! I've no fault to find, and there's a many more 'at's o' my way o' thinking. I could never ha' browt myself to believe 'at such a thing as a strike 'ud ever take place at Marrashaw's—where most on us has worked all wor lives! And it's my opinion 'at it's nowt but secret mischief-making, and as long as Lockwood Clough's there wi' you, I'll say straight what a good many on us knows—it's that there lass o' his, Hermie, at's largely at t' bottom on it—now then, Lockwood! You mun excuse me if I speak plain, but what's t' use o' doin' owt else?"

"You can speak as plain as you like, mi lass, for owt I care!" answered Lockwood. "Happen me and Mr. Bright knows a bit more nor what you know."

"Happen you do, and I shouldn't wonder if you did," retorted Mally, "but there's me and some other women 'at's worked i' t' mill 'at knows summat! That there dowter o' yours, Lockwood Clough—and mind you I've nowt to say agen her 'ceptin' i' what you might term political matters and them theer things—she's been making mischief among t' younger women at t' mill for a long time, secret-like. Happen you've never heard of it, but she got a lot o' t' cleverer sort, t' better-eddikated sort o' lasses to join a class 'at she started—it wor to be for t' improving theirselves i' one way or other; reading books and such-like. That wor what you might call t' surface object—but it wasn't t' real object, not it!"

"What was the real object, Mally?" asked Bright.

"Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Marrashaw," answered Mally, with a confidential glance. "For I've heard and learnt and gathered a good deal, and kept my lips shut about it—t' real object wor to talk and preach to these lasses all about these here new-fangled political notions, and about capital and labour, and I don't know what! There's ever so many o' our lasses i' t' mill 'at talks nowt else but that there sort o' stuff! It 'ud do 'em a deal more good, i' my opinion, if they talked about their hats and their gowns and their young men—I ha' no patience, hearing lasses o' that age talking politics as if they were going to stand for Parlyment! And it were Hermie Clough 'at set 'em off—she's driven it into their heads 'at there's a time coming when there'll be no masters, and as far as I can make out, no money neither—there'll be nowt at all, it seems, and we shall all do as we like, though how we're all going to live, if there's neither money nor masters, I don't know. But if that's what comes o' all this eddikation, I'm glad I never had none! And it's all that talk, fro' such-like as your dowter, Lockwood, and fro' men like Allot Howroyd, 'at's browt this

trouble about, and if it wasn't 'at Mr. Bright there's kind enough to stand by them 'at stands by him, where should we all be, I could like to know. I'll lay neither Hermie Clough nor Allot Howroyd 'ud find t' brass to keep me and my six childer while t' strike's on—not they!"

"Well—you'll be all right, Mally," said Bright, soothingly. "And the trouble mayn't last very long, either. You people that don't approve of it should let your voices be heard."

Mally gathered the big shawl about her firm chin with a sudden gesture; from under it her eyes flashed in a quick response to Bright's suggestion.

"Now then, never you mind, Mr. Marrashaw!" she exclaimed. "There's more o' that'll happen nor you think of! If that lot think 'at they can do all t' talking 'at there is to be done, they're mistaken. I'm a peaceable woman as ever put foot in a clog, but I can do a bit i' t' talking line when it comes to it, and I shall let my tongue go now—I'm none going to be a dumb slave to no Allot Howroyds and Hermie Cloughs! There's going to be what they call a torchlight meeting i' Bolton's Fold, at t' back o' t' mill yonder, to-night, and I shall be there. And I'm as good a Englishwoman as any on 'em, and as it's a free country, happen they'll hear what I've got to say—I never did go on t' stump, as they term it, but one's never too old to learn, and it's never too late to mend, and if I don't tell some on 'em what I think on 'em, and i' plain language, too, wi'out mincing matters, it'll be 'cause I've lost t' use o' mi tongue between now and then! And good morning, Mr. Marrashaw, thanking yer kindly."

She pulled the shawl closer again, and marched off through the gates and across the moor, and Bright looked after her with a certain admiration.

"If we'd only a hundred or so of that sort on our side, Lockwood!" he said. "They'd make a difference. I suppose there are more, like her."

"Aye, plenty on 'em!" answered Lockwood. "And they'll talk, as she will. It's all a question o' which side can talk loudest and longest," he added, cynically. "They pay more attention to tongue-work nor I do."

"I wish there was any way of finding out how many we have on our side," remarked Bright. "I suppose a good many that are daren't let it be known that they are."

"Why," said Lockwood, "there is, or might be, a way 'at I thought of as I was coming up i' your trap this morning. Perhaps you haven't heard of it, but Barker, that sat on t' Town Council for t' Riverside Ward, died yesterday—he'd been ailing for months, and he's gone at last. Now, there's scarce a voter in that ward that isn't one of our people, and of course t' election by ballot—how would it be if you put up, Mr. Bright? You'd know then, by t' votes you got, how our people really stood."

"Not a bad notion," responded Bright. "But—I wonder who else would put

up? What was Barker?"

"Oh, Barker—he was a Liberal," replied Lockwood. "T' last election was run on ordinary party lines—he romped in with a big majority. Your father supported him, and I should say nearly all our folks voted for him. But you could put up as—well, just as yourself."

"And supposing the strikers put up one of their lot?" suggested Bright.

Lockwood laughed as he laid a hand on the massive handle of the big gates.

"Why, then, in that case," he said, drily, "in that case, there'd be no doubt about it! You would know how many were on your side! Couldn't have a straighter issue."

VI

When Lockwood had gone away, Bright walked about the grounds of Marrashaw Royd for some time, thinking over the news of the morning. He thought little of the smashing of Grew's windows: procedure of that sort was precisely what would be resorted to by Haverthwaite folk on the discovery of a traitor, a spy, or an informer: they were much more likely to wreak vengeance on Grew than to turn on the mill. But he thought much about Hermie's latest departure. Impulse, of course!—she had always been impulsive; swift to act on whatever idea suddenly possessed her. Well, as he had said to her father, she and Howroyd would doubtless suit each other excellently; they were both revolutionaries, idealists, and born schemers. And now, in harness together, they would make a formidable combination, and, without question, all their united abilities—which, as Bright well knew, were considerable—would be thrown into the fight against himself. When he finally retired into the house and betook himself to pen and paper at his desk, it was with the conviction that if he meant to win in this sudden and unexpected struggle he had best set all his wits to work.

He spent the whole of that afternoon in drafting and revising a new profit-sharing scheme on the lines recommended by Lockwood, and in preparing it for the printer—next day, he decided, he would put the press to work, and flood the district round Marrashaw's Mill with copies of his improved prospects. Firmly convinced that a carefully worked out scheme of equitable division of profits was the real panacea for most of the complaints arising out of the differences between capital and labour, he found it impossible to believe that his new proposals would fail to win approval, even from those who had remained indifferent to the original ones. He had done away with the features to which so much objection had been taken. Under the new scheme, every employee of twelve months' standing would benefit. Instead of preferring workers of twenty years' standing before all others, he had worked out a scheme by which every man and woman employed at the mill, would on completing twenty-five years' service, enter into possession of a comfortable life-pension, which was to be considerably increased if fifteen years of further service were given. And to do away with all suspicion of favouritism, the division of profits amongst managers, heads of departments, and overlookers was cut down from the figures of the former scheme: thus, the entire staff of three thousand was placed more firmly on that basis of equality of which Bright had heard so much before the strike. When he had read and re-read his finished copy of the new proposals it seemed to him that none but the most unreasonable could possibly find fault with it as an honest attempt on the part

of an employer to give his workpeople a handsome share in the profits of their labour. It was a scheme, anyway, which would have made Charlesworth Marrashaw's hair stand on end—which, in his son's opinion, was a sure testimony to its wide liberality.

But when he had completed this new scheme—on paper—Bright knew well enough that neither it nor any scheme would please the irreconcilables. The veil of secrecy torn away from them by the treachery of Simon Grew, they had now come out into the open, and they would stir heaven and earth to impress their ideas and principles upon the people. It was impossible that they could win this fight, in Bright's opinion; their gospel was still a new and strange one; their tactics all unproved; their ideas, to the practical and calculating workman, must needs seem chimerical. But they had already infected a large portion of the community with their notions; they had power and ability to infect more; and they would make the most of the summary dismissal of Howroyd and Jubb. And if they could not actually win this fight, they would pave the way for another, later on, in which their chances of victory would be greater. One amongst them, as Bright knew well, looked confidently and with assurance to the future—Hermie, when in her prophetess moods, always spoke of the future as certain: she saw far into the mists. Now Bright did not wish to look so far—his ideal, to which he was already as fanatically devoted as she was to hers, was a model industrial community, himself the head, wherein, from top to bottom, there should be contentment and prosperity. Let him set that up, get it firmly established, see it last his time—after his time, to be sure, there would be new men and new methods, but in his time he would have done his share towards improvement.

"If I could only ding into their ears and drive into their minds what it is that I really want!" he muttered as he folded up his revised scheme. "Surely they'd see, then! However, it's a question of pegging away—I'll bring 'em round, yet!"

Then he remembered that while he meant to peg away, his opponents were already pegging away, and losing no time about it, and the desire came on him to go out scouting and make observation of their lines: he remembered that one great feature of the art and science of warfare is the careful finding out of what your enemy is after. If he was going to reply to these people, he must know what they had to say, and at first hand. Mally Watkinson had told him and Lockwood of a meeting that was to be held that night at Bolton's Fold: very well, he would go to Bolton's Fold and be a listener. And next day he would take up the line which Milly Ellerthwaite had advised, and go on the stump himself. After all, he knew of a certain percentage of his people which was favourably-disposed towards him; it might be a bigger one than he was aware of: he must make it still bigger.

It was lucky, thought Bright, that the revolutionaries had fixed upon Bolton's Fold as a meeting-place for that evening. It would have been impossible for him to show himself at a street corner gathering, or to have mingled with the crowd on any open space—his presence would have led to scenes. But he knew how he could see and hear everything at Bolton's Fold, unobserved of any one—not a soul would know he was there. Bolton's Fold was a bit of old Haverthwaite, lying at the rear of Marrashaw's Mill, in the very thick of the mean, grey streets which Bright had long since resolved to sweep clear away and replace by modern, up-to-date dwellings. Originally a square, surrounded by tall, old-fashioned houses, it was now a three-sided place, its front having been pulled down; the open space, paved with flag and cobble stones, was big enough to accommodate a crowd of considerable dimensions. And here, in one of the houses at the top-end of the Fold, lived a man whom Bright knew to be a staunch supporter of his own—one Eli Aspinall, an overlooker at the mill, and when night fell, an old cap pulled about his ears, and a muffler enveloping his chin and cheeks, he made his way to Aspinall's back door, and gaining admittance told his host what he wanted—a convenient and secluded post from whence he could hear and see without being seen himself.

"No difficulty about that, Mr. Bright," said Aspinall, leading his master inside his living-room. "You mun come where I'm going myself—into our front chamber, upstairs. If we draw t' curtains, and open t' window, and have no light i' t' place, you'll be as safe as if yere in your own house. And you'll hear all 'at's said there—they've fixed up a platform right under our windows."

Aspinall's wife, placidly engaged in knitting socks by the fire, sniffed in high and stern disapproval.

"Aye, they have so!" she said. "An' I've ta'en good care to lock and bolt our front door, and to close t' shutters o' t' downstairs windows, an' all! An' I wish they'd ta'en their platform and theirselves somewhere else—we always been a peace-abiding community here i' Bolton's Fold, and we don't none o' these here upsetters coming among us—let 'em go elsewhere!"

Aspinall rubbed his chin, looking doubtfully at Bright.

"It is a bit queer, to be sure 'at they should come here," he said, as if in corroboration of his wife's statement: "There's scarce one o' t' strikin' lot lives i' this Fold; we'm all what you might call o' t' faithful brand hereabouts, Mr. Bright, so why they fixed on this spot I don't know."

"They want to convert you!" laughed Bright.

"Well, they'll none convert me!" exclaimed Mrs. Aspinall. She gave a comprehensive and appreciative glance at her comfortable surroundings, which Bright was quick to note. "I know when I'm well off, and I shouldn't ha' been

as well off as what I am if I'd wasted my time listening to every Tom, Dick, and Harry 'at can't bide if he isn't hollowing his opinions. And I'm none going to listen to owt they have to say—I shall bide here, and I hope there'll be no window-breaking, nor nowt o' that sort, for it's none so long since 'at I had all t' front o' our house painted fro' t' spouts to t' pavement. Sech goings on!—I wonder what your poor pa 'ud ha' said, Mr. Bright, if he'd lived to see 'em? Now, he was a man, reight!"

"I hope you'll find me one," said Bright. "I'll make a try at it."

"Well, you mun be firm," replied Mrs. Aspinall. "I haven't lived a certain time wi' Haverthwaite folk without knowing summat about 'em. If you give 'em an inch, they'll take a good deal more nor an ell!—that's their way. They need a firm hand, Mr. Bright. I'm none a Haverthwaiter—I never come into t' place till I wed our Eli there, nearly thirty year since—and of course I feel strange yet, but I know 'em. And—"

"There's t' band o' music!" interrupted Aspinall, as a crash of brass instruments broke in on his wife's eloquence. "Come up to t' front chamber, sir."

Bright followed his host upstairs into a bedroom whose window looked out on the Fold: it was already open and the lace curtains drawn across it; from behind these he could see everything in the open space before him.

"Doing things thoroughly, anyway!" he remarked as he and Aspinall took up their places. "Quite a demonstration."

The business-like solemnity of what he saw amused him—it seemed to him to be all of a piece with the dead earnestness of everything that Hermie had a finger in. Immediately in front of Aspinall's door two drays had been drawn up to make a platform for the speakers; a row of chairs was arranged on one; at the front corners of the other were two flaring lamps of naphtha intended to throw strong light on the speaker of the moment. Other swinging lamps had been set up here and there about the Fold, and in their light Bright saw that the place was packed from end to end with men, women, boys, girls. But as he and Aspinall reached their vantage posts, the crowd was parting to make way for a procession, which headed by a red flag and a brass band, advanced from the direction of the street outside. To the strains of what seemed to be martial music the conveners of the meeting ascended the drays, and in the flaring of the naphtha lamps. Bright recognised Howroyd's pale, ascetic face and Hermie's golden hair. He began to wonder if he and they would ever meet on a common platform.

"Now there'll be some oratory!" remarked Aspinall, at Bright's elbow. "They've all got t' gift of gab, this lot. But you know, Mr. Bright, I've heard it all before, many and many a time! It's always t' same old hymn, wi' a bit o' variation i' t' tune—there's nowt new in it."

At the end of an hour, after listening carefully to several speeches, Bright was inclined to agree with what Aspinall said. He, too, had heard it all before—there was nothing new. The chairman, one of his own younger workmen, spoke of the right of combination. Howroyd, defending his own position, held forth on the right of free speech. Jubb expatiated on the inconsistency of Bright in not differentiating between private and public criticism. There was little to stir the enthusiasm of listeners in these efforts; they were all more or less heavy and academic. It was left to Hermie to do the necessary playing to the gallery, and when she had got fairly under way, Bright realised how dangerous she could be. Her appeal went straight to all the primitive emotions: without seeming to do so, she skilfully excited those demons of envy, covetousness, and jealousy which lie dormant, but are readily roused, in every human heart. Here, indeed, was the old tale—the tyranny, cupidity, selfishness, cruelty of the employer; the long-suffering, much-bearing, spoliation and cheating of the employed. And Bright realised as he listened that Hermie was an adept at suiting her subject to her audience: he knew from experience that she could talk by the hour about economics, in text-book fashion; he had not known until now that if she liked, she could orate in an inflammatory fashion which needed little development to be deepened into direct incitement to physical action.

"Gow, but she's a tongue, has that!" murmured Aspinall, as the slight figure between the flaring lights wound up with a stirring peroration and dropped back into the shadows. "That's t' way to make mischief! And you see how she carries 'em with her, Mr. Bright!"

When the volume of cheering which broke out at the end of Hermie's speech had died away, the chairman went to the front of the platform. An astute man, he wanted to bring the meeting to an end on the enthusiasm which Hermie had created. But in accordance with custom in those parts, he had a duty to perform.

"Is there anybody else 'at wants to say aught?" he asked. "Or does anybody want to put any questions to any o' the speakers? This is a free and open meeting—no restrictions here. Free speech!"

A woman's half bare arm shot out of the gloom immediately in front of the platform, and with a sudden recollection of her which made him laugh, Bright recognised Mally Watkinson in the strident voice that uplifted itself above the murmurs of the crowd, already minded to dissolve.

"Mr. Chairman—if I come up there on that dray, can I say owt I like? 'Cause if so, I'm coming!"

The chairman looked in the direction of the voice, looked back at those around him on the platform: he, too, laughed.

"Aye, owt you like, missis!" he answered. "Come on and say your say! There's no repression o' speech here, public or private. Hand her up!"

A dozen willing hands pushed Mally's sturdy figure on to the front of the dray, and the crowd settled itself to listen. After all, apart from Hermie's fiery speech, the proceedings had been dull, too academic and technical for the tastes of the majority of the listeners, and the prospect of a diversion, even at the end of the proceedings, was alluring. Encouraging voices lifted themselves; delighted laughter broke out.

"Say thi say, Mally! We'll hear thee, however long thou talks! Full steam ahead, lass!" shouted one and another of the assemblage. "Strike a top note!" And then, from somewhere outside the circle of light, came a still louder voice making itself heard above all the rest and evoking a roar of laughter. "Bravyo, owd Honesty!—tell 'em a bit o' plain truth—we've heerd enough o' soft talk! At 'em!"

"Silence!" shouted the chairman. "Now then, missis," he went on as the voices and laughter died down. "Go ahead!"

Mally had thrown back the shawl from her otherwise bare head, and now planting her hands on her broad hips she faced the crowd with a look of determination.

"And there's no fear o' me not going ahead when I once get started!" she began in a loud, ringing voice that easily reached the furthest limits of her audience. "Here I am, and here I shall stick till I've hed my say! I've listened to all 'at's been said so far, and poor soft stuff at it was, I gave it a hearing, and you'll give me one, or else you're worse cowards nor I take you for. I want to know why we're here—I want to know what all this is about? I came here to hear summat about it: I've heard nowt but fine talk fro' t' men and downright bad stuff fro' t' woman, and not one word 'at tells why ye lot—or most on yer—left your jobs yesterday morning. And so I'll tell you, and straight to your faces—it's 'cause ye've ta'en leave o' what senses ye had left, and in some cases that wasn't over much. Ye're being deceived and cheated by these here clever 'uns 'at's perched up on this platform—clever bad 'uns I call 'em—and especially by this lass 'at's just been raking up all t' foul things 'at she's ever heard on, as if they were existing to-day, when we all know well enough 'at they've been dead and buried and forgotten by all decent folk this many a long year. She's a lass, and I'm a woman i' middle age, owd enough to be her mother, and I've six o' my own, and's buried three more, and happen I've heard as much about t' bad owd times as what she has, and a deal more, and could tell more tales about 'em nor ever she's known on. But I'll ask any truthful man or woman 'at's worked in yon mill as long as I have—and I been there thirty years—if there's ever been owt o' that sort i' our time? No—never, and never like to be, and you all know it, and a young woman 'at has t' badness for it is sheer, reight-down badness—to stand up here and rake all that out o' t' past is shameless and wicked—she's a black heart, and she'll come to

no good, and so I tell her to her face, unless she mends her ways! I say again—what are you striking for? There's scarce one o' you can tell, ye poor soft fools—these here men behind me, and this lass, doesn't know, either, for all their fine talk. But I'll ask you summat 'at'll touch you up, for I know ye Haverthwaite folk and how fond o' brass you are—what are you going to do for money? Do you think t' trades-union's going to back you up—I've heard 'at it isn't—you came out agen its orders, and there'll be no strike pay coming from it. Where will you be then? Ye've gone cock-a-whoop into this strike, thinking 'at you could force t' trades-union to come in wi' you—all right; is there a single trades-union leader on this platform? You know there isn't—t' union, as a body'll ha' naught to do with it. And I'll tell you summat more—this here lot behind me is all again t' trades-union. Let 'em deny it if they can—let any one on 'em step forward and say if I'm lying! You see they daren't—they do nowt but look at each other and away at t' roofs o' t' houses. So I say again—what are you going to do if this goes on? You've all got a bit o' brass, no doubt, but it'll none last so long, and you'll grudge every penny on it, and if so be as it comes to a long fight, where are you going to be? I'll tell ye where you'll be—you'll be traipsing to t' pawnshops! For do you think 'at this lot behind me's going to keep you? If I know owt, it'll take them all their time to keep theirselves, for I doubt if they'll find employment i' Haverthwaite after letting all and sundry see what they are. Aye!—they've let you see what they are, and if ye'd one half or one-quarter o' t' sense 'at your fathers and mothers had what you'd do 'ud be to fling all t' lot on 'em into yon river! That's my say, and I've said it, and I'll say it again at every street corner round this part o' t' town sooner nor let a gang o' pestilent mischief-makers like these here talk and talk and talk and never get a word i' answer. What are they all leading you to? Do they know? Do ye know? Then I'll tell you! They're leading you to cold hearths and empty bellies! Empty bellies! Cold hearths! Shame on 'em!"

There had been ironical laughter and murmured interjections during the first few sentences of Mally's speech, but from the time she mentioned the aloftness of the trades-union officials a dead silence fell on the crowd, and it became intensely still. Drawing the shawl over her head and throwing a contemptuous and indignant glance on the platform party, Mally descended from her perch and shouldered her way amongst the people. The chairman suddenly sprang up, making a signal to the band. But some quick eye in the crowd noticed his motioning finger, and a harsh voice broke the moody silence.

"None o' that music, mi lad! Answer what t' woman's just said. What about t' trades-union?"

"Aye, what about t' trades-union?" vociferated a hundred voices.

The chairman exchanged a few hurried words with those about him.

“We shall know definitely about that to-morrow,” he said, turning to the people. “You need have no fear. The union’s bound to support us!”

“That’s a lie!” shouted a man who suddenly sprang on the front part of one of the drays. “T’ union’s none bound to do owt o’ t’ sort! I know for a fact ’at t’ union did all it could to dissuade ye four ’at’s on t’ platform there fro’ striking—ye persuaded t’ folk to come out agen t’ union wishes. It’s as Mally Watki’son says!” he went on, turning to the crowd. “This lot here—Howroyd, and Jubb, and that lass o’ Clough’s—they’re agen all trades-unionism. An’ it will be as t’ woman prophesied if ye let them lead you—cold hearths and empty bellies! Chuck ’em!”

“Now there’s going to be a row, sir!” whispered Aspinall, close to Bright’s elbow. “They’ve got t’ bone o’ dissension fairly cast among ’em, now. And once get ’em fratching among theirselves—”

But there was no row. Some quick-witted person extinguished one of the flaring naphtha lamps; the others were put out on the instant, and in the darkness the crowd began to break up, arguing and talking as it made its way out of the Fold. Presently Bright left Aspinall’s door and walked thoughtfully away. It seemed to him that Mally Watkinson’s plain words and sharp tongue had possibly effected more harm to his enemy’s cause than he himself could have wrought by any amount of carefully prepared speeches or by a dozen explanatory pamphlets. In one phrase she had laid the future bare before the men and women whom she had so fearlessly addressed.

Cold hearthstones and empty bellies!

Bright knew how that would strike home. He had only to glance through the windows of the little grey houses by which he was passing. There were bright, gay fires in every grate, and the supper-tables were spread with a plenitude of good things.

VII

Deep in thought, Bright walked slowly along, only dimly conscious that somebody was steadily following him. Suddenly, as he came to a turning the footsteps behind him quickened in pace and drew nearer; a voice that seemed familiar called his name. And turning sharply, he found himself confronting Grew.

Grew, seen clearly in the light of a neighbouring gas-lamp, was smiling—there was something knowing and suggestive in his smile: it was that of a man who feels that he can say a good deal if warranted by occasion.

"Well?" responded Bright. He came to a full stop, looking doubtfully at his follower. "Do you want me?"

"Well, I came after you all the way from Bolton's Fold, Mr. Marrashaw," answered Grew. "I saw you come out o' Aspinall's back door, so I made behind."

"You were there, then?" said Bright.

"Aye, I was there!" assented Grew, with a sly laugh. "Of course! Same as you were, no doubt—where no one could see me."

"Well?" asked Bright. He was all in the dark as to Grew's motive in hailing him. "What is it?"

Grew came nearer, lowering his voice with a glance at the nearest doors and windows.

"Do you want to bring this bother to an end, Mr. Marrashaw?" he asked meaningly. "Now's the time! To-night, while t' effect o' yon woman's bit o' plain talk's strong i' folks' minds! She did more wi' that rasping tongue of hers nor you'd do in a month with speeches and papers—she hit 'em fair between t' eyes! Look you here," he went on, waving a hand at the lighted windows around them. "All 'at these folk'll talk about to-night'll be Mally Watki'son's speech—I tell you she got there, where you wouldn't."

"I was just thinking that myself," said Bright. "But—you've some suggestion in your mind?"

"My suggestion is that this is what they call the psychological moment," answered Grew, with another of his sly, enigmatical smiles. "It's for you—it rests with you to take advantage or no. If you'd do what me and one or two more advise, you'd stamp this rising clean out—now! Yon woman put her finger straight on t' critical point—t' trades-union action!"

"Was she right in what she said?" demanded Bright. "Did she know? Or was it just her guesswork?"

"Will you come with me?" asked Grew. "Just come where there'll be a bit o' quiet, private talk, in strict confidence. There's naught to fear—I'm not

taking you where there'll be poisoned bowls and sharpened daggers—nowt o' that sort. Come—and you'll do some good."

"Certainly!" assented Bright. "Why not?"

"This way, then," said Grew. He motioned Bright to turn back, and leading him a little way along the street in which they were standing, presently left it for a row of better class terrace houses. "You know, Mr. Marrashaw," he continued, in a low, confidential voice, "you don't know nor understand the ins and outs o' these affairs as I do! There's all sorts o' movements inside a movement, wheels within wheels, cliques within cliques—there's never aught goes on in t' labour movement that isn't wire-pulled to an extent that you know naught about. That's why I wanted you to come with me for a few minutes."

"Do you want me to go in for wire-pulling?" asked Bright.

"I want you to take advantage of what you find out about it," answered Grew, meaningly. "Same as other folks will. Here we are," he added, as he paused and knocked at a door. "And you may as well know—you're expected! There were two or three of us down at yon do i' Bolton's Fold, hidden away, same as you were, and we saw you leave Aspinall's, and I slipped after you to bring you back—here. And, between you and me, you'll not regret it. Now', my lass!" he went on as a girl of fifteen opened the door and revealed a half-lighted, narrow passage. "Father in?"

"He's i' t' parlour, Mr. Grew," said the girl, glancing inquisitively at Bright, who was still well muffled. "You're to go in to 'em."

Grew motioned Bright to follow him along the passage to a closed door at the further end. Opening it without ceremony, he pushed his companion in, and Bright, peering through a cloud of tobacco smoke found himself in the presence of three men, two of whom he recognised as his visitors of two days before—the chairman of the meeting which he had addressed at the Independent Labour Hall on that night so many months ago, and the local representative of the trades-union. The third was a stranger.

The trades-union man, evidently the master of the house, sprang up and pulled forward an easy chair: there was that in his manner and in the salutations of the other men which convinced Bright that they were not only glad to see him but that his coming gave them some sense of relief.

"Much obliged to you, Mr. Marrashaw," said the trades-union man, cordially. "Glad to see you, sir—take this chair." He glanced at Grew, who had carefully closed the door and sidled to a seat. "You've said a word or two to Mr. Marrashaw as you came along, no doubt?" he suggested. "So—"

"I've told Mr. Marrashaw that the psychological moment's here, at hand, if he likes to seize it," replied Grew, "and that if he'll fall in with what can be suggested to him he'll stamp this strike clean out—quick! That's what I've

said."

The other three men looked at Bright enquiringly. And as none showed any signs of immediate speech, Bright went straight to what seemed to him to be the point.

"I've heard all that," he said. "And I've come here. But now I want to know why I'm brought here—definitely. What's all this about? What's the situation? I know you two, and I know Grew. Who's your friend there?—I don't know him."

"One of our chief officials, from head-quarters at Hallasfield, Mr. Marrashaw," replied the local man. "Sent over to make enquiry into this strike. All this is confidential between you and us."

"Well?" observed Bright. "I'm listening."

The local man glanced at his companions, and evidently understanding that he was to be spokesman, turned to the visitor.

"The position's this, Mr. Marrashaw," he said. "I'll explain it as simply as I can, sir. You know that pretty nearly every man, woman, and young person in your employ belongs to our union, as indeed most mill hands in Haverthwaite do. Well now, when we heard that a strike was threatened at your place over your dismissal of Howroyd and Jubb, we came to you to see what could be done in the way of avoiding it. We talked to you: then we talked to some of the leaders. We found that they were very bitter over that dismissal, and we found too, that a fair lot have got thoroughly infected with the notions that Howroyd and his group have been preaching quietly for some time. And, next morning, as you know, nine-tenths of your people didn't go to their work. But—that's naught to do with our union! We may as well tell you straight out, our union has no quarrel, as a union, with you, Mr. Marrashaw. We think you were a bit arbitrary and sharp about these two men, but we recognise that you'd some just cause of complaint—in fact, as officials, we've a good deal of sympathy with you, for what Howroyd and Jubb and Hermie Clough have been doing in your mill, they've been doing in our union, for some time!"

"You're aware of that?" asked Bright.

"Aye, sir, we're aware of it, well enough!" replied the spokesman with a laugh and a sly glance at the others. "And of a deal more! Now then, there's the position. This is not a strike set up by the union, nor approved by it. Howroyd and his lot have insisted that the union's bound to come in, that they'll force it to come in—that's all talk! The union is not coming in. What that woman, Mally Watkinson, said to-night, in her rough way, is quite true—the union isn't going to support Howroyd and his gang, and there'll be no strike pay from our funds. Understand, Mr. Marrashaw, once for all, there's naught between our trades-union, officially, and you. We mayn't see eye to eye about this profit-sharing scheme of yours, but that's a matter that, in our

opinion, can be adjusted and arranged—what is important is what I say—between us and you there's no quarrel. So far, since you took over your father's business, we, as officials of the union, have naught to complain about."

The other two men, who were watching Bright narrowly, murmured acquiescence.

"I'm very glad to hear it," said Bright. "And as to the profit-sharing scheme, I've already said it could be improved, and I believe I have improved it. Anyway, I'm going to carry it out. I intend to make my business a model one—a model for every big industrial concern in this country!—and I shall look to everybody concerned to help. But now," he went on, "I want to know something. You know far more than I do about these things—I'm only learning—so just tell me. If as you say, there's going to be no support from your union, and if, officially, you did all you could to dissuade these people from leaving their work, whatever made Howroyd's lot go on? They must know that failing support from you, they'd no chance! What the secret about it?"

The other men laughed, and the spokesman gave Bright a knowing look.

"I'll tell you, Mr. Marrashaw," he said, leaning forward along the table by which he and Bright sat. "This affair, when you do get at the bottom of it, is just as much an attack on trades-unionism, as trades-unionism has been, and still is, as it is on you. This Howroyd group have been working in secret for some time. Recent events have forced 'em into the open. They know as well as we do that they haven't, and never had, the remotest chance of success in this present affair. No body of workpeople can possibly succeed in strike tactics unless it's supported by a strong trades-union influence and funds. Howroyd and his lot know that: they know they can't win. Why, then, did they go on? I'll tell you! It's all part of a deep-laid scheme. They want either to capture the trades-unions as they are, or so smash them into fragments and build up new ones on their ideas. Now this affair of yours is a test-case! They want to find out how strong they are, and, in finding out, to do as much mischief as ever they can to their two enemies. You, the capitalist-employer, are one; we, the old-fashioned trades-union officials, are the other. Do you understand, Mr. Marrashaw?"

"I'm beginning to," replied Bright. He remained silent for a moment or two, thinking things over. Now he was realising the significance of some of Hermie's doings and sayings in the past, and it seemed to him that she had perhaps regarded him as a good deal of a possible catspaw, an easily-used instrument. "Well," he said at last, looking round on the three men, "you brought me here for some purpose? What do you want me to do?"

"We want you to do something that'll take the wind clean out of the sails

of the Howroyd lot, Mr. Marrashaw," answered the spokesman eagerly. "You'll understand. I'm sure, that we, as trades-union officials, don't want to be mixed up with this affair too much—as little as possible, in fact. If it comes to it, there'll be a definite refusal on the part of our executive. But if you'll follow out something we'll propose to you, there'll be no need for our formal refusal—things will have righted themselves before they ever come before us."

"What are you asking me to do?" demanded Bright. "Put it in plain words."

"We want you to open your gates, just as usual, to-morrow morning," answered the spokesman. "Start work again!—just as if nothing had happened. Let your buzzer go—and your machinery run—go ahead! As I say—as if this business had never taken place."

"You think the people would come?" exclaimed Bright.

"I think—we all think—that after what that woman Mally Watkinson drove into their ears to-night there'd be a rare lot that would only be too glad to come!" declared the spokesman. "Let it be known—to-night!—that's work's starting as usual to-morrow morning, and there'll be a good gathering. And there'll be more next day, and more next—and the thing'll be settled! When they find out that there's going to be no union support, and no strike pay—you'll see. Haverthwaite folk may be fond of ideals, but they're a deal fonder o' creature comforts!"

"How could it be made known to-night?" asked Bright.

"Easily!" said the spokesman. "It's scarcely nine o'clock, now. Give the word to some of your foremen—it'll spread round here like wildfire. No difficulty at all about that, sir. You've only to say the word!"

"The whole neighbourhood 'ud know in half-an-hour," remarked Grew. "Put it in Lockwood Clough's hands, Mr. Marrashaw."

"Aye!" said the spokesman. "Tell Lockwood to let it be known, and it'll be all right. No fuss; no explanations; no questions. The thing is—start!—and go on as if the last day or two had never been."

"You think it'll answer?" asked Bright.

The men looked at each other, smiling enigmatically.

"Try it, sir!" said the spokesman.

Bright reflected for a moment; then he rose and buttoned his overcoat.

"Very well!" he answered.

The elder man of the four, who had sat silently listening to all that was said, laid a hand on Bright's sleeve.

"Mr. Marrashaw!" he said. "You don't know our folk as I know 'em! For all their hardness and obstinacy and similar qualities, they're as easily swayed as corn before a wind! This Howroyd lot swayed 'em in one direction two days since, but Mally Watki'son swayed 'em in another to-night. It's as Grew there says—this is t' psychological moment! You go, sir, and give orders for full

speed ahead to-morrow morning, and you'll see t' owd machine'll move on!—we know, here, what we're talking about."

VIII

Bright went away from that secret conference full of somewhat perplexing thoughts. He saw now what Grew had meant when he spoke of wheels within wheels, cliques within cliques, movements inside a movement. He was impressed, too, with what the elder man had just said as to the mutability of the people. He had heard his father voice similar sentiments: Ellerthwaite, too, had spoken to him more than once of the way in which democracy sways and shifts under the influence of one demagogue or another. But he had never heard a working man speak so frankly, nor with such conviction and now he seemed to see the folk who at that moment were getting their suppers in the warmth and comfort of their cottages in an entirely new light. Demos, then, after all, was not the united, concentrated force, one-minded, one-purposed, clear-thinking, that he had imagined, but truly a many-headed body, subject as water to wind. To-day, Hermie Clough; to-morrow, Mally Watkinson!—the impression of the moment always being strongest.

Lockwood himself appeared at the door of his house in answer to Bright's knock, and exclaimed in surprise on recognising his visitor.

"All right, Lockwood," said Bright. "Alone?"

"Aye, I'm alone—and shall be," responded Lockwood, as he ushered his master in and closed the door. "Them two—you know who I mean!—have gone off to Brelforth, and they'll not come back to-night. T' truth is," he continued, as he drew forward a chair for Bright, "there was a bit of a sickener for t' Howroyd lot at that meeting in Bolton's Fold to-night. That woman 'at came up to your place this morning, Mally Watki'son—"

"I was at the meeting," interrupted Bright. "I heard Mally. Then you think she really put a spoke in their wheel?"

Lockwood gave a dry chuckle.

"I think she put such a spoke in their wheel that it's like to upset t' entire cart and cargo!" he said. "An' they know it, and all!—you see, it was t' first bit of practical common sense 'at most o' t' folk had heard. It touched their pockets! And as soon as owt touches a Haverthwaite man's pocket, he's on guard. This Howroyd gang coddled all t' rest into believing two things, Mr. Bright—one was that t' trades-union 'ud back 'em up; t' other that you'd give way as soon as you saw they meant business. They're being disappointed in both."

"You say they know things aren't going well for them?" asked Bright.

"I'll tell you," replied Lockwood. "They've already got deserters, or at any rate, half-and-halfers in their camp. After that meeting to-night, they'd a bit o' hurried talk amongst theirselves, and our Hermie and Allot Howroyd set off

there and then to Brelforth, to get help. Their lot—this syndicalist lot—is strong in Brelforth: they've gone there to get 'em to back 'em up here and with t' trades-union headquarters. I got to know that just now fro' Tom Watmough—Hermie sent him wi' a message to me about being away for t' night, and Tom told me t' rest. He's been one o' Howroyd's chief supporters, but he says now, as lots on 'em are saying all over t' place, that if there's to be no union support, he's had enough. You see how it is, Mr. Bright?—they're none going to face them cold hearths and empty bellies 'at Mally Watki'son prophesied, none they! They know better!"

"I'll tell you what it is, Lockwood!" exclaimed Bright, suddenly. "They seem to me to be more like a lot of children than anything else! They're ready enough to start a game at anybody's suggestion, and the first thing in it that they don't like, why, then, they aren't going to play any longer!"

Lockwood laughed satirically.

"Why, you'll excuse me, sir, but that's a bit of a platitude," he said. "Well enough known to me, anyway, and to a great many more on us. They are children!—and they're over susceptible to glibness o' tongue. You'd hear and see to-night—our Hermie carried 'em away in one direction wi' all that old tale 'at she owt to be ashamed o' dwelling on, and Mally Watki'son flung 'em back in another, ten minutes after Hermie'd sat down. Aye, they're children!" he continued, with a sigh. "Like them 'at owd Paul wrote about 'tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness'—that's it, sir!"

"Subject to the impression of the moment!" said Bright.

"There's no doubt on it!" affirmed Lockwood.

"Then—are they, just now, under the influence of Mally's Watkinson's speech?" asked Bright. "That's the last thing they had forced on them!"

"I should say there's naught else being talked about, fro' one end o' these streets to t' other," affirmed Lockwood. "Aye!—they'll talk about no other thing to-night, and to-morrow morning an' all. No union support—no strike pay—t' pawnbroker's shops—cold hearths—empty bellies—crying childher: it'll take a lot o' talk fro' our Hermie to drive them ghosts out o' their minds! Especially out o' t' women!"

Bright rose from his chair.

"Then there's only one thing to be done!" he said. "And I'll do it. We'll start work again to-morrow morning! Just as usual—as if nothing had happened. Can it be done, Lockwood?"

Lockwood considered matters for a moment or two. He glanced at the old clock which stood in a corner of his living-room.

"Oh, aye, it can be done," he answered. "Yes—there's no difficulty about that. There's naught to do but warn our engine-men and foreman, and so on,

and just give t' work to two or three o' t' old workers, such as Mally Watki'son—they'll have t' news spread all round before ten o'clock. Fortunately, t' men that you want, for starting again, are all on our side—there's naught to do but to just see 'em and tell 'em to get to their jobs i' t' morning, just as usual." He paused, looking thoughtfully at Bright. "I see your point, your notion," he said suddenly. "It's to just—quietly go on, ignoring t' events o' t' last two days?"

"That—and to find out if there aren't a good many that'll be glad to come back with no questions asked," asserted Bright.

"Just so," said Lockwood. He picked up a cap, muffler, and overcoat that lay near him and began to prepare for going out. And suddenly he gave Bright a half shy smile. "You'll say I'm a bit of a sentimentalist, Mr. Bright," he remarked as he wrapped himself up. "Happen I am—but I can assure you 'at I've never heard no sweeter music i' my life than t' sound o' t' clattering clogs on their way to t' mill of a morning! This morning, I heard naught—it was all dead silence hereabouts, an' I'm none ashamed to say 'at I dropped a tear or two on t' pillow—I did so! But to-morrow—"

Bright slipped his hand within the old overlooker's arm and gave it a squeeze.

"Come on, Lockwood!" he said. "You'll hear the clogs clatter for many a morning yet!"

IX

As Lockwood and Bright left the house, the front lights of a motor-car turned the corner of the street and coming slowly toward them halted before the gate of the overlooker's little garden. The driver leaned forward from his seat, peering at the two figures advancing along the path.

"Is that Mr. Clough?" he called.

"Aye, it's me," replied Lockwood. "What's wanted?"

"Have you seen aught of Mr. Marrashaw to-night, Mr. Clough?" asked the driver. "I'm seeking him, and I heard 'at you'd be like to know where he is if he's down this way."

Bright had already recognised the man's voice, and knew him for Ellerthwaite's chauffeur. He went out of the gate and up to him.

"I'm here," he said. "What is it—who wants me?"

"Mr. Ellerthwaite, sir," replied the driver. "I didn't see it was you, sir. T' master wants to see you particular—he sent me across to Marrashaw Royd with orders that if you weren't at home, I was to find you and bring you back to our place at once. I heard from your servants that you'd gone out and might be down this way, so I came on."

"All right," answered Bright. "I'll come with you in a moment." He turned back to Lockwood and drew him aside. "Now, Lockwood!" he whispered. "Get on with what we've been talking about. Get hold of half-a-dozen of likely people to spread the news, and see that everything's ready for a start first thing in the morning. I'll be down here myself in good time—meet me at the mill. Now I'll go and find out what Mr. Ellerthwaite wants."

All the way through the town and its outskirts and across the dark moor, Bright wondered what it could be that had made Ellerthwaite send for him so late in the evening. He was still wondering when he arrived at the house, where he was at once shown into the dining-room. There his wonder changed to surprise at the scene before him; it was certainly one which he had never expected to see. For the second time that night he suddenly grasped the significance of Grew's remark about wheels within wheels—he had evidently been hailed to yet another secret conference.

Ellerthwaite sat at one end of the dinner table in the centre of the room. He was leaning back in his chair, his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, a cigar in the corner of his lips, a half-amused, half-cynical smile in his eyes, listening to one of two men who sat on either side of the table, at his right and left hand. These men, too, had their cigars, and they had glasses before them: Ellerthwaite, with his usual ready hospitality had made them at home. And a little in the background, by the hearth, sat Milly, keenly interested in whatever

it was that was going on. She was watching the man who was talking: Bright knew him well enough as one of his own employees, Walshaw: a young, energetic, pushing fellow; he knew the other man, too: Burton, an older man, also a Marrashaw's mill-hand. Both were strikers.

Ellerthwaite turned a shrewd and informing eye on Bright as he walked in —there was a world of meaning in his glance as he waved his cigar towards the two workmen.

"There you are!" he said. "I thought we should rouse you out somewhere. Here's two of your men who've been having a bit of talk with me about my having a bit of talk with you. But I tell 'em—they'd better say what they have to say straight out to Mr. Marrashaw. Sit you down, Bright."

Bright dropped into a chair at the other end of the table, nodding to his two men as he drew closer. He saw that this was going to be a moment of confidence, and he had no mind to adopt a stand-offish attitude.

"I don't know in the least what it's all about," he remarked, pleasantly, "but I've no objection to hear. What is it—what's the mystery?"

The two men glanced, half-sheepishly, at Ellerthwaite, and Ellerthwaite laughed.

"I seem to have been elected to be a sort of intermediary," he said, "so I suppose I must preface matters. The fact is," he went on, "there's a cave in the opposition camp! Some of 'em already fled to Adullam—and here's two ambassadors that want to start negotiations. They've some interesting things to tell. You'd better hear 'em."

Bright turned to the two men.

"Well?" he said. "But what? I rather think you two were pretty zealous on the side of Howroyd and his party, weren't you?"

The two men looked at each other, and at Ellerthwaite; the younger man smiled and turned on Bright with a sudden assumption of almost childlike confidence.

"Well, we were, Mr. Marrashaw!" he said, ingenuously. "It's quite true, sir —we did our bit in that way. You can put us down as holding commissioned rank in t' rebel army, if you like. But now—"

"Stop a bit!" said Bright. "Let's be clear. I know you two—you've both got headpieces on you. Now both of you, personally—what did you strike for?"

"Well, that's a fair question, sir, and I'll answer it," replied Walshaw. "I'll answer for both. We thought your treatment of Howroyd and Jubb was harsh and arbitrary. I think so now, Mr. Marrashaw—I think you'll think so yourself, some day, on reflection. You were a bit too impulsive—too sharp."

"It wasn't what your pa 'ud ha' done, Mr. Marrashaw," said Burton, a man whose plain-spokenness of character manifested itself in his face. "He was a strict and a hard 'un, was your pa, but he'd ha' gone more closely into t'

matter. There was too much o' t' autocrat in your behaviour, sir—for a free people!"

"All right," said Bright. "Those are fair answers—from your point. If you thought my conduct was harsh, you'd a perfect right to protest against it, in your own way. You did!—by striking. But—now?"

Walshaw favoured the gathering with a comprehensive smile.

"The fact of the case, Mr. Marrashaw," he said, "is—we feel we've been done!"

"That's it!" muttered Burton. "Done, sir. Been, as it were, taken in. Been made mugs on—as t' saying goes. And that's worse than t' other!"

Ellerthwaite laughed: it was evident that he was deriving some huge secret amusement out of the situation. But Bright was puzzled. He turned a blank face on the victims of duplicity.

"Who has been making mugs of you?" he asked.

"This Howroyd lot!" answered Walshaw. "Howroyd himself!"

"And t' woman," added Burton. "Yon Hermione! She's t' worst. If that there sort's going to get t' upper hand i' politics, then I'm going to have no more to do with 'em!"

Bright looked more puzzled than ever. He glanced at Ellerthwaite, and Ellerthwaite nodded at Walshaw.

"You'd better explain, my lad," he said. "Mr. Marrashaw's wondering what it's all about."

Walshaw turned to Bright, and leaning over the table, began to check off his points on the tips of his fingers.

"Well, you see, Mr. Marrashaw, it's been like this," he said. "Your father never knew it, and you've never known it, But Allot Howroyd, and Hermie Clough, and that lot have been spreading their doctrines among t' people for a good while back—on t' quiet. Now then, when this do came between you and Howroyd, they determined on forcing a strike, though I know for a fact that they'd far rather ha' put it off for a couple of years, till they were in better condition. But there was an excuse, and they decided to take it. They persuaded the bulk of us to come out—and we did come out. But now—how did they persuade us? First of all, Howroyd, at a sort of private, secret meeting that was attended the other night by principal chaps, like Burton there and myself, assured us that our trades-union would most certainly back us up, and that if it showed any signs o' not doing so, he'd the means to force its hand—he asserted, positively, that him and his lot had got t' trades-union head officials in a string, and could do what they liked with 'em, and that they were powerful enough to smash t' union all to pieces."

"And you believed—that?" asked Bright.

"Aye, we believed it!" said Walshaw. "He's a very persuasive chap, is

Allot Howroyd, when he's on his legs, and of course he's a highly-educated man, compared to us, and he can deal with figures and facts and statistics and so on in a fashion that 'ud make anybody take his word for gospel. We did believe him—we believed, after what he said, that if we came out, the union would back us up, that there'd be strike pay, and all t' rest of it. But there was more than that—it wasn't only Howroyd's assurance that made us come out that morning—there was another!"

"T' woman!" muttered Burton. "She was t' main persuader!"

"Aye!" assented Walshaw. "Hermie Clough! I'll not say," he continued, "that we shouldn't ha' come out, even if she'd said naught, for t' feeling was very bitter again you, Mr. Marrashaw, about turning them two away in such cavalier fashion, but what she did say when Howroyd had done certainly settled t' matter. It put t' cap on! You know what a tongue she has!—she'd persuade some folk that black's white, if she were minded that way."

"I'm waiting to hear what she told you," said Bright. "What was it?"

Walshaw glanced slyly at Ellerthwaite; the glance wandered round to Milly before it settled on Bright.

"Well, Mr. Marrashaw!" he answered, with a depreciating smile. "You mustn't mind if it seems a bit personal: I'm just acquainting you, as it were, with the strictly secret sides of the case, so I shall have to tell some personal things. When Howroyd had said his say about the trades-union aspect of the matter, Hermie said hers on another. She'd got her campaign all ready mapped out—seems to me, she'd had it all laid by in a pigeon-hole for some time, ready to take out when occasion rose. She said that she'd make herself responsible for bringing the campaign to a victorious conclusion. She said it would be a short and sharp one, and it would end—couldn't but end!—in a complete victory for us. Then she told why. She said that she'd been Charlesworth Marrashaw's right hand for the last years of his life; that he'd more than once said that she knew far more about his business than he did himself; that it was really her that had been the controlling force in the business for some time, and that when she left Charlesworth over some tiff they had, he'd privately tried to bribe her heavily to come back, saying that the business couldn't do without her, and that she was coming back, at a tremendous salary, when he suddenly died. Then—"

"Wait!" said Bright. He had been exchanging glances with Ellerthwaite during the last few sentences. "Listen!" he continued, turning to Walshaw. "She made this statement before a private meeting of some of you, you say? You were there?"

"Aye, I was there, right enough!" replied Walshaw. "I heard her say all I'm telling you."

"Me, too!" said Burton. "I was there, an' all—heard every word on't."

“Did she give you any proof that the last statement was true?” asked Bright.

“Yes!” exclaimed Walshaw. “She did!—she knew well enough that it ’ud add force to what she said. She showed us an agreement ’at your father had signed. She was to have two thousand a year. She told us what she was going to do with it—what she didn’t want for herself. She was going to use it for furthering the Cause. It was her way, she said, of robbing the enemy!”

Bright looked across the table at Ellerthwaite. But Ellerthwaite was replenishing the glasses of the ambassadors, and Bright signed to Walshaw to proceed.

“Go on!” he said. “What else?”

“Well, your father died—so that didn’t come off,” continued Walshaw. “But she came back as secretary to you. Now then she dealt with you. She said that if she’d been a necessity to your father, she was a thousand times more of an absolute one to you! She said that you knew naught whatever about t’ business, that you’d been entirely dependent on her for running it since you’d taken hold, and that you couldn’t possibly do without her. More than that, she said that she’d always been able to twist you round her finger like a bit o’ soft stuff, and that if you had shown a bit of spirit about this Howroyd and Jubb affair, it had only been a flash in the pan with naught behind it, and you were probably bitterly repenting it already. And she said that if only to get her back, you’d be on your knees to her within a week, and she’d be able to dictate terms. Her own terms!”

“She didn’t happen to mention them, I suppose?” asked Bright.

“Oh, aye, she did!” said Walshaw. “She had it all cut and dried, I can tell you, Mr. Marrashaw! T’ terms were these—she said that you cared not one rap for t’ business: you were wrapped up in scientific research and such like. So she was going to insist on your clearing out altogether with what your father had left you in ready money and so on, and you were to hand t’ mill and t’ business clean over to us, t’ workpeople, to run on communistic lines. It was to be—ours!”

“And—you believed all that?” said Bright. “You did?”

“Well, of course, she put it in a better way nor what I’ve done,” replied Walshaw. “She explained it all more fully. And you know what a tongue she has, Mr. Marrashaw—yes, I should say we certainly thought it ’ud come off.”

“And so, having heard all that Howroyd had to say, and what she had to say, you struck!” said Bright.

“Aye, we struck, right enough!” admitted Walshaw, sheepishly. “No denying that, sir.”

Bright pulled himself up and thrust his hands in his pockets.

“Very well!” he remarked. “Now then, what are you here for? What have

you come to Mr. Ellerthwaite about? Why have you told me all these secrets? Am I to understand that you're sick of your precipitate action? And is it just you two, yourselves?—or do you represent somebody else?"

"I said—they're ambassadors," interposed Ellerthwaite. "Come with olive-branches!"

"On whose behalf?" demanded Bright.

"Well, I'll just tell you where it is, Mr. Marrashaw," answered Walshaw, after a slight pause. "I said—we'd been done! I've told you how Howroyd and Hermie Clough got round us. Now then, you see, at the very start off, we found out that you weren't such soft stuff as she made out. Instead o' sitting down to cry as she reckoned you would, so to speak, you locked them mill gates! We all knew what that meant. You'd said that if there was a strike, it 'ud be followed by a lock-out. When you turned that key in its lock, we knew you were a man that would be as good as his word. So—that settled Hermie Clough's plan o' campaign: we knew then that it had no real basis; that it existed only in her own imagination. T' real fact o' t' case is," he continued, with a broad smile, "I've come to t' conclusion 'at Hermie Clough's one of these here megalomaniacs!—she thinks she's a deal more powerful than she is!"

"Well?" said Bright. "What else? There's more."

"Yes, there's more," admitted Walshaw. "Of course, we began to get uneasy about the trades-union and the strike pay. And so, without saying aught to Howroyd or Hermie, or any of 'em, a small deputation—me and Burton there among it—went over to Hallasfield late this afternoon to see the head officials, and get a right, dependable, authoritative word about the whole affair. We saw 'em—the chief men, the executive. And—they told us straight! The union's going to have naught to do wi' t' strike! There's not going to be any strike pay! Howroyd had no right to pledge t' union. He's no power over it—it's all gammon to say that he could force its hand. T' secretary told us that we could give his compliments to Howroyd and to Hermie Clough and tell 'em that they could take their vapourings to somewhere else, where they'd be more in touch with rebellions and revolutions—t' trades-union machinery wasn't going to be put out o' gear by them. 'They're a hundred years too soon,' he said, 'or, maybe, a hundred too late—they're best fitted for French Revolution work,' he said. 'Anyway, we're not going to have anything to do with 'em. Yours is a private dispute between your employer and yourselves,' he said, 'and you can go and settle it—the union'll have nothing whatever to do with it!' And so," concluded Walshaw, "of course—we came home!"

"Much wiser nor we went!" added Burton.

"The fact is," said Walshaw, "Hermie Clough—as was—and Howroyd's had the lot of us on toast! Or else, they fancied they could do things that they

can't do. You know, Mr. Marrashaw," he went on, with another sudden turning to Bright, "I can tell you something else 'at you know nothing about, and that your father knew nothing about, either. Them two, Howroyd and Hermie were always plotting together! I'll tell you how they used to do it—they were clever enough, or she was. As soon as your father had gone home of an afternoon she used to ring Howroyd up on t' telephone from your father's private room, making an excuse for him to bring an order book or something o' that sort, and off he'd go, and of course, as your father had gone, him and her had t' place all to theirselves! There were two or three of us in his department knew about that. And it went on, just t' same way, after she came back to you, when your father was dead. Howroyd used to go round to t' private office to her nearly every afternoon when you'd gone, and—"

"We'll leave that alone, I think," said Bright suddenly. "The thing is—what do you want? You spoke of some deputation that had been over to Hallasfield, of which you were members. Have you come here—to me—representing them?"

"Them and others," assented Walshaw.

"T' practical lot," added Burton.

"Well—what do you want?" repeated Bright.

"We want to know if you're going to keep up this lock-out?" answered Walshaw, suddenly. "That's about it!"

"Aye, that's about it," muttered Burton.

"Very well," said Bright. "Now I know what you want. All right—you can go and tell anybody and everybody that Marrashaw's Mill will be at work, just as usual, first thing to-morrow morning. That's definite—and it's final."

Presently the two men went away, evidently greatly relieved, and soon afterwards Bright went away, too; father and daughter were both quick to observe that he was not disposed for conversation. When he had gone they looked at each other.

"It seems to me," said Milly, "that Hermione is a pretty good specimen of a wire-puller!"

"It seems to me," replied Ellerthwaite, with a cynical laugh, "that Hermione is sadly deficient in two things—the sense of humour and the faculty of perception. In other words, Milly, my lass, she's a good deal of a fool, and she's a serious fool, which is worst of all. However—I reckon Master Bright has had his eyes opened to-night to more curious things than he'd ever thought of—he'll do a lot of thinking as he goes home across yon moor."

X

Bright was certainly full of thought as he went out into the night: certainly he was also conscious that he had learnt things that evening of which he had never previously even dreamed. He had been brought face to face with the undeniable fact that intrigue and secret dealing and not a little jealousy and back-biting were as common among the leaders of the labour movement as they are amongst politicians and diplomatists of higher rank: it all came back to what he had said to them in his impromptu speech months before—there was no real union, no real and deep community of thought and purpose in their ranks. Here was Howroyd and his lot pulling one way; there were the trades-union officials pulling another; here, the old-fashioned workers like Mally Watkinson and Lockwood Clough denounced all and who interfered with what they personally considered a very safe and comfortable order of things; there, opportunists, like Walshaw and Burton, were ready to desert any cause at a moment's notice as soon as they found that their bread was likely to lack butter. And behind all these various contending, seething, variable forces was the sinister figure of Simon Grew, ready to sell secrets, turn traitor, play the spy, act as go-between, if it profited his own pocket. But unprincipled as Grew doubtless was, he was a fellow of common-sense and keen penetration—had he not told him, Bright, that if he took up with the labour cause in deadly earnest he'd get a broken heart for his pains? "I know 'em!" Grew had said, with a cynical laugh. Bright was not sure now that Grew had not been right. And in that moment, as he paced slowly across the heather and ling of the silent moorland, he had a sudden illuminating vision of his own father, and saw Charlesworth in a new light. The old man had been old-fashioned, out-of-date, imperious, arbitrary, perhaps a bit hard and harsh, but he had also been a leader of men, for had he not kept a firm hand on the reins of his many-headed team and driven it successfully, with neither accident nor mishap for a long and notable course?

"I daresay he knew a lot more, and was a far wiser man, that I ever gave him credit for!" soliloquised Bright. "The old saying's all wrong—the real truth is that there's no fool like a young fool!"

He began to examine himself at that, seeking to discover wherein he had been foolish, and how he could learn some lessons from whatever folly he had committed. He was not going to give up any of his cherished ideas nor relinquish any of his deep-laid schemes; far from it: Marrashaw's, he was resolved, should be made into that model industrial concern of which he had long dreamed: it was now the big ambition of his life to surround himself, as employer, with a contented and prosperous body of employed. And now, he

thought, he knew them better. Instead of being a mass of units all bound together by common interest and mutual taste, he saw them in their true proportions as three thousand absolutely separate and distinct personalities, each requiring care, attention, proper and full shepherding. Shepherding!—that was a good word, he thought, with a laugh—he had got to be shepherd of a flock of sheep. And sheep are easily turned and easily led and easily frightened—and there are wolves. He had seen the wolves looking out of the dark recesses of the woods and crags upon the confines of the sheep-fold during the last few days, and it had not escaped his notice that many of them wore sheep's clothing.

"Life-work!" he muttered to himself. "Life-work! Once more—I reckon the poor old man knew a lot more than I ever thought he did. No wonder he put up that statue to himself!—it meant I suppose, that he wanted to typify himself as the man at the helm."

Bright was taking a short cut across the moor. It took him by what was little better than a sheep-track along the edge of the table-land, and at last by a great mass of rock which rose high out of the hillside, and formed a landmark that could be seen for miles along the wide valley of the Haver, far beneath. He paused as he came up to this rock and looked about him in the light of a half-moon and its attendant stars, and then lingering, suddenly became aware of a figure which sat motionless on a ledge close by—so motionless that at first he took its vague outline for a part of the dark mass above. But a light breath of wind stirred some drapery or other, and with a quick instinct he went nearer.

"Good God!" he exclaimed half-frightened at his own voice. "Hermie!"

Hermie turned her face slowly in his direction. She sat like a statue on a low ledge at the foot of the pinnacle of rock, her hands clasped on her knee, her whole attitude that of blank apathy. And the dim moonlight showed Bright that her face was drawn, pale and haggard.

"What is it?" he asked, going nearer. "Why are you here?"

"Go away!" she answered in a low voice. "Go—right away! I don't want you—anybody! Go!"

"No!" said Bright. "I shan't—I won't! You're in trouble. I'm not going."

To show that he meant it, he sat down on the rock, close by her, keeping his eyes on her face. She turned away from him, staring fixedly at the hills on the far side of the valley, whose dark bulk was just visible in the uncertain light, and for a moment or two there was silence.

"If it was I who was in trouble—and you don't know that I'm not—you'd be quick to do anything for me," said Bright, at last. "Come, now—let me do something for you—anything. What is it?"

He waited a long time before she answered; when at last her lips moved, her voice was harsh and cold.

“You can’t do anything,” she said. “It would be far better if you’d go away. Thank you, all the same.”

“Well, I’m just not going,” declared Bright. “Look here—where’s Howroyd? You—you haven’t quarrelled?”

Hermie turned and looked at him with an expression of profound wonder.

“I couldn’t possible conceive our quarrelling,” she answered. “We’ve too much of a purpose. Howroyd’s gone to Hallasfield.”

“I heard that you’d gone, too,” said Bright. “Why didn’t you? And what on earth are you doing here—at this time of night?”

“I was wishing I could cry!” she replied suddenly. “But—women like me don’t cry! I wish we did.”

“Well, I guess you will, some day,” said Bright. “But—what about, now? Three or four hours ago, you were full of threatenings and slaughter! I was there at Bolton’s Fold. And now you’re—here! Why?”

“Because I’m beaten!” she retorted suddenly. “You’ve beaten me! I might have known. I let Allot go to Hallasfield, and at the last moment I stopped here—I thought I’d better be on the spot. And I went back amongst the people and found—”

She paused, turning her face again towards the hills, and for a moment there was silence.

“You found,” said Bright, “that the people had executed one of their as-you-were movements. Weathercocked! Well—that shows how little you’ve ever known them.”

“Money!” she muttered. “Money! Of course it’s your money. They let themselves be bought—body and soul! What chance do people like Allot Howroyd and Hermie Clough possess against Marrashaw’s money!”

“You’re on the wrong track,” said Bright. “Neither I nor my money have had anything to do with the collapse of your strike. It’s collapsed just because the people suddenly saw that it was going to lead to precisely what Mally Watkinson prophesied—cold hearths and empty bellies! Hermie!—what an awful pity it is that you can’t see things as they are! Why didn’t it strike a couple of clever people like you and Allot Howroyd that as soon as ever it came to a question of brass—for that’s it!—these people would desert you to a man? Don’t you think—come, now!—don’t you think you’re a bit foolish?”

“I daresay we’re both utter fools,” she answered. “So it’s a good job we’re married—we shall have that bond in common, at any rate. I’m glad I have married Allot—he’s got an ideal—my ideal. That’s—everything, to me.”

“Well, I’m glad you’re glad, then,” said Bright. “That’s all right. But I’ve ideals, as well as you. I want to carry them out, and I mean to.”

“By a system of genteel slavery!” she remarked, with a sudden sharpening of tone.

“Not half as much so as yours would be,” retorted Bright. “But come, don’t let’s argue at this time of night. Come away, now, and let me see you home. You’ll go to your father’s?”

Hermie suddenly rose and drew her wraps round her. She stood for a moment staring across the valley.

“I suppose you thought at first when you found me here that I should very likely throw myself off these rocks, or fling myself into the river, or something of that sort, if you left me?” she said. “Well, I shouldn’t. If there’d been any tragedy, it would have been in my putting a bullet through Grew and one or two others—I would now, if I could go scot-free. But there won’t be any tragedy—I hadn’t even anything to do with breaking Grew’s windows. And I’m going home to my father’s, and I shall sleep, I suppose, and get up in the morning and make breakfast, and by and by Allot’ll come back, poor fellow, with his disappointment heavy on him, having found that those fat-cheeked, black-coated smugsters at the trades-union headquarters will have nothing to do with us, and then—”

“Well, he’s got you to comfort him,” interrupted Bright. “You can comfort each other.”

“And then,” she continued, paying no heed to him, “we shall be sneered at and laughed at all over the town as the two fools who tried and failed—laughed and sneered at by the very people who, till to-night, regarded us as gods!”

“But you see, you weren’t even demi-gods!” said Bright. “And as to the people—you’d better read and think over the second scene of the third act of *Julius Cæsar*. Come, now, Hermie, why won’t you and Howroyd be sensible! With your abilities and cleverness, why don’t both you put aside your impracticable ideals and join in with me at what is practical? I’m not saying that your ideals are wrong or impossible—all I say is that the time isn’t yet—the people aren’t ready—nothing’s ready. Join in with what is practical, with what can be done!”

“No!” she answered. “Never! We’re the pioneer lot—the vanguard! The army’s a long, long way behind us, and it’ll find us all dead and gone when it gets up, but when it wins through, it’ll realise that it would never have won the pass and scaled the heights if we hadn’t fought and died. And if people like us stand fighting alone now, don’t you forget, Bright, that the army’s coming—you can hear it if you’ve ears to hear, and if you’ll listen—and it’ll come with such a rush and sweep at last that—but I’m going—good-night!”

She suddenly turned, and went so swiftly away from him that before Bright could realise it, she was vanishing in the gloom, and presently she was gone—a light, slender figure so elusive and almost ghost-like that he had a half-whimsical fancy of its being caught up and carried away on some chance

breath of the moorland wind. He made no attempt to follow her: he knew that she would do what she said. For a few moments he stood, abstractedly staring at the far-off hills as she, too, had stared: at last he also turned and went homeward. But in those moments had visualised the future, for Hermie and for himself. She would stand by her ideal, with the man who shared it with her; they would be idealists to the end, and they would make much mischief, and stir up rebellion, and set men by the ears, and in their way, a strange and ruthless one, they would help the race. That was their way: it had attractions. But it was not his way: he saw that as clearly as he had seen the other. His lot was evidently to keep the machine going as well as possible, patching, repairing, making minor improvements, until the time came when it was worn out and must be wholly replaced: that was his job. And in the doing of it, he saw how things would go: he would remain a rich man, and marry Milly Ellerthwaite, and they would get on famously, largely through her own good temper and mother-wit, and he would be regarded as a model employer, and men would speak well of him when he died. And maybe, though it was difficult to see it through the clouds of mere material existence, his job and Hermie's job were, after all, not so very much dissimilar: it might be that, like the various-sized stones in an edifice, each had its use and was as important as the other.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.
Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.
[The end of *The Mill of Many Windows* by J. S. (Joseph Smith) Fletcher]