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SLAVERY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

—

DARAB'S WINE-CUP
THE WANDERING ROMANOFF
A MAN ADRIFT
A SAILOR TRAMP
LONDON IN SHADOW
A TRAMP IN SPAIN



SLAVERY:

Pictures from the Depths

BY

BART KENNEDY

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*I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO MY SON*

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BOOK I

N. L. Mullins
3 Hamill
Harro
R.

SLAVERY

PROEM

I.

A RICH woman would not be forced to leave her child. She would not be forced to go out into the cold, the rain—out into the grey of early morning.

But then to be rich is not to be a slave. To be rich means that you may own slaves. You can buy flesh. You can buy blood. You can even buy the milk from the breast of the mother who is poor—the milk that belongs to her own offspring.

It is a fine thing to be rich. Then your children may grow up to be strong and supple and straight. Air they will have, food they will have, light they will have. They will acquire certain qualities.

The richness of the land will be theirs:—the wine and milk and flowing abundance:—the flocks, the herds, the great hunting wastes, the palaces, the great houses;—the galleries wherein

Slavery

are stored the subtle, wonderful works of art. Those that are poor shall not gaze upon these things save by their will and consent.

Their power will reach out through the air and down, down into the mines. Into the bowels of the earth. Into the depths of the sea. It will extend out over the dark ocean waters. Resistless, sweeping.

And they will sit in rich halls and direct.

Towns and kingdoms and empires they will govern. And strange, far-off places. They will proclaim wars and let loose hordes upon hordes of destroying men. Death, fire, and rapine they will deal out. Steel will flash, bullets will hail, shells will hurtle and crush at their command.

They will loose the powers called evil.

They will talk in steady assured tones. They will have cold, clear, strong voices. They will sit in the best places. They will travel, and know sunshine and change. They will walk firm. In their eyes will be a look of command.

They will know how to crush down the puny efforts of mobs. Naught will they care for the glowing, warning words that live in great books. Neither will they heed the teachings nor the voices of philosophers.

Behind their words and deeds will be a God.

Slavery

The God of gold. God immeasurably mightier than the God of churches and shrines.

It is a fine thing to be rich.

II.

It is a bad thing to be poor. Then your children must struggle up through misery, and filth, and degradation. They must fight the life out to keep the life in. They must give blood to keep blood.

In darkness must they dwell. In reeking, closed filth-spots and dens. Mean qualities must they acquire because of their foul environment. They will have the peering, terrible eyes of things that live in darkness.

Before their faces will be a great wall which will shut out light and warmth and joy. They will have the bloodless faces of ghouls. Their bodies will be bunched up. Misshapen.

To them will be preached the gospel of Content. They will be asked to believe that the earth revolves not, that rivers flow not, that things ripe and decay not. They will be told that it is the will of God that they live in filth and foulness.

Many things they will be told.

Sad is the fate of these offsprings of the misery,

Slavery

the dirt, the slavery of the centuries. Blame them not if they cringe. Blame them not if they be mean. Blame them not if they be suspicious. They come from out the maw of blackness.

They have no friends. Art is not their friend. God is not their friend. Intellect, that tremendous power that harnesses the earth-forces, is not their friend. Nay, this power of powers as it grasps and uses the forces that lie in earth, sea, and heaven, is their enemy. It thrusts them deeper into the Pit. Blame them not when they destroy the subtle appliances which Intellect has devised for the saving of their labour.

Sinister mystery. The very gifts of God are used for the forcing down of these slaves.

Talk not of the slaves of Rome. Talk not of the slaves of Babylon. Could not the stones of London tell of murder and blood even as could the stones of Rome and Babylon? Is there not deep down in the stones of these three cities the blood of the slaves of labour—blood spilled by soldiery?

Blood that has turned to stone. Seal ineffaceable. Enduring, immovable witness.

The slaves of London—Rome—Babylon. As the myriad sands of the sea. As the drops of waters of ocean. As the fallen leaves of countless

Slavery

forests. Ghosts that are living. Ghosts that are dead. Poor murdered and enslaved whose blood and misery cry out. What is the difference between them? I will tell. It is a difference in the phrase that describes them. That is all.

What the womb of the future holds who can tell? Who knows of the thing that will astound us to-morrow? Who can tell of the fate that awaits the slave of to-day?

But whatever the fate can it be worse than the fate which hangs upon him now? Can the mind conceive of a deeper darkness? Is there still a lower hell?

Aye, sad and black is the lot of him who is poor. Sad and black is the lot of the man and of the woman who toils.

Pity the poor. Nay, I ask you who are poor to pity yourselves. Become strong and resolute. None may free slaves but slaves. Become courageous. Remember that the giant who will free you lies sleeping in yourselves. Awake him.

Think of your children. Think of their fate.

Out they must go into the highways to sell their labour or to sell their flesh.

They must become the wolves of the slums, the gnomes of the workshops, the harlots of the streets.

I.—THE TOWN.

THERE is a certain town in the North of England. It is a great town. An old town. Its beginning is lost in the haze of fable and tradition.

Here worshipped the Druids. The Roman conquerers of the world gathered here with their eagles. Here fought Saxons and Danes.

A strange town. It stands on a slow-moving river—a river foul and black as the Styx. The greenness and freshness of the old centuries have gone. And the town. The blackness of Commerce is now upon it. In it cotton is spun and woven and sent out into the world. Its air is dark, damp, and discoloured. Poisonous smoke is for ever soddening it. Smoke weaving and winding into shapes, vague and vast and sinister. On all sides stand monstrous chimneys. High, looming death-columns. The rays of the sun can barely struggle through their hideous reekings.

The town is as some strange twilight hell. Some heavy, immense Inferno. The air is such



Slavery

that trees die in the parks. It is no place for human habitation, but still hundreds of thousands live in it. The people who work.

All the day they toil—mostly in factories.

II.—THE SONG OF THE CLOGS.

I.

At half-past four in the morning the sharp clamp of their clogs is heard. They are going to work. And the clamp goes on till six o'clock. The sounds come and go through the darkness. Dim forms of women hurry along through narrow, winding streets with shawls over their heads. Like sad ghosts. And men with grimy clothes and flat, greasy caps. And little, shivering boys and girls. Little children. All hurrying.

Clamp! Clamp! Clamp!

Thus go the clogs. Sinister sound, telling of hopeless slavery. The curfew bells of the Norman William told not of a slavery so abject as this.

Clamp! Clamp! Clamp!

Thus it goes day after day—week after week—year after year—generation after generation. No cessation. No change. Ever going. Clamp! Clamp!

Slavery

The song of the clogs. Who shall write the song of the clogs?

II.

Lancashire thralls. They wear not iron collars with their master's name inscribed thereon, as did their slave ancestors. But they wear clogs. Their masters may not strike them down, nor flog them, nor put them to the sword. But they may starve them to death; they may humiliate and degrade them; they may force them to live in filth and foulness. Ancient collars. Modern clogs. Signs with the same meaning.

But a voice says:—"These men of Manchester are free men." A voice cries out:—"These men of Manchester have a vote!" True—they have a vote. True—they have the glorious privilege of saying which vampire shall next suck their blood.

It were better for the men of Manchester to have the name as well as the game of slavery. It were better that they were not mocked by a shadow—that they were not given a stone in place of bread.

Then their eyes might be opened.

Slavery

III.

Now the slaves are pouring into great square blackened buildings—factories. It is close on to six o'clock, and they must not be late. They must be in through the gate by the time the clock strikes. If not they will have to stop off a "quarter." They will have to go away and come back again in two hours and a-half. And from their wages will be stopped more than they would earn if they worked the two hours and a-half.

Six o'clock has struck. They are at work. Men—women—little children. They have taken off their clogs. They are in the midst of great, whirring, moving machines, spinning bobbins, and swift-guiding threads. Cotton—cotton is everywhere:—in the air, on the ground, in huge wicker baskets, in big heaps. Here it looks white and soft and fleecy. Here—wound on bobbins—it looks fibrous and durable. Cotton is being changed by the power of iron and blood and sweat and loss of sleep. Cotton, the Moloch. Little children are being sacrificed to it at six in the morning. Women are being sacrificed. Men are being turned into lank, bloodless beings. All for cotton. All are being sacrificed. See it

Slavery

turning and flying and whirring. It is white. But it should be stained with blood. Upon it should be the blackness of infamy. Aye, see this cotton. It is carrying away the blood of England.

Look at yon man who is piecing up a broken thread! Of what use would he be to fight for England? Look at yon woman! What kind of a child would that poor starveling bear? Look at yon little child who is slowly dragging along a heavy basket of bobbins! That poor little child who should be in bed. Factory master, have you no little ones of your own? Have you no little boy? Have you no little girl?

This terrible two hours and a half. This worst part of the whole cruel day. This time of whirring — this time of hurrying hands and feet — this time of stupor through lack of sleep. This awful time for the children. To them it is a confused nightmare. Little, pitiable figures whose bones are being stunted.

Here is half-past eight. How the time has passed no one knows. The engine stops for half-an-hour.

IV.

The factory bells ring out in the middle of the day, and suddenly crowds of people are streaming

Slavery

out into the streets. The clogs are again going. The workers are off to their dinners. They have left behind them the whirring and stunning noise of machinery, the spinning cotton bobbins, the swift-gliding threads, the dust, the heat, the watchful eye of the overlooker. They have now a short respite. For a time they may be themselves. How they have been watching the clock in the factory as it slowly, slowly travelled from nine to ten, from ten to eleven, from eleven to twelve, from twelve to one. How slowly the minute-hand moved! It seemed as if the hour-hand never moved! The factory clock. Slow, inexorable master, exacting to the last drop of blood—exacting to the last effort of strength.

And now they are streaming into the streets. The air is filled with the clamping of clogs. They are hurrying along in confused bunches and groups. They are talking freely, for the strain has been lifted from them. They are not watching the clock. Time is now their ally—their friend. It has lost its slowness—its hatefulness! They have for their very selves one hour. Think of it! One whole hour.

These factory workers are mostly women—women wearing shawls and clogs and petticoats that are somewhat short so as to give them

Slavery

freedom of movement. The work in the factory requires patient watching, deftness of hand, and quickness of eye. So women are useful.

And now they are passing through the ugly, hard-looking streets. The factory bell gave the signal for their loosing. They are talking and laughing and chatting as they pass. A few are silent. A few are sad. Maybe they are thinking. And so it goes.

They look badly fed; they look as if they never breathed pure air; they look squalid, do these women. Fit mothers of stunted, cringing slaves.

And now the streets are deserted and silent. The crowds have sunk into the courts and back alleys and narrow streets. They have sunk into their dens and hovels. They are eating dinner. They are eating coarse, adulterated food. Food that is really poisonous.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The factory bell is again ringing. It is now approaching two. The people must not be late. The signal is going. They must get ready. Their hour is nearly up.

They are struggling along the streets, slowly—reluctantly. There is no eagerness in their faces. Two o'clock is not one o'clock. One o'clock

Slavery

meant freedom—two o'clock means slavery. It means dull waiting and longing and watching. It means watching out of the corners of the eyes for the approach of the overlooker—a slave like themselves, who is set to watch over them and to drive them. He is picked out for this work mainly because he has in him a cruelty, a servility, a cringing, and above all a keen sense for the interest of the owner of himself and his brother and sister slaves.

The factory bells have ceased to clang—the great doors are closed—the engines have started—there is a spinning of cotton bobbins, a fine dust—a whirring, a great stunning noise.

v.

Men there are who will tell you that these workers are content with their lot. They will tell you that they care for nothing better—that if they were to be taken away from their whirring, sinister machines they would be dissatisfied.

But these men lie. The slaves of the machines do feel the degradation of their lives. They may lack the power to express it, but they feel it. Sodden, dull, and brutal though they have become, there is still in them that unkillable sense of the dignity of the human being. This sense

Slavery

lies buried deep in them as the strange jewel-stone lies buried deep in the earth.

VI.

It is night. The engines have stopped in the factories and the people are streaming out. The clogs are clamping. The long, long day's work is done. The workers may go and rest. They may go and do anything they wish. Their master has no further thought of them. He has had his pound of flesh. How they are housed—how they are fed matters not to him. When they are used up and dead and gone there will be others to take their places. They breed quickly. He only wants them while they are able to work for him. When they are weak and ailing they may go and rot and die.

He has no liking for these miserables who are streaming through the streets. They are vile and dirty and ungrateful!

And now they are going home! And now they are going home! The work of the day is done. The sweater has no further use for them. They may go to hell if they like. Aye, they are going home. Home!

Go on, miserables. Stream, stream through

Slavery

the Manchester streets. Cotton slaves. Go on.
Go home.

.
Wearers of clogs! Heirs of the mightiest
empire the world has known! Will the time
come to pass when the offspring of yourselves
and your kind will not be even worthy food for
steel and powder? Will the lust of greed so
grind you down that at last this lust shall miss
its object? Children of the mightier and more
glorious Rome! Will you become so starved and
weak and unfit and spiritless that at last you
will be unable to bear arms? Will you fall and
carry with you the empire?

.
Clamp! Clamp! Clamp!

Thus it goes day after day—week after week—
year after year—generation after generation. No
cessation. No change. Ever going. Clamp!
Clamp!

The song of the clogs. Who shall write the
song of the clogs?

III.—THE BOY

I.

THE little boy was alone in the dim, squalid room. Before his mind were passing vague, distorted pictures. And remembrances. Now he could hear harsh, ugly words. Now he could hear the sounds of blows and scuffings. Now he heard the refrains of songs—refrains sung by the people outside in the narrow street when they were getting drunk on Saturday night.

And now came the strange crooning songs his mother used to sing to him. His mother's voice was low and full and beautiful. It seemed long, long ago since he had heard these deep, sad Irish songs. He could see his mother's face bending over him. A strong, beautiful woman's face with dark, sad eyes. He could see her moving about the room. And then he could see her not. She was gone. Gone! When would she come back? When would she come back? Had some big black thing carried her away?

Slavery

His mother with the beautiful face and low, beautiful voice. His mother who stood between him and everything. Who gave him food when he was hungry. Who soothed him when he cried. Poor little lad. Poor lonely little lad! Jumbled-up images were passing through his mind. The vague, formless, distorted imaginings of childhood. Those terrifying things which children cannot tell of. They oppressed him. They were heavy upon him. He could not connect them. Oaths, sounds of blows and scufflings, drunken singing voices, forbidding, black images, his mother's low crooning—all lingered and hovered about him. And he was terrified because he was alone.

He began to cry.

His mother had gone out hours ago. She had gone to work. She had left him as he lay asleep.

Poor woman! There were tears in her eyes as she turned and looked at him. He was her first-born. She had borne him in sorrow and pain and frightful anguish. She had borne him into a black-clouded world—a joyless, choked world that had crushed her down—that would crush him down. Him! Her son! Her first-born! Wouldn't it be better if he were dead now?

Slavery

Why should he go through with it all? Where was the benefit of it? She knew it all—the whole dull round. He would grow up somehow—without a chance, without anything. And then he would become a common labourer, or, maybe, a rough on the street corner like the rest of them! Or he might 'list and take the Queen's shilling and have sergeants and officers lording it over him. Or he might be led into bad ways—and have to go to prison. Why should he go through with it all? Why should he? Wouldn't it be better not?

And an impulse to kill was suddenly in the mind of the woman—the mother! She would kill him—her child. And then she would go and give herself up. It would be the best way out of it. It would save him from going through the black misery. She laid her hands on the boy's throat—and the boy awoke. He opened his eyes and smiled, and said, "Kiss me, mammy," and she paused, and kissed him, and laid her face near his till he went to sleep again.

Then she went out to work.

And now the boy was alone with strange terrors and phantoms. He was in the midst of a hideous silence. A terrible silence that held within it ghost-sounds of blows and scufflings and voices

Slavery

and refrains of songs. He was afraid and he was crying, for he was a very little boy.

The day wore on and still he was alone.

II.

He was playing with the other boys in the narrow, crooked street that ran out into Oldham Road. It had been raining, and they were trying how well they could leap across the shallow pool that had collected along the street gutter. First one boy would leap over a certain width in the pool, and then the rest would follow. And then he would choose a wider spot to leap across and the others would follow again. And so it went. How they shouted and laughed! They got very wet and draggled, but that mattered nothing. They were hardy little boys with bare legs and feet.

Only the strongest children born in that neighbourhood ever survived.

There was a slaughter-house on the right-hand side of the street, as one stood and faced Oldham Road. On killing-days the children would cluster together and peep through the cracks in the big wooden door to watch the butchers slaughtering the cattle. With the innocent cruelty of children they laughed and shouted as an animal was

Slavery

dragged in and struck down. The sight of the blood excited them.

* * * * *

The boy whose mother had to leave him alone by himself when she went out to work was now five years old. He was about the age when children are trying to understand the reason of things. An insatiable curiosity was upon him. Why was this? Why was that? Why was a thing round? Why was the sky up over the ground? Why did the rain fall down in drops? These were some of the questions he was always asking. The problems that have confounded the philosophers lay before him.

But there was no one to answer his questions. He only saw his mother late in the evening, and then she would be too tired to try and answer him. All through the day he would gather in his mind a great store of questions to ask her. He would begin the moment he saw her, but soon he would see that she was too faint and tired to answer.

So his mind was thrown in upon itself. He was forced to think things out alone.

Even as he played with the other boys he was thinking. And his face became solemn and hard—unlike the face of a child.

Slavery

The instinct of fight was also strong within him. One day he had an adventure:—

The main had been opened, and the sewer rats had come out to eat the garbage that lay down in the yard at the back of the cellar where he and his mother lived. He watched them. How big they were—and what sharp eyes they had! And they were ugly!

He went into the yard.

He was in the middle of them now, but the rats paid no heed to him. Sewer rats are not afraid of children. Sometimes they will attack them.

The rats went on eating as the child watched. Who made them? Why were they there? Where did they come from? God could not have made them, he thought. It must have been the big black devil who made them, because they looked so ugly and had such long, sharp teeth. They ought to be killed. They were bad.

He moved over to where a thick piece of wood was lying. He would kill the rats with it! He lifted it up slowly, and poised it in both hands over his head. He walked to the nearest rat who was feeding, taking no notice. Down he brought the piece of wood with all

Slavery

his might on the rat. It fell over on its side, its back broken. "Killed! Killed!" he shouted. He struck the rat again and again till the life left it altogether. The other rats had run away at the sound of the first blow.

At night he told his mother about it.

The boy's father passed in and out of his life in a vague, shadowy way. He did not seem real to him. There were times when he did not see him for months.

With his mother he would sit up and listen for his father's footsteps on the night that he might come home. Anxious they noted the footsteps echoing along through the street in the darkness. A footstep would sound at the end of the street. And it would come and come—and pass! Eagerly they listened for every fresh footstep. Hour after hour they sat together in silence. His mother's heart would beat as she listened, for often the black hunger was upon them.

And sometimes the father did not come. He had earned no money. Or he was too far away.

What a great big street was Oldham Road! It was so wide, and people were always going

Slavery

along it—and in the middle of it horses were always going with carts and luries. From morning till night their hoofs were clattering. Clattering faintly in the distance; clattering loudly past him; clattering, clattering off into the distance. Were the horses never tired? The carts and the luries were always moving and rumbling. Where did they come from? Where did they go to? They were always coming up or going down Oldham Road. Oldham Road was called Oldham Road because it went to Oldham! He would like to go to Oldham. He would like to go on a lurry as it was coming {from the New Cross. He was not big enough yet to jump up on the back of a lurry, but when he was big enough he would—and he would ride on and on. But he would have to mind and not let the driver see him, for then the driver would strike over his shoulder at him with his whip. He would have to hide behind a box or a bale. And when he had ridden on and on he would come back and tell his mother all he had seen.

Where did the lurry go to, and where did the bales of cotton come from that were on it; and what did the horses do, and what did the men do who drove them and who cracked the

Slavery

whips? What did they do when they were not driving the horses and not cracking the whips? Who made the leather things that were on the horses, and who made the wheels of the lurry, and who made the lurry itself, and did the lurry know where it was to go to?

These things were often in his mind.

He had no toys, for his mother had no money to buy him any. The child's mind was forced to dwell upon the facts of Life.

Once he saw a regiment of soldiers passing down Oldham Road. They wore red coats, and they walked along carrying guns on the tops of which were long, bright knives—bayonets. He had never seen soldiers before, and he was excited as he watched them stepping so firmly past. The tramp of their feet filled up the whole road with sound. They did not look round at the people who were looking at them, but went along just as if no one were in the road. The sun was shining on the long knives of their guns. And then suddenly a band began to play and the soldiers seemed to tramp faster. And at last there was an end of the long line of passing men. A group of boys were following the end of the line and he joined in with the group and followed, too,

Slavery

listening to the band that was now playing from a long way off. He liked these red, tramping men with the guns and long, shining knives. And he liked the band. But he had to run to keep up, and at last he was tired. He sat down on a step and he watched them till they were gone altogether. And as he came slowly homeward he wondered if they would ever come back. He would like them to come back so that he could follow them again. He would like always to follow them. He would like always to see their red coats and their guns with the long, shining knives.

The world has for the mind of a child a charm that is at once vague and intense and wistful. Things pass and repass and appear and disappear before it. And the mystery and wonder of it all strike the child. Things come from the darkness and go back into the darkness. Life is an inscrutable, terrible pageant. The splendid and the terrible and the vile and the horrible jostle and mingle and move along. There is neither order nor plan in the great procession. Just movement. And the mind of the child notes the absence of plan and design. Here is a wonderful, vast, stupefying thing

Slavery

existing and passing with neither rhyme nor reason. And the child asks questions. But there is no one to answer. The oldest and wisest is puzzled in common with the child as to the meaning of the world and life. The philosopher is himself but a questioner.

So the child has to face the Sphinx alone.

.

When he was a big man he would go out into the world and take his mother along with him. And they would go on and on and on till they came to a land where the sun was always shining. They would go to a land where they would always have plenty to eat.

How changed the world would be when he was a big man. He would set all things right. He would change all things. The big men of the world did not do things as they ought to be done. When he was a big man he would do things ever so much better.

Why was it that people were hungry? Why was it that people had to go into the workhouse? Why was it that he was not like some of the little boys he had seen?

Once he had seen a little boy driving in a carriage down Market Street. The boy's mother sat in the carriage with him. She was well

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dressed and had a big fur round her neck. She looked so nice as she drove along in the carriage. He would like his own mother to drive in a carriage too. It would be nice to sit by her side and to be dressed like the little boy was dressed. The little boy had silver things on his shoes. He saw the shine of the silver as the carriage passed. Why couldn't he and his mother drive in a carriage? Why couldn't he and his mother be like this boy and his mother?

He was unable to tell why. But when he was a big man he would get his mother a carriage—a carriage and horses—and they would drive together, too.

When he was a big man! Everything would be all right when he was a big man!

There would be no hunger and no cold in the world. And all little boys would have shoes and stockings to wear. In the winter time it was cold to run along the streets in bare feet. In the summer it was nice. But in the winter time the feet got sore and the skin cracked.

But being without shoes was not so bad when he was not hungry. He did not mind his feet being cold then. He could run about and get warm playing with the other boys.

What he did not like was being hungry.

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Nothing else was as bad as that. When he was hungry it was like as if something was eating him inside. Ever since he could remember he had felt hungry. There were some days when he had enough to eat, but these days did not come often. He always seemed to have been waiting for his mother to bring food home.

How different everything would be when he was a big man! Then he and his mother would always have plenty to eat. And they would drive in a carriage behind big horses. And they would live in a great, big, wonderful house where everything would be nice and warm. And in the winter time they would have such a big, roaring fire. His mother could not afford to have a big fire in the cellar where they lived. She had to make a fire with little bits of coal and cinders so as to make it last. But when he was a big man, and he and his mother lived in the great, big, wonderful house, they would sit together watching the flames in the big, roaring fire. He liked watching the flames in a fire. He liked seeing the faces that came into the flames. Where did the flames go to?

When he was a big man! Everything would be all right when he was a big man!

IV.—THE WORKHOUSE.

I.

THERE is something cold and repellent in organised charity. Cold as charity. This phrase has passed into a proverb.

Individual, spontaneous giving is a fine and noble thing. It is a recognition of the tie of kind. A man who gives to a man who is in want gives to himself. He is wise with the profound wisdom of the heart—a wisdom that as far transcends the wisdom of the head as the light of the sun transcends the cold light of the star.

The deserving. It is said that one should but give to those that are deserving. But all who are in want are the deserving. They deserve the gifts of their fellows as the parched grass deserves the rain. He who but gives to those whom he thinks to be the deserving is a giver who puts a lien upon his gift. Indeed, he is not a true giver. He is only a bestower of charity.

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It is right that every man should give, for every man receives. Who shall escape this logic.

Charity. The word has come to have a hateful, mocking, cynical meaning. Even at its best it meant but weak, hypocritical restitution.

Behind charity there lies a self-satisfied sneer. The face sneers whilst the hand slowly stretches forth an alms. From charity has sprung that abortion—the Workhouse.

A cold and terrible and hideous place where the sanctity of the individual is denied and profaned. It would be better far for the poor to be shot than to be thrust into it. It would be better far for their blood to be spilt upon the stones of the streets. Better for England. There would be fewer English slaves. There would be more men fit to fight for the King. The violence and the shedding of blood would make the workers strong. It would fit them to bear arms.

The English worker.

He goes forth at the call of his country to fight for the honour of the King and the glory and the profit of the Empire. He stands bravely the hunger and the cold and the heat and the long, forced marches. He sheds his blood.

At last he comes back from doing his duty by his King and by his country. It may be that he

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is broken down through privation. He is as a tool that is broken. No more will he be able to fight for his bread.

And here he is back in England listening—to what? Plaudits. How brave he is! How fine he is! What a grand fellow he was to go forth and fight for his country! He is grasped by the hand. He is cheered. Men slap him on the back. Then he sinks back into silence and darkness and goes—

Into the Workhouse.

Talk not of the glory and grandeur of an Empire where such a thing as this can happen. Talk not of its power, its magnificence, its brilliance. Its power is shoddy, its magnificence fustian, its brilliance but the dazzle of decay.

The Workhouse is the hideous goal towards which the poor are forced to travel, it matters not whether they fight in the field for their King or whether they fight in the close workshops for bread. They go along to it over the rough, sharp stones of Slavery Road. It is a straight road, this Slavery Road. The poor try to turn their heads so as not to see what is at the end of it. But it is useless. There it is at the end, waiting for them.

The Workhouse.

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II

The boy was in the workhouse.

He was playing with the other boys in the yard, but in the play there was a sense of constraint. It lacked the freedom of the play of the children out in the street. The laughter and the shouting were not so loud and joyous. Hanging over them was the black shadow of organised charity.

Children are like plants. They need the sun and the warmth—the sun of love, the warmth of a home. The workhouse is the negation of the family and the home. The family is the root and binding force of Society. And because the workhouse denies this principle it is an abortion—a hideous paradox.

Life had suddenly become too hard on the mother, and she had been forced to go with her boy into the workhouse. There was no other alternative but that of starving to death, and a mother will do many things before she will see her child starve.

On the day she went into the workhouse an incident occurred:—She was in the office having her name entered into the book as an inmate. She was holding her boy in her arms. She would

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soon be parted from him, and she wanted to have him near her as long as she could. Off on the desk, where the official was entering her name, was a piece of bread. The boy in her arms was hungry, and he reached out instinctively to take the piece of bread. The official saw the action, and he leant forward and pushed the bread out of the way so that the child could not get it.

This infuriated the woman—the mother. She suddenly put her boy down and she struck the official in the face. And she struck him again and again. She was a big, strong woman, and she thrashed him soundly.

She was taken before a magistrate and sent to prison for fourteen days.

Day followed day in the workhouse with monotonous regularity, the boy was only allowed to see his mother for an hour or so each week. His little life was now blank and dreary and dim—a dull, drab procession of days and nights. He heard voices telling him to do this and that. Cold, hard, ordering voices. He seemed to live through an ugly vague dream. There was no one now of whom he could ask questions, for no one cared for him. Children feel it when no one cares for them. If he could only run away and go

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back to Oldham Road. He might see the soldiers again. He might follow them as they marched along. He would like to see again these red, tramping men with the guns on the top of which were the long, shining knives. If he could only run away. But he would not like to go without his mother. He would like to run away with her, holding her hand. They would go on and on together, and never come back to this place any more. He would like to be with her again in the cellar, for then he could see her every day, and, besides, he could go out and play in the street. There would be no one to say anything to him if he shouted out. There would be no voice silencing him and telling him to keep quiet. Here, in the workhouse, there was always some one telling him to keep quiet. If he could only run away with his mother he would be glad. One day, indeed, some boys did run away. But they were big boys—great, big boys. He stood and watched them as they climbed over the wall. But they were brought back again. And they were beaten. It was not an easy thing to run away, for some one was always watching. Some one was always ready to run after you. How was it that they would never let him see his mother when he wanted? He had asked to see her at first, but

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he had been told to keep quiet. He could only see her every Sunday now, and then she looked so strange. And she always cried. They had taken her away when she hit the man on the day when they first came to the workhouse. He cried about it the whole day. He wondered what they had done to her. It was a long time after that before he saw her again. And she looked so white. When he was a big man, like one of the soldiers he had seen marching down Oldham Road, he would come back and kill the men who had taken his mother away, and he would kill all the men who owned the workhouse. Yes, when he was a big man he would kill them. He and his mother wore different clothes now—workhouse clothes. He did not like them. He would sooner have his own clothes—his old clothes. What did his mother come into the workhouse for? They were much better off when they lived in the cellar. He was often hungry, but he would sooner be there than here. He would sooner wait in the cellar till his mother brought him food. It was always nicer than what he got here. And when he was out of the workhouse and with his mother again in the cellar he would never cry and say he was hungry, as he used to do. For whenever he said he was hungry to his mother, she

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used to cry. What did she cry for? But he would never say that to her again. Perhaps she would have come into the workhouse if he had not kept saying he was hungry. He was sorry now that he had said it. He was sorry now that he had reached out his hand to take the bread on that day. Only for that his mother would not have hit the man—and she would not have been taken away. He was hungry, but he should not have done it.

What a long time he had been in the workhouse. It seemed as if he had been there all his life. The Sunday before he had asked his mother when they were going to go out, and she had said nothing. The Sunday before that she had told him that they would soon be able to go out again. She had not answered him when he had asked her last Sunday when they were going out. Perhaps the workhouse men had told her that she would never be let go out any more. He would ask her if they had done that the next time he saw her. If they had done that he would wait till he got bigger, and then he would run away by himself. And when he got to be a man he would come back for her. But she might be dead by then. But never mind—he would kill all the workhouse men.

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And at last one night he dreamed that his mother was taking him away. She was dressed in her own proper clothes, and so was he. She was taking him away from the workhouse. She held his hand and they were going along quickly. And when they were a far way off, he turned round to look at the workhouse. It was burning. Great flames and black smoke were coming from it. And he and his mother stood on a hill and watched it. And then they turned and went down a long, straight road. They were free once more.

In the morning when he woke he wondered if the dream would come true. He hoped it would. And it did. His mother came for him. She was dressed just like she was on the day they came in. She smiled and she kissed him. And he was given his own clothes back again.

And soon he was joyfully going down the road, holding his mother's hand.

Mother and child were leaving the black, workhouse shadows.

V.—HALF-TIME.

I.

AROUND the boy were great whirring wheels and great leathern belts spinning and whirling along. A chaos of noise and gleaming machinery and cotton flying and running and gliding swiftly, and immense wheels and cogs and flying shrieking spindles and spinning bobbins. Dust and heat and the rankness of grease were mingling. And hurrying and rending and smashing.

The factory.

Faintly through the din could be heard now and then a human voice. Dimly could be seen lightly-clad figures. The air was heavy and hot and close.

It was the first time the boy had ever been in a factory. He had wanted to go very much. He had the intense curiosity of childhood. He wished to know what went on behind the factory's immense square walls. The big black walls held mysteries which he longed to solve. So he

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begged his mother to let him go on as half-timer—to work one-half the day and to go to school the other half.

His mother had consented after a while. Indeed, she could do nothing else. He was much too young to go to work, but it was the hardest kind of a struggle to keep herself and him and his younger brother. And when all was said and done he would get eighteenpence a week, and eighteenpence a week would just pay for the rent of the cellar. And perhaps now she would be able to get a piece of meat on a Saturday night for the Sunday's dinner.

All through the night before the morning he was to start working he had lain awake thinking of the factory and what he would see inside it. He felt so proud—almost as if he were a man. Now he would get to know all about it. Besides, he would earn eighteenpence a week! It would be nice to give it to his mother on a Saturday.

And at half-past five, when his mother called him, he got up quickly and joyfully. In fact there was no need at all for his mother to call him. He had been awake hours before the time. He dressed himself and got out into the dark street. In his little clogs he clamped along to the factory with the rest of them.

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And now he was an atom in the midst of the machinery as it was working at full blast. It was just a little after six o'clock. He was at the same time fascinated, confused, and afraid. The machines looked so strange and horrible. They were like big giants and ogres and devils eating cotton! And they made such a loud noise. He never thought they would make such a noise! Still, he liked to watch them. But suppose they were to catch him and tear him to bits!

A hard voice shouted to him to go on with his work and not stand looking about him. It was the minder.

The boy's work was simple. It took but a moment to show him what to do. He was a scavenger. He had to clean up the pieces of cotton that fell upon the floor of the wheel-house. The wheel-house was the place where the great, wooden box-like machines—the mules—moved to and fro in the spinning of the cotton. As the mule was retreating the boy had to follow it quickly with a dust-pan and brush and gather up the pieces of cotton that fell from it. When the mule got to the end of the track it would stop for a second or so to adjust itself, and then it would move back again across the wheel-house. And the boy would have to rise up quickly from his

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sweeping and gathering up. He would have to get out of the way, for if he were caught between the mule and the floor he would be crushed to death. This was the first thing he had been told. His work was more dangerous than anyone else's. Having to stoop down all the time prevented him from watching the mule as well as he might.

He had a very narrow escape on this first day. The great wooden, cotton Moloch nearly crushed him. The excitement of being in new and strange surroundings had worn off. His eyes were heavy, and a longing for sleep had come upon him. He was but a child. He stumbled and was nearly under the mule, but the minder pulled him into safety, and then shook him roughly for not being careful. When a boy got crushed it was awkward?

And he worked on. For eighteenpence a week.

At one o'clock he stopped work, and at two o'clock he was in school. Here he was taught a great deal about the glory of God and the glory of England, and a very little about the art of reading and writing. The tired lad, whose mother had to starve and slave to try and give him insufficient bread, had the notion driven into

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him that England was the grandest and richest country in all the world. Though he was a little, ill-used slave himself, still he was living in a great, free, and noble country.

The map of the world was shown to him as he sat with the other boys. And it was explained to him that the blood-coloured parts represented the parts that belonged to England. What a lot of them were on the map! He wondered why they were the colour of blood.

It was a great privilege to be born in England, the teacher said. England had put down slavery. Yes, she had made the black slaves free. Wicked men used to steal these poor people away from their homes and sell them in markets. But generous, free England had put all this down. She had stepped in and saved them. There was no slavery under the English flag!

So said the teacher.

Oh, it was a fine thing to be a little English boy, for then one might grow up to be a great, big Englishman. Think of it! What a glorious thing it was! The French were no good; the Germans were no good; the Italians were no good. In fact, no one was really any good but the English. And the boys were made to learn a little rhyme out of their books which

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told them how superior at fighting—and at everything else—little English boys were to the little boys of any other nation whatsoever.

And he was also told that if he kept on being a good little boy God would be very good to him after he died.

God would be good to him after he died! The thought gave him a sort of gladness. He would not have to go hungry then; and he would not have to wear a little dull looking scarf. He would not be different then from the boys who were better off than he was, and who wore nice, white collars. In heaven he would not have to wear clogs. Clogs were hard to the feet. And only poor boys wore them.

The eventual goodness of Good! What would the poor do without it? How would they get along; and how would they face what they have to face if they did not have it to look forward to? Heaven. That promised land that lies far, far off into the distance—a strange, glorious land filled with light and harmony and joy—a land glowing and beautiful and ineffable.

But, alas! the poor must die ere they reach it. It is guarded by the gate of darkness and pain. Land that has sprung from out the wondrous

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crucible of Imagination! Do you really exist—or are you but as the mirage that arises afar across the sands of the desert?

There is no answer. Those who have gone tell us nothing.

There were times when the boy was thrilled with happiness. There were times when the world was bright and beautiful and full of glorious promise. It was as if he could see through the dim, dark mist of Manchester the glowing outside world. One day he would go out into it and solve its secrets. He would travel on and on and on. Over seas and lands and mountains, and through forests he would go. To travel! How he would like to travel! Over the sea. Over the ocean. The great ocean where the waves rolled and fell, and dashed and roared, and grew up into breaking mountains. He could almost see it before him as he was told about it in school. What was in this great, mighty ocean? What lived down in it?

If he could only really see it.

He had only seen the black, crawling Irwell that wound along through Manchester. He had only seen the narrow canals through which long, heavy barges were slowly pulled by horses. The water of the canals lay flat and leaden and dull.

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But the great ocean—and the bright, moving, wide salt sea. Eagerly he listened to what was said in school about the strange, great waters. How he would like to stand on a shore and look out—out upon a sea! In the distance he would be able to see ships with their white sails swelled out with the wind.

He knew what ships were like, for he had seen pictures of them. They were as great birds with mighty wings. When he was big enough he would go away and become a sailor. He would sooner be a sailor now than a soldier. He would get on a ship and he would go all over the world.

He would see the strange, shining foreign countries. He would see the oranges growing and the grapes growing. And wonderful trees. He would go off and never come back again till he was a great big man. Then he would have plenty of money to give his mother.

He liked to sing the school songs with the other boys when lessons were over. The clear voices rang out and around. They seemed to carry him to strange, strange places. As if he were in a dream.

.
He used to go with his mother on Sunday to hear mass. The altar was ablaze and glowing

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with lights and the shine of gold. The priest chanted forth sonorous words. Old, old words that had come down through the ages. "Kyrie eleison! Kyrie eleison! Christe eleison! Christe eleison!" The boys on the altar in their white robes gave out the responses. And in the air were living solemn organ-tones.

And when the stoled priest held aloft the chalice to expose the Sacred Host! How breathless was the hush that came over all as the sound of the bell told of the presence of the Body of Christ!

He liked to hear the bell of the little chapel ringing out over the parish. It rang and rang strangely through the dim, sunless air of the town, calling the people to worship. Calling them to come and forget for a short space the darkness of their lives. Here as they knelt in the little chapel they were at one with each other. They knelt as one before the glorious and beautiful ideal of God. All bowed their heads as one beneath the eyes of the sublime democracy of Religion. And the bell of the little chapel called them forth from their homes.

The voice of the bell spoke strangely to him. What it said he could not have told, or even, in the vaguest way have defined to himself. But for

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all that its meaning was strong upon him. It thrilled him as he listened. Its voice was at once vague and clear and beautiful and full of hope. An angel's voice calling forth through the darkness. This strange, beautiful bell calling him to the little chapel! He listened to it as he passed through the streets. This strange, clear voice that was calling him! This voice issuing from a place of peace and rest and holiness. Issuing from the little chapel that expressed a sense of strange calm and beauty in the midst of surroundings grimy, sordid, and infernal.

How beautiful was the voice of the bell.

How sonorous and wonderful were its tones! They seemed at the same time so far off and so near. They seemed to come from a far way off in the bright heavens that lay up above the dull skies of the town. The bell! He could have listened to it for ever.

This bell that rang through the dim, sunless air. It called the people to worship in the little chapel.

II.

How proud he felt on that Saturday when he got his first week's wages. He ran the whole way from the factory with the shilling and sixpence tightly grasped in his hand in his pocket. He

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was so eager to get home quickly and give it to his mother. Eighteenpence! To him it seemed a great lot of money. The most he had ever had in his life before was a penny that had been given to him by a stranger in the street.

Eighteenpence would buy so much. It would buy so many things. A shilling and a sixpence! As he ran along he brought his hand slowly and carefully out of his pocket so as to look at them again. There they were. He could see the edge of the shilling and he could feel the sixpence lying in his hand against it. He opened his hand still more carefully, and there were the coins lying one on the other. The sixpence was worn, but the shilling was bright and new. And he put his hand in his pocket and then brought out the shilling by itself. How bright and nice it looked. He liked the look of the edge of it. And he had earned it all by himself. And not only had he earned a shilling. He had earned a sixpence as well. He would have liked the sixpence to have been new just as the shilling was.

And he ran along.

He passed swiftly through the crowds who were going slowly home from work on that Saturday afternoon:—men and women and girls,

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with shawls over their heads, and children. He was vexed because they were going along so slowly. They kept getting in his way as he was running home.

And here at last was the cellar where he lived with his mother and his little brother. He paused for an instant, and then he was down the steps in a trice and he was holding out his wages in his hand to his mother.

“Ah ran all th’ way, mother,” he exclaimed, breathlessly. “’Ere’s me wages!”

His mother took the money and smiled. And then she bent down and kissed him. He was her own dear little lad!

“Let’s go out and buy summat, mother,” he said. And the mother wrung out the clothes she had been washing, and, getting herself ready, she took his younger brother up in her arms and they all went together up the cellar steps and out into the streets.

She felt a great pride in her boy. He was so good and he had run home so quickly with his wages! He had thought of her before he had thought of anything else! Her heart swelled as she looked at him. There he was, walking by her side, with his head held up so proud and high! In time he would grow up

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and become a fine, big Irishman. He was born in England, but that would never make him an Englishman! She wanted him always to remain an Irishman. And her thoughts took another turn. A feeling of bitter sorrow came upon her because of him having to go to work so young. She would have liked to have kept him by her and to have worked for him herself. She was afraid that the factory work would do him harm. She had heard that the factory was a place that kept boys from growing. Yes, she was sure that working there would do him no good, and she had a mind not to let him go there again. But, God help her, she was so poor! She was driven to the wall! The little bit of money came in handy.

And, maybe, after all things would come out right in the end! She would put her trust in God and the Blessed Virgin!

She bought a loaf of bread and some bacon and some onions. And she gave Jim a penny out of the eighteenpence he had earned to buy a pennorth of apples. And then they went back home to the cellar full of joy and happiness. As the fire was out and there was hardly any coal, she sent Jim for a quarter of

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a hundredweight to the coal yard. It was not many minutes before he was staggering down the cellar steps with the little sack of coal on his back. And then the mother made the fire and put the bacon in the frying pan to fry. Jim and his little brother Joe listened hungrily and delightedly to the bacon as it was frying and crackling in the pan. It was such nice-looking bacon, Jim thought. And then came the onions. Plenty of onions! Jim helped to cut them up. He had to keep turning his head away so that they would not smart his eyes. And the bacon was put on a plate by itself, and Jim was stirring up and turning over the onions in the frying pan with a spoon so that they would not get burnt. He had asked his mother to let him do it.

It was all ready now, and his mother got two big plates off the shelf for herself and Jim and a little plate for Joe. And she put out the fried bacon and onions on to the plates. And then she poured out the tea.

What a good meal it was! Everything tasted so nice! And it had all been got out of Jim's wages?

Jim felt glad.

The meal was over and his mother began to

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make up the fire. She carefully scraped up all the cinders from under the bottom of the grate and put them up on the top of the live coals. And on the top of the cinders she put some dried potato peelings that she had saved. And after a while the fire began to glow and throw out a strong heat. Then she laid down a couple of sacks upon the stone flags in front of the fire.

“Lie down, Jim,” she said, tenderly, “you’re tired.”

She then went back again to the washing of the clothes and Jim lay down and fell asleep.

And now Jim was on a ship that was sailing over the ocean—the ocean he had been told about in school. The face of the ocean was strange and still and shining. It was not like what he had been told. It was so still and calm. But the ship went along with great swiftness. It had sails just like the ships in the pictures in the school-room. It flew on and on over the still, shining ocean. How clear the waters were! He could see right down to the bottom of the ocean. And then he suddenly found himself alone. He was walking through a beautiful place that was full of light. And a

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bell began to ring through the air. It was the bell of St. Anne's. He could tell it by its sound. It was ringing here in this beautiful place, just as it rang when it was calling the people of the parish to the little chapel. Where was his mother? He looked around for her, but she was nowhere to be seen. And he began to be afraid. And all at once there came darkness. He was on the ship again and the moon was shining strong and clear. It was all a dream. But still everything was so real to him. No; it was not a dream. He was bigger now and stronger. He had grown. He was much older. And again there came the sound of the bell of St. Anne's. But it was faint. It did not sound like it had sounded in the beautiful place that was full of light.

And lo, he was a man! a big, strong man. He had been away from Manchester for many, many years. He was coming back now to see his mother. His mother would have all she wanted now. He had plenty of money to give her. She would have all she wanted. He was glad to come home after being away all these years.

He was coming back on the same ship upon which he had gone away. There was nobody but

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him on the ship, and everything was silent. But still the ship flew swiftly along over the ocean. It was the same ocean over which he had crossed before. A still, shining, strange ocean. He could see right down to the bottom of it through the clearness of the waters. And as he stood on the ship there came to him the faint ringing of a bell. Yes—yes, he knew the bell. It was the bell of St. Anne's. But how small and faint it sounded. He could hardly hear it. But he knew it. It was the bell that had called him when he was a little boy to chapel many years ago.

But where was his mother? He was here in Manchester looking for her. He was a great, big man now, and he was able to look after her. Manchester was a dark place, and he could not find her. Where was she? She was gone. She was dead. She was——

“Mother!” he cried out loudly, waking from his dream.

III.

One morning in the factory — during the breakfast half-hour—Jim was talking to another boy. It was a few minutes before nine o'clock, and they were standing together close to the

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frame of the spinning-mule at the lower end of the wheel-house. The two boys formed a strong contrast to each other, Jim—despite the hunger that was so often upon him—was blue-eyed and tall and sturdy for his age, whilst the other boy was black-eyed and sallow-faced and small.

They were talking together, when all at once the smaller boy took a box of matches out of his pocket—struck a match—and put the flame to one of the threads of cotton that ran from the mule to the bobbins. He had not given the slightest hint or warning to Jim of what he was going to do. He had just set the flame to the cotton in a mechanical sort of way. He did it with the air and the manner that might have accompanied the taking of a top or a marble from his pocket. Indeed, so quiet and matter of fact was his action that Jim did not realise the danger of the thing that had been done. He looked upon the setting on fire of the cotton almost as a matter of course.

The flame flashed along the thread of cotton as it would along gunpowder. And almost before the eye could see it the cotton was ablaze that was wound around the bobbin. And in another second the flame shot along a hundred threads back to the front of the mule and back again to

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the bobbins, and then the flame, grown a hundred-fold, shot half-way up the whole length of the spinning-mule.

Just at that moment the engine began to start, and sparks shot out from the cotton that was shrivelling on the spindles. The spinning-mule was moving across the wheel-house. But the minder was a man quick of resource and action. He had seen the bursting along of the flame almost at the outset, and he had rushed over to the end of the wheel-house, where buckets of water were always kept in readiness. He was running to meet the flame with a bucket in each hand when the engine began to start, and it flashed through his mind that the movement of the mules would make it more difficult to grapple with the fire. He put down the buckets—ran back to the end of the wheel-house—put the machinery out of gear—and was back again throwing the water on the flame. All in a moment!

Whilst he was doing this he called out to the piecer—a young fellow of eighteen or nineteen—to bring some more water; and between them they got the fire under and finally out. But for the minder's promptness the whole wheel-house would have been by this time a mass of flame.

The two boys were still standing together at

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the lower end of the wheel-house. The boy who had set a match to the thread of cotton looked on in an unconcerned way, whilst in Jim's face was a look of amazement and wonder. The flashing of the flame along the spinning-mule made him hold his breath in astonishment. He had never seen a fire go so quickly before! The danger of the whole thing never occurred to him.

The minder came up to the two boys.

"'Oo did it?" he asked, menacingly.

Though he had not seen the actual setting of the match to the cotton, he felt that one of these boys was at the bottom of the mischief.

At once the sallow-faced, black-eyed boy pointed to Jim.

"'E did it"; he said, in answer to the minder's question. "'E put a match to th' cotton."

The minder turned furiously upon Jim.

"Wot did tha' do it for?" he shouted.

But Jim could not answer. He was so confused and astonished at the boy accusing him of what he had done himself, that he turned red and stammered and looked guilty.

"Tek that!" roared the minder. And he struck Jim a heavy blow with his open hand on the side of the face. Jim fell. The minder struck him again and again, as he staggered to

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his feet. "Ah'll show thee!" he exclaimed. "Ah'll show thee! Tha' might a set th' 'ole factory afire! Tek the clogs, and goo whom! Goo on! Tek the clogs!" And, under a rain of clouts and blows, Jim managed to pick up his clogs and to run for it. The minder chased him to the stairs that ran down to the factory yard. "Goo off, and ne'er come back again," he shouted, as Jim bolted down the factory stairs.

The minder walked slowly back to the wheel-house after his exertion. He might have had the boy put in prison, he thought. But the short way was the best! If the boy were locked up, he would have to appear against him in court. And that was too much bother! The best way was to do just as he had done. To give the boy a good clouting and discharge him! That was the best thing. And he began to repair the damage that had been done in the wheel-house.

Poor Jim! He felt sore and confused and bewildered as he ran down the stairs. The blood was coming from his ear where the minder had repeatedly struck him. The fire, and the accusation, and the sudden heavy rain of blows had stupefied him. It was not till he got out of the factory gate that he began to collect himself,

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He sat down on the step of a house across the road and slowly put on his clogs.

The other boy had set the cotton on fire, and he had been blamed for it and beaten and discharged. He had been punished and had lost his place through what someone else had done. He would have no wages next Saturday to give his mother. And it was all through what someone else had done. It was the first time in his life that he had been brought face to face with an injustice that he could grasp and understand.

It was not the minder's fault. It was the fault of the boy who had told the lie! And Jim determined to wait for him. He would not go home and tell his mother yet about losing his place. He would wait till one o'clock for the boy, and then he would take it out of him.

He could kill this boy. It wasn't the minder's fault. No, it wasn't his fault. It was the fault of the boy. He would wait for him!

He had been told at the school and at the chapel that he should always forgive his enemies, no matter what they did to him. The strong religious sense that was in him for the moment came to the fore in his mind. The idea of absolute subjection to whatever wrong might be done to him had been driven into him by those

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who had taken upon themselves the training of his mind. The picture of Christ submitting to all injuries and in the end dying upon the Cross had been put vividly before him. The baneful doctrine of slavery had been forced upon him. It was a good thing to put up with everything that was done to him and to trust in God!

These thoughts came vaguely into his mind. But they were gone in an instant. The pain that came from his bruised, sore face drove them away. He would wait for the boy and have it out with him.

It would be a long time yet before one o'clock and he walked slowly down the street and off towards Oldham Road. Ever since he could remember he had liked Oldham Road. It was such a wide, big street, and when you stood in it and looked up it you could not see the end. A wide, big street that went on without end. The thought of the time when he was a very little boy and when he had seen the soldiers going along it came to him. Where were all the soldiers now, he wondered.

Here he was at the New Cross, and he passed along down Oldham Street and into Market Street. In Market Street there were great shops with beautiful things in the windows, and all the

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people were well dressed. They were not at all like the people who lived where he lived. There were no factory girls with shawls over their heads. There were no people who wore clogs. Everybody was well dressed and they walked along in a quick way.

Here was a shop window that was full of big pictures. They were the nicest pictures he had ever seen. They were better than the ones he saw in the school. One caught him especially. It was a picture of soldiers riding on horses. There seemed to be a great, great many of them. All riding on horses. They were in a country that was all covered with snow. A country over which hung a gray, dull sky. The soldiers looked tired and cold. It seemed in the picture as if they must have been riding for days and days. One who rode in front was a man with a long, stern face. He sat up very straight on his horse. He looked to be a very tall man and he wore upon his head a curious hat the rims of which were pointed down. His cloak fell straight down over his arms. A big man with a long, stern face.

But in the very front of them all was a man who rode on a white horse. He seemed to be rather short and he wore a three-cornered hat that came down over his eyes. His eyes were strange

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eyes. They seemed to see nothing and to see everything at the same time.

In the distance to the right of the picture there were more soldiers riding together. The figures looked dim and they could hardly be made out. They stretched off and off till they were lost in the distance.

The picture was so wonderful and strange and real. It was as if they were all moving with one step together. Men and horses who looked cold and tired, and who had been marching through the snow for days and days. And the man in front—the man who rode on the white horse—seemed as if there was no one with him. He looked as if he were going by himself. As if he had forgotten everything. The man with the three-cornered hat and the strange eyes.

For a long time the boy looked at the picture. And then he tried to read what was under it. He would like to know more about it. But all that was under it were some figures that told him nothing: 1812.

It was nearly one o'clock now and he was going towards the factory. He had spent the time wandering up and down Market Street, looking into the shop windows. What he had seen had

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almost made him forget what had happened to him that morning. But when he had got up past the New Cross and into Oldham Road again the feeling to be even with the boy came upon him afresh. The sense of injustice rankles deeper and produces bitterer fruit in the mind of a boy than in the mind of a man.

He was running quickly along when who should he see but his mother. They met face to face as he was turning a corner.

He told her what had happened when she questioned him about the bruise that was on his face. The big mark that was on the place where the minder had repeatedly struck him had now turned nearly black.

She took him by the hand.

“Come up to the mill,” she said, “and show me the minder when he comes out.”

Her eyes blazed, and there was a hard look in her face as she walked up the street with her boy. She was that fine and glorious type of woman:—the woman that, when the occasion arose, would fight to the last in the field or in the trench. A woman who belonged to the Irish race.

The factory bell was ringing and the people were crowding out through the gate. Jim kept a sharp watch.

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"There 'e is, mother," cried Jim suddenly, pointing out the man who had struck him.

His mother went forward and seized the minder by the collar.

"What did you strike my boy for?" she demanded, and before he could reply she hustled him against the wall and struck him. The minder tried to defend himself, but she was too quick and strong for him, and in a moment he was lying in a heap on the flags.

In the meantime Jim saw the boy who had put the match to the cotton, and he ran at him. But the boy was too swift for him. He dodged in and out through the crowd outside the gate, and managed to make his escape down an alley. Jim followed, but it was of no use. The boy shot down the alley like lightning—turned—and was gone.

Jim gave up the chase and ran back to the factory gate. There was his mother talking loudly to a crowd of people. The minder had managed somehow to get away.

"Come home, boy," she said to Jim, as she saw him, and, taking his hand, they went off down the street together.

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She was determined now not to let him go to

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work in a factory again. She would keep him at school as long as ever she could. And when he did go to work, he would go to work in a healthier place. If she had her own way she would give him the finest education going. She would make a gentleman out of him! And, indeed, if she had her rights she would easily be able to do this! She remembered when she was a girl in Ireland of hearing her grandmother talk about the great property that had once been in their family. But Cromwell had taken it away!

He had brought the black ruin upon her country. Often she had cried through the whole of the night over the wrongs of Ireland!

She wished that she were back again in her own country. And she thought sorrowfully of the long, hard, struggling years through which she had passed since she left it. Somehow she had never got on well in England. It would perhaps have been better for her if she had gone to America—that time, long ago, when she had the chance! She had heard wonderful things of what the Irish had done in America. Maybe, if she had gone there long ago she would have been in fine, well-off circumstances now. And her boy wouldn't have to be working half-time in a factory. America was a wonderful, big place, she

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heard, and fortunes were easy made! Why hadn't she gone?

But, Ireland. After all was there any place like Ireland, if one could get the bite and the sup and the place to shelter? It was the most beautiful country the world had ever seen! And wasn't it a sin and a shame that the people were driven away from it!

IV.

Jim was now going to school through the whole of the day. At first he was glad to go back, but after a while he grew tired of it. He preferred working half-time. Work interested him and there was more freedom in it.

His mind was beginning to grow past what he was being taught in school. He still liked the singing and the going to chapel, but the dull mechanical method of the teachers unconsciously wearied him. The method of teaching in schools was then as it is now—all wrong. There was little or no appeal to that most powerful quality in the mind of a child—imagination. And there was no appeal at all to the logical or reasoning faculties. The boys were taught things in the arbitrary way that parrots are taught things. This, however, was not the fault of the teachers.

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It was the fault of a system that failed to see, and still fails to see, that imagination and individuality are stronger in a child than in a grown-up person. Life has cramped the mind and the being of a grown-up person, whilst on the other hand the mind of a child is fresh and new and unafraid. Schools, as they are, are worse than useless. No wonder boys play truant. They are not only taught false and narrow views of things and of life, but their interest is not even held in the teaching of these.

The schoolmaster was a fine type of man. And he was that rare type of man—the man who is bigger and greater than his office, and who still does not despise it. He liked boys and he did his best by them. He was at once inflexible and thoughtful and kind. He did his best to discountenance and discourage the snobbery that is so rampant amongst the working class in England, and that finds its echo even amongst their children. One boy was the same as another to him; it mattered not whether his father was a mechanic at thirty shillings a week, or a labourer at eighteen shillings a week. Even if the boy had no father at all to look after him, it was the same to the schoolmaster. In fact, if he favoured anyone at all he favoured the poorer boys. When

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he chastised the boys, he chastised them without any show of feeling or passion. And he chastised them in a way that brought no ignominy with the chastisement. He was a man with an oval, handsome face, and big, thoughtful eyes. He most likely realised that he could do less than nothing for the children under his care—that they were bound as he was bound to the wheel of circumstance.

Jim finally persuaded his mother to let him go half-timing again. This time he was taken on at the flint glass works. Here were manufactured blown and pressed tumblers and decanters and dishes and all the various household glass-ware.

The wages he was to receive were higher than what he had got in the factory. He was to get three shillings a week.

He was put to work in the cutting shop, washing glasses with three other boys in a big trough filled with hot water.

The cutting shop was a vast oblong room, and was alive with quick-gliding leathern straps that ran from the shafts up above near the ceiling, driving wooden and stone and iron wheels of all sizes. Each of the running wheels was set in an

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iron trough—half circular in shape—and at each trough a man was working.

These men were glass cutters. They were nearly all unhealthy looking, and they had that odd pinched expression that belongs to people who constantly inhale dust.

They lived their lives in dust:—glass-dust, sand-dust, and dust of pumice-stone. All the day they stood at their troughs, grinding and cutting and smoothing and polishing glassware on the swift-running wheels. In the early morning and the evening when the lights were lit the patting shop made a strange picture. Here were pale-faced men deftly holding and turning and twisting beautiful, shinning objects of glass. Swift-turning wheels, brilliant, shining glass, and pale, intent men. And the sound, at once dull and piercing, of grinding and cutting. A scene squalid and picturesque.

The boys worked at the end of the cutting shop. Their duty was to grind smooth surfaces on the lower ends of glasses and tumblers, so that they would stand evenly when put on a table. Roughing, smoothing, and polishing. These were the three processes. A boy took a glass in either hand and passed them to and fro on the surface of a big iron wheel that was so fixed that it spun

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round on the flat just as would spin the top of a round table. Sand and water fell in a steady stream from a hopper above on the swift-circling, flat, iron wheel. The boy held the glasses on the wheel with a firm, steady pressure and turned them deftly around in his hands, so that the bottom of the glass would be ground fairly and evenly. This was roughing. The glasses were then passed on to other boys who held them in the same manner on a stone wheel, which was fixed to run in the same way as the iron wheel. Water fell in a steady stream on the stone, and the object was to make the bottom of the glass smooth after the process of roughing—to get the sand out of it. This was called smoothing. The glasses were then passed on to boys who worked at a wooden wheel. This wheel was also on the flat and it whirled round with great swiftness, and the boys themselves coated it with wet pumice stone. The glasses were held and turned round in the hands in the same way as they were on the two other wheels. This was polishing. The glasses were then passed to the boys who washed them in the trough.

The work that the boys liked least of all was the washing of the glasses. The reason of this was because the work was not so interesting, and,

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again, they never got a chance to sit down and rest. The boys who worked at the wheels were often able to sit down for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour at a time. They had often to wait for boxes of glasses to be brought into the cutting shop. But the poor washers were always behind. And a boy was always glad when he was promoted to working on one of the wheels. At first he was awkward and able to do but one glass at a time. But he soon got into the way of it, and was able to do two glasses at a time with the best of them. The washers were recruited from the new boys.

Jim felt proud when after a few days he was put to work on one of the wheels.

In a way the work was dangerous. The boys were constantly getting their fingers and hands cut from the smashing and breaking of the glasses. Sometimes glasses would "fly" in their hands:— suddenly half explode and smash through not having been properly tempered in the glass-house. The cuts the boys got from glasses "flying" were often so severe that they had to go to the dispensary in Mill Street to have them bandaged up.

An ugly looking little man with one eye was set in charge of the boys. The boys disliked him

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intensely and they used to shout nick-names at him and throw sand and pumice-stone at him when his back was turned. He was a man without sympathy or knowledge as far as boys were concerned, and was too fond of using a cane. Once he tried to cane Jim when another boy had thrown pumice-stone at him from his blind side. But Jim promptly flung a glass at him, and the caning didn't come off. Jim's life was already making him hard and rough and more than willing to take his own part.

An instance of this occurred a week or two afterwards. It was on a Saturday afternoon and Jim had gone off for a walk towards Rusholme with another boy who worked in the cutting shop. They had got to the outskirts of Manchester when they heard the firing of a gun. A crowd of people were standing in a field, or croft. Curious to know what was happening, the boys hurried up to the crowd.

Jim pressed through it, and there was a man raising up a gun to his shoulder and aiming at a pigeon that had just been set free from a trap some distance away. It was a pigeon-shooting match. Jim had never seen one before, and he was anxious to see all there was to be seen.

The man fired, and, in his excitement to get

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up closely to him, Jim brushed roughly against a lad of his own size and about his own age.

The lad turned and spoke sharply to him. He was a well-dressed, well-nurtured boy and was evidently far above Jim as far as class and circumstances went. Even the tone of his voice showed that. He was not a boy who worked with his hands, and consequently he felt contemptuous of Jim and his kind.

Jim felt the insolence of his tone, and a strange, intense feeling suddenly stirred him. He hated this boy because he was different to him; because he spoke differently; because he was dressed better. It was not so much that he had spoken sharply to him. He hated him because he was different. Why he should hate him he could not have told.

He said something in defiance to the well-dressed boy, and the boy spoke still more sharply and made a move as if to strike him. And suddenly Jim sprung at him and bore him to the ground. All the terrible hatred that the injustice of class distinction engenders was upon the slave-boy who worked half-time. He could have torn the boy limb from limb.

The boy's father was the man with the gun, and he had great difficulty in pulling Jim off his son.

VI.—THE GLASS-HOUSE.

I.

How wonderful was the glass-house where the glass was melted in the great white-hot furnaces, and where the men sat in chairs kneading and shaping and turning the glass as it came soft and hot from the furnaces. It was a great, dark, high place, and there was an air of romance and magic and mystery about it. There are times when labour has its scenes of poetry and beauty. And in the dimness and darkness of the night the glass-house was a strangely beautiful place. Shadows, and furnace-glaires, and shafts of light, and the shimmering of the wonderful, translucent metal — as the men worked it into shapes — mingled and blended themselves into an effect of dark, mysterious red. Red existing in the midst of darkness. And in the scene of strange, red darkness men and young men and boys were working. Here, half in the deep shadow and half in the white furnace-glare, a young man was

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gathering the soft, hot metal from out the furnace, He was gathering it on the end of a straight, smooth iron tube. He worked the smooth tube deftly in his hands till he had gathered around its end the required amount of metal. And then he withdrew it from out the terrible heat of the furnace. The soft glass was shining now on the end of his tube as would shine closed-in rays of sunlight in darkness. Shining in a way wonderful and magical. And the smooth iron tube was handed to another man who swayed it gently to and fro. And then he held the tube to his mouth and blew into it. And the gleaming, soft, translucent metal grew on the end of the tube. And then he whirled the tube round and round and blew into it again. And lo! the soft metal had become a thing of size and was rounded like a globe. Now he sat down in a chair and quickly turned the tube this way and that way. As he turned it he applied a tool to the globe of metal, bringing it to the shape he wanted. And now there was finished a beautiful thing from the deftness of the hand. And a boy came up and carried it away, and placed it in a great oven so that it could cool gradually. By this time the gatherer had placed in the glass-blower's hands another tube laden with soft, hot metal. And

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again it was swung carefully to and fro, and blown into, and again shaped.

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Surely was this work here in the glass-house art craft in its truest and best sense. What was the painting of pictures and the making of statues when compared to this wonderful and beautiful work that was done here by common men? Men who possessed neither name nor fame. Common men working in the midst of a dark, mysterious place of shadows and glare and redness. These men worked neither for shouts nor for acclamation. To-morrow they would be gone and their names would be as unknown to the world as they were unknown to-day. But they worked. They worked for bread. They made things that were at once beautiful and useful and the world acclaimed them not. The world is strange. It acclaims but useless work that is said to be beautiful.

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Here was another man who was gathering metal. He drew it from out of the furnace and held it over a mould, and another man cut from the metal, that pended from the end of the smooth tube, the amount that was wanted. He had to judge and to cut to a certain exact

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fraction. All the pieces of metal taken had to be absolutely the same weight to a hair. Neither a hair above nor a hair below. The glasses that were made must weigh the same, as coins of gold weigh the same. He that could not judge and cut so as to get this result was not a true workman.

A man pulled on the handle of the press above the mould—the soft metal within was pressed—and there was brought forth a glass, beautiful and shining.

Here was the metal boiling in the pots in the great furnace. It bubbled and seethed and emitted strange-coloured flames. It was living with a wonderful and terrible life. Seething, boiling, translucent metal. It lived in the midst of frightful, roaring fire.

All around in the glass-house were sounding the deep, sinister fire-voices. They rumbled and roared and threatened. It seemed as if they might burst forth from their furnace chains. But the men who were working here in the dark mysterious redness heeded not. They worked on and on. Gathering and swinging and blowing and pressing the metal. Here their voices rang around in song through the shadows and the

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glare and the darkness. Here their voices were silent as they worked on with bent and knitted brows. These men heeded not the voices of the fire. For fire was their great and mighty and terrible slave. Fire was the genie that had been evoked for the purpose of accomplishing tasks stupendous and strange.

II.

The men and boys worked in shifts through the day and through the night, for the fires had always to be kept going. It would not do to let them die down and out. And so the work went on and on in the half darkness.

Often when his work was over in the cutting shop Jim used to go off into the glass-house to watch the men working. It was the most wonderful place he had ever seen. And he would stand off in a dark corner and watch the work going on. He hoped that when he was a man he would be a glass-blower. He would like to swing the tube to and fro, and blow down it into the soft metal till it swelled out. He would like to sit in the chair and turn the glasses to the shape. He used to stay for hours watching the work.

He would far rather have worked in the glass-

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house than in the cutting shop. But his mother did not like the idea because of the night-work. He tried to explain to her what a wonderful place the glass-house was. She listened to his accounts of it, but she said it would never do for him to work at night. It would be against his growing up to be a big man. And that was the end of it.

Still, she had nothing to say against his going to watch the work now and then. And when he came home she listened to him gravely as he told her all about it.

The glass-house was to him as a place of enchantment. A wonderful, dark, glowing, magical place.

VII.—SWIMMING.

I.

SUMMER was here now, and the boys were having a great time swimming and learning to swim in the canal. Boys were diving in head foremost from the tow-path. These were the boys who had mastered the grand art. Boys were venturing cautiously from the edge—taking a few, flopping and floundering strokes—and getting hurriedly and anxiously back again. And there were boys who stuck like grim death to the edge of the tow-path. It was, perhaps, their first time in, and they were very much afraid.

Ho! for the grand overhand stroke that sent a boy whizzing along through the water. And the good, straight, safe, slow breast stroke. And the stroke on the left or the right side. And the half-floating backward stroke with the legs. And the swimming with one hand up above the head. And the treading water with

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both hands held up high above the head. And the sudden turn downwards from the swim in mid-canal, and the slow, gradual, half-dive half-swim to the bottom. How hard it was to get the head well down under and to bring the arms into play for the slow working down. It seemed ages before the legs could be got into the water to help the stroke head downwards.

Here were boys diving off from the bow of an old coal barge. How clean and smooth and graceful was the dive of that boy! He went in almost without a splash—nearly as if he had made a hole in the water. And there was the boy who fell into the water like a crab. And the boy who flopped in.

Here was Frank Nolan, the best swimmer of them all. He could swim overhand from one lock to another. Indeed one Sunday he had swum a mile and a half—three times between lock and lock. His favourite stroke was the long, even breast stroke—of all strokes the best.

But the place where the best fun of all was to be had was in the lock—the deep narrow lock where the boats had to pass through to get from level to level. The depth of the lock made the water in it look green. It was a famous place.

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A boy could dive from the top of the lock gate and go down and down and down and down again without ever coming to the bottom. And the water held him up better than the water in the canal—because it was so deep. It was grand to feel the press of the strong, buoyant water against the body. It was grand to plunge head foremost down into it. The water closed on the body as it shot down like a plummet, and then one stopped and the head was up again to the surface before one knew of it.

Or a boy could dive and just before he got to the end of his plunge he could take one big breast stroke, and go down, and another stroke, and go down, and another, and still down. How strange the water felt to him now when he was so far down beneath it. He was in another world. But he wanted breath. He must have breath! And he turned and swam up. But so slowly. He wanted breath! Was he ever going to get to the top? Yes—but he was going slowly. Surely he had not come so far down as this. Breath. The top! Here he was taking a big breath. He had got to the top before he knew of it. He would not dive down so far again!

When the water was pouring from the canal on the high reach, that was the time. The water

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boiled and roared and hissed and circled and eddied round and round. That was the time to dive in. When the water was pouring down and in—making boiling, rushing waves. A boy dived into the fighting, hissing water—came up—and he was dashed here and there like a feather. He was a bit afraid. But how grand it was. The pouring, rushing water roared in his ears as he fought in it. It sounded a thousand times louder to him than if he were standing watching it on the canal bank. It was as if a hundred big locks were pouring in together. All coming on the top of him. He had been a bit afraid—at first. But now he was not afraid at all. It was so grand to be in the middle of this pouring, rushing, fighting, water. He was not afraid. For he was master.

II.

It was in the old water-roads of Manchester—the canals—where the boys learned to swim. The waters of the canals were warm almost throughout the year because of the heat of the many factories and workshops that stood along their banks.

Jim had often watched the boys swimming, and he was ambitious to learn to swim himself, but the first time he let himself slowly from the canal-

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edge into the water he felt afraid. And when the water got up to his neck he would have pulled himself quickly out, but that he was ashamed. A boy who was much smaller than he was began to laugh at him. This boy had learned to take his first two or three strokes, and was, therefore confident enough to venture out from the edge of the canal.

It is a strange and terrifying sensation this going up to the neck in a big body of water for the first time. One feels no alarm as one goes in up to the breast. The poise of the body is not disturbed. But when the water comes up to the neck everything is changed. The heart flutters, and the body trembles in endeavouring to adjust itself to the extra pressure of the water. The body feels every move and ripple of the great surrounding element. One is in the grip of a vast, strange, terrifying monster.

But, if one persists, this feeling wears off, and then there comes confidence. Now is the time when one can learn to swim.

After he had been in two or three times Jim was no longer afraid. And Frank Nolan, the best swimmer of St Anne's, took him in hand. He took Jim along with him into deep water and made him practice his first stroke there. And

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soon Jim had confidence enough to go and plunge right across the deep lock when it was full. This he managed to do before even he could take his first stroke. He would stand on one side of the lock—dive in—and the impetus of the dive would bring him to the other side. Some of the boys who could not swim were in the habit of doing this. It was not dangerous, if one had confidence. But there were always swimmers round in case of accident.

After about ten days Jim was able to take his first two or three strokes. But that by no means meant that he had learnt to swim. The art of swimming is the art of poising the body in the water and moving along in it. Some people say that one should move as much as possible in the water as one moves or walks, on land. But this is altogether wrong. There is absolutely no likeness, nor, even analogy, between the movement of swimming and the movement of walking. It may seem a paradoxical thing to say, but swimming—when it is perfectly acquired—is a more natural mode of progression than walking. Every part of the body is brought into play, and the same amount of muscular effort is less tiring in the water than on the land. What does tire a swimmer is the loss of vital heat through contact

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with water that is lower in heat than the body is used to when it is clothed. In some of the islands of the Pacific—where the people swim perfectly and where the warm water keeps up the vital heat of the body—an onlooker, seeing the people swim, would indeed be apt to think that swimming was man's natural mode of movement—that water was his natural element. So gracefully and effectively and quickly do the people swim, that walking appears—when compared with it—but as an ungainly, half-halting, awkward movement.

There is an analogy between the movements of flying and swimming. What strong swimmer has not felt this? To swim in the midst of the great rolling waves of a storm gives one a strange sense of soaring in the air. One faces a great wave, and turns from one, and goes under one, and avoids one, and is borne aloft, and goes down below and up again. One steers one's-self more surely and easily than one would in a storm on land. One feels like a king.

A strong and perfect swimmer can live where no boat could live. He can avoid with ease the terrible, striking, smashing blows of great waves. He can steer himself easily through a furious welter of waters.

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Swimming is indeed a grand thing. It gives one the command of another element.

It appeals strangely to the one who has grasped and mastered its mysteries. Surely in the far off Beginning, man, or the being from whence man sprung, swam in great, wide waters.

III.

Policemen used to try and catch the boys, for there was a law against bathing in the canals. But the boys were too sharp for them. When one of them was seen coming, they would get out and race naked along the bank of the canal with their clothes in their hands. Or they would just roll their clothes up in a ball, hold them up above their heads, and swim, one-handed, over to the other side of the canal. There was hardly ever a case of a boy—even if he could not swim—being caught. They used to have great fun with the police. “Ey! Ey! ’Ere’s a slop!” The cry would go up, and the boys would be out of danger in a twinkling.

It was a great day for Jim when he swam his first half-mile—from lock to lock. A couple of boys walked along the tow-path, carrying his clothes. They shouted out encouragement to him as he swam on. It seemed so long, this swim,

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and once he was on the point of giving up. He had not yet mastered the art of resting in the water, and allowing for the full value of his stroke. But he kept doggedly on.

A barge came along. He had to swim well over to the off side to avoid it, and this lost him a good deal of effort. But he got to the lock in the end. He had done his first half-mile—all with the breast stroke.

Of course there were public baths in Manchester. But a boy would have to pay twopence every time he went in, and these boys did not have the money. The twopences were all needed to buy food. And added to that they went into the water two and three times a day. The water of the canals was warmer than the water of the public baths, and to crown all, bathing in it had the charm of being forbidden.

On Sundays the boys and young men from all over Ancoats went along up Ashton Road, and on to the outskirts of the town. Here the water of the canal was purer and clearer—and colder. But bathing here was more dangerous than bathing right in the town. The police were more easily able to make raids, because the banks of the canal were more open. They used to disguise themselves by wearing plain clothes—that is, they

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disguised themselves as far as policemen possibly can. Policemen are an undisguisable race. However, they managed to get up close enough to make an arrest now and then.

VIII.—WHIT-WEEK

I.

WHIT-WEEK! Here it was at last—a time of rejoicing and jubilation. The factories and the foundries had stopped work for the week, and the working people of Manchester were preparing to enjoy themselves. They were paid nothing by the firms who employed them for the time they stopped off work, but they heeded that but little. Here was holiday-week when they were free to move about as they wished. For a whole week they could follow their own bent. They could go off on cheap trips, or stop at home, or loaf and lounge about. Whit-week was their own week.

All of the people that could had been saving up money ever since Christmas. Even children saved up their pennies and their half-pennies. This week had been looked forward to through the dark slavery of long months. And now it was here and—think of it—the sun was actually shining brightly in dull old Manchester. And the

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Manchester people were thinking that Manchester was not such a bad place to live in after all. The dark, dull-skied town had fallen under the glamour of Whit-week.

Whit-Monday! Well, Whit-Monday was only the first day of the great week, and the people did not begin to stir round too much. They were still tired after the dull grind of the year, and they wanted to rest a bit. But on Tuesday they began to waken up gradely—as they say in Lancashire—and on Whit-Wednesday things were going at full flourish. The people were going off on delightful cheap trips—going off for the day into the country, or to the sea-side. How delightful it was to get into the country or to the sea-side and shout, and talk loudly, and romp around a whole day through. The factory girls dressed themselves up finely in shoes and fine hats and dresses. Clogs and shawls were put a' one side. They were out to enjoy themselves and to forget that they ever worked in a factory.

Belle Vue! Aye, that was the place. Belle Vue Gardens! The place where one could see the lions and the tigers and the eagles, and all the birds and beasts under the sun. The great place where one could dance through the whole of the day in the big, long ball-room—the walls

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of which were covered with great pictures. Here the music was going all through the days of Whit-week, or it was going outside on the big platform just opposite the lake at the back of which was the painted scenery representing grand, high mountains. Here in the ball-room the young fellows and the young girls used to romp and dance together. It didn't matter much whether you knew a girl or not. You just went up and talked to the nicest one you saw—and you took your chance. And it was all right. You danced and romped with your girl, and if you were half a man you kissed her, and if her chap came along and grumbled—well, you fought him, or you apologised, or you did something or another that gave satisfaction. Belle Vue was a great place! You could go in for sixpence. But after four o'clock in the afternoon you had to pay a shilling. And when the night came there was the splendid display of fireworks. And then everyone went home feeling pleased and gratified and happy. Belle Vue! What a great place it was!

II.

Whit-week was a time of great excitement at St Anne's. For on the Friday of that week there

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was a great procession through Manchester of all the Roman Catholic schools.

Jim was excited at the idea of walking with the scholars on Whit-Friday, but what excited him still more was the fact that he was going away into the country with the scholars on Whit-Thursday. They were going to Strines, a place some miles away from Manchester.

Jim was actually going to ride on a train. He had never ridden on a train before and had never seen the country. He had seen the country outside the town, but never the real country.

He went to bed on Wednesday and hardly slept through the whole of the night. His mind was too full of the great day to come to-morrow.

Here at last was five o'clock in the morning. It was already daylight and he got up and dressed himself. His mother had managed to buy him a pair of shoes, and these along with a new hat and a coat that had been bought second-hand made him look very nice.

Soon he was going down towards St Anne's School with his mother and his little brother. They were going to see him off. The scholars had all to assemble in the school-yard and then to march together to the station.

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The sun was shining full into the little, square school-yard and Jim was standing there with the other boys and girls, who were as eager as himself for the signal to march off. And the signal was given by the schoolmaster, and the children turned to the right and marched down Junction Street, and again to the right, going down Every Street, and to the right again, going up Ancoats Lane. Then they crossed over to the left and went on across the town till they came to the big station where they were to go off on the train.

It was a beautiful morning full of sunshine. The children carried with them their provisions for the day. These were either packed in small hampers or tied up in handkerchiefs, as the case might be. The night before the mothers of the children had cut up slices of bread—and ham, if they could afford it—and packed them up with cakes and apples and whatever else was wanted.

Jim's provisions were tied up in a red handkerchief, which, by the way, he nearly lost as he was bustling and crowding into the station with the rest of the children. It got knocked out of his hand in the crush, but his mother, who was coming behind, picked it up and gave it to him when she saw him again on the platform.

Jim had tenpence in his pocket to spend during

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the day. It was more money than he had ever had of his own before, and he had been a long time saving it up. But here at last it was in his pocket—ten big pennies. He would be careful, however, not to spend the whole of it. He must try and make it last up to the end of Whit-week!

Here was the train coming to the platform. A big engine puffed slowly in front of it. How slow the train was! It seemed as if it would never get to where the children were standing. But at last it stopped, and the boys rushed forward, opened the doors, and scrambled in. The school-master had given up the railway tickets sometime before.

There was a great noise and shouting and confusion. But everyone was happy. The big grimy station resounded with the laughter and the noise.

The guard blew his whistle and waved his flag and the train began to start. Jim managed to shove his way up to the carriage window. There was his mother standing on the platform. She waved her hand to him as the train left the station.

And now the train was going swiftly along. They were passing along the tops of streets and under arches. He had never thought that there

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were so many houses and streets in Manchester. And the train began to go faster and faster. And then it went slower and at last it stopped at a station on the outside of the town where some more scholars got in. But it did not stop for long. It was soon running again. Here were fields, the biggest he had ever seen. And big trees. The trees seemed to run quickly past the train. But the telegraph poles ran quickest of all. They were up to one, and it was gone by in a flash, and up to another—and that was gone. The wheels were rumbling and grinding under the train, and the carriage rocked with a short, quick motion. How strange it was riding in a train. One flew past everything. Jim felt as if he had wings—as if he were flying through the air. And the train went faster and faster. Here was a little station. But they were through it before you could think. Here were fields and trees, and fields and trees flying before them. They flew so quickly, but at the same time they flew so evenly. The country beyond them came and came towards them and was gone. They came to a station, and stopped. But they were soon off. And again they stopped. But only for a moment. How green the country was. It was green everywhere. And off over yonder was

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winding a river. It was a far way off, but even from the distance Jim could see that the water was clear. It was not like the Irwell in Manchester. The train ran on and on, and some of the boys in the carriage began to sing. Jim joined in with them, but he soon stopped. The going along of the train excited him so much. He could think of nothing else. The shaking, and the quick, smooth grinding of the wheels beneath, and the short quick puffing of the engine at the head of the train, and the passing fields and trees, and the country coming towards him was all such a thing of wonder to him. His first ride in a train! He had never thought it would be so good as this! He hoped Strines was a far way off and that the train would run on and on for a long time. And the train still ran along swiftly. And there came into the air a long whistling sound. Jim had not noticed the whistling before. The train ran more slowly, and then it began to stop. Was this Strines? No. The train had started—was going quickly—and trees and fields were again flying. Here were big hills. They were slowly, slowly moving as far away as one could see. And at last there came again the long whistling sound. The train went slower and slower. It stopped. Here was Strines.

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Jim was sorry that the ride in the train was over.

The children scrambled out of the train on to the platform, laughing and shouting gaily. For a moment or so they ran around the station, inspecting things. At the end of the platform were several empty milk cans. The boys immediately began to roll and push them about. But soon order was restored. The schoolmaster formed the boys and girls into a sort of rough column, and they began to march out of the station towards the field where they were to romp about, and to play through the whole of the day.

How clean and fresh and pleasant was the air. The sun was shining softly. On this day the sky up above was blue and clear.

They were marching down a real country road with big trees on either side—trees with bright, shining, green leaves. How the children longed to climb them! And here were fields with beautiful red flowers in them. And yonder was a high tree that had a bird's nest almost at the very top of it. The nest was plain to be seen.

Birds were everywhere—singing, chirping, and flying up above, and darting here and there. They seemed to be as happy as the children who had come all the way from Manchester to see

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them. And there were butterflies fluttering about. They seemed so easy to catch that some of the children could not resist breaking out of the column to run after them. But butterflies are not easy to catch.

Here they were at last. This was the field. It was to be their home through the whole of the day. They crowded up before the gate, whilst the farmer was unlocking the padlock, and when it was opened they burst in and raced and scampered over the whole field.

How big it was and how comfortable and nice was the grass to roll upon! And there were so many flowers in it! And close to the end of it it dipped down—making a brook down which the boys could roll. And on one side of it there was a big wood. They would soon find out what that wood was like, and what was in it!

But the first thing that had to be thought of was breakfast, and the boys who were in charge of the bats and balls and stumps, for playing cricket, left them on the field and trooped off with their friends to the farm-houses. The football was left in a bag near the stumps and bats.

There were enough farm-houses around to take them comfortably. Thirty or forty children went

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to a farm-house together, and they paid a penny a-piece, and, in some case three halfpence, for boiling water for their tea and the use of cups and saucers and plates.

They carried their own tea and sugar with them from Manchester, and soon the tea was made and breakfast was going merrily along. They were hungry after their railway ride, and their march to the field, and they did full and ample justice to the meal. Thick slices of bread and butter, and slices of ham and bacon, and oranges and apples disappeared as if by magic. And through the meal they talked and laughed and shouted loudly and gaily.

“’Ey, Ted, ’and us that tea-pot!”

“Goo on wi’ thee. What does tha want it for?”

“Never thee mind. Thee give it.”

“Aw reet. ’Ere it is.”

“’Ey gi’ us a slice o’ that cake, and tha can ’ave a slice of this ’ere ’am!”

And so the meal went merrily on.

The farm-house where Jim had got to with his friends, Harry Platt, and Ted Keating, and Joe Donlan, was a comfortable old place. The big kitchen, where about twenty of the children sat — boys and girls — was heavily raftered. They

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were all together at a long, square table. Jim sat between Harry and Ted.

Breakfast was over and they rushed out into the fields. Hooray! Here was Whit-Thursday! Here they were at last in the country with the long day before them!

A game of cricket! Who would play a game of cricket? And in the twinkling of an eye the stumps were driven into the ground and the bails set upon the top of them. Sides were picked and a penny was tossed up in the air to see which side should go in first. In a moment Joe Donlan was bowling and Harry Platt was batting. Joe was a good bowler! He had a way of getting a fellow out with an overhand ball!

Over in another part of the field football was going. The boys were not bothering about trying to play a scientific game. It was free kicking, and kicking as hard as you liked and as long as you could. If you got the ball in front of you, you kept it there till one swifter than yourself took it from you.

Here the boys were running races for prizes given by the schoolmaster. And off over yonder the very little children were playing games of their own. And there were others who were

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enjoying themselves rolling over and over down the brook at the end of the field.

The middle of the day! Here it was with the sun shining as it can only shine in midsummer in England—full and soft and strong. It was time for dinner, but this time the dinner was to be had in the middle of the field. Two great cans of milk were brought from the farm-house and everyone sat on the comfortable, soft grass whilst the milk was handed round in cups. Cakes and oranges and bread and milk made a very good meal.

In the afternoon the wood was explored with its wonderful trees and undergrowth and deep hollows. The farmer had said that the boys were not to go into the wood, but that mattered little. In they went just the same. Jim and Harry Platt actually saw a rabbit some distance off, and they gave hot chase. But the rabbit was too swift. It jumped and hopped along and dived down a hole just near the roots of a big tree.

After that they came back to the field and Jim won a prize of threepence in a jumping match. And Harry won sixpence in a hundred yard race. Then came a race where the boys ran in twos with their legs tied together. Father Peter who had just now come into the field gave prizes for this

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race. He had come up from St Anne's in the middle of the day to see how the boys were getting on.

What a grand day it had been! It seemed to be at once the longest and the shortest day in the children's lives. From daylight to darkness it had been crowded with enjoyment. One thing had followed quickly after another. It had been a long, long, beautiful day. A day worth while waiting for and looking forward to.

The children were standing together on the platform of the station, waiting for the train to come and take them home. They were feeling, perhaps, a little tired, but the glamour of the wonderful day was still upon them. They were living over again the scenes through which they had passed.

A boy was seated upon the bats and the cricket stumps that had been tied up into a rough bundle. His head was nodding forward. He was nearly asleep. And here was a little girl sitting on the station bench with the arm of a bigger girl around her. She was asleep—and, perhaps, dreaming of the wonderful day. And yonder were groups of boys talking together. They were discussing the any things that had happened—the feats that

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had been accomplished. And yonder were groups of girls. All talking of the wonderful day.

Here at last was the train. And the children got into it and were borne away from the beautiful country back into the town.

III.

The next day—Whit-Friday—the scholars were walking. Banners were flying, and bands were playing. Catholic school joined Catholic school, making a vast procession through Manchester.

Jim was carrying a banner in the ranks of St Anne's. He was selected for the honour because he was a strong boy, and he was much elated. He had felt a little tired that morning, after the day before, but the feeling soon left him. He marched proudly in the ranks, with his banner held up aloft, keeping step as well as he could with the band.

After he had carried it a long way, the boy next to him—who was to relieve him—wanted to take the banner. But Jim would not let him. He wanted to carry the banner all the way himself.

It was a fine day—just as it was the day before—and the sun shone gloriously on the brave and long army of banners. Some of them were

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of immense size, and often they swelled out like great sails. There were blue banners, green banners, red banners, banners of gold, and banners of silk. Going in one long, brave array.

Thousands upon thousands of people were standing in the streets, watching the procession. There is something that irresistibly attracts in a procession. Something that appeals. And here were thousands looking on. Oldham Road was lined with people, Ancoats Lane was lined, and Oldham Street, and Market Street, and Moseley Street, and all the streets along the route. Multitudes of people were standing listening to the blare of bands coming and going, and watching the bright spectacle. The people who were looking on, talked and laughed, and jostled and stood on tiptoe to get a nearer view, and made free comment of all kinds. In fact they were a part of the procession, as spectators always are.

Not only did children walk in the procession, but men and women walked also. They walked because it is human to walk in processions, and they walked also to show the belief, the faith that was in them. People must possess a faith of some kind. Otherwise their souls fade and die.

Young girls passed, dressed in white:—the Children of Mary. And young men passed. And

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men passed some of whom were old and gray.
And women.

Here in the line of the procession came St Anne's.
And yonder was Jim, struggling bravely with his
banner. He was tired now. But he still struggled
bravely along. He had just seen his mothe
amongst the people who were standing, watching.
And he was holding his banner as well up and as
high up as he could.

Into the air there came the sound of a hymn.
The band that was passing fell into silence as the
hymn arose. And the air was filled with the
sound of the beautiful Lancashire voices.

Faith of our fathers, living still
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword.

These words rang out wedded to a simple and
wonderful melody. And the hymn went on to tell
of those who had lived in the past and who were
true to themselves in spite of sword and fire. It
told of the struggle against the domination of
tyrants. It told of that spirit, brave and God-
like, that in the end will free the world from
slavery. This beautiful hymn was a symbol of
the wish of man to be free. It was a symbol of
the instinct to resist oppression.

Our fathers chained in prisons dark.

The wonderful hymn went on. Its melody

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was one of those simple, thrilling, imperishable melodies born of a people in times stern and terrible. There was sadness in it and at the same time there was hope and exultation in it. And there was firmness and resolve in it. There was at once softness and tenderness in it, and an indomitable resolution. In it was that strange quality of fire that has been in the melodies that have inspired men to arise and overthrow iniquitous states and empires.

A symbolic, wonderful melody sung by the beautiful voices of Lancashire workers. They knew not that it was a symbol. But a symbol it was. A radiant and beautiful symbol of man's finest and most sacred instinct—the instinct to resist oppression.

It might be said that these people who were walking in the procession were the slaves of an organised faith—of a religion. The blind, egotistical fools who delve amid the shifting sands of the thing that is called science might sneer at them. Half-thinkers might endeavour to cast ridicule upon them. But there is no guide so dangerous as the half-thinker.

Religion is symbolical, and there are times when it appears to break its promises. But

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when all is said and done it is the friend of those who are denied the right to live. It has its faults, but even at its worst dare anyone say that its attitude towards the toiling millions—sunk in the hell of poverty—is to be compared with the sinister attitude of commerce? A priest of religion may be bad, but who shall dare to compare him with one of the damnable priests of commerce? These men who in the stock-marts of the world cause thousands upon thousands to suffer hunger and death so that they may amass millions! These cornerers of the food—and the materials for earning the food—of the people! These men who possess the millions that are drenched with the blood of the people!

Sneer not at the influence of priests whilst there is allowed to exist in the world these foul birds of prey! These cornerers of food and produce. These men who do murder from afar behind closed doors. Let it be said straight:—A man who corners food and produce is a man guilty of wilful murder. That he is not made to suffer the just punishment of his crime is due to the fact that men are cowards.

Religion has its faults, but at least it does better by the people than does commerce.

Religion. Did it but possess the lightning to

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strike the men of the blood - drenched millions
dead!

IV.

Whit-week was over now and the people were preparing to go back to their work. For a whole week the clogs had been silent. But early on Monday the clamping would again sound through the morning air. Again would the women hurry along with the shawls over their heads. And the children would hurry along. And the men would hurry along.

The factory bells would ring out. And the shuttles would whirr, and the cotton threads would glide and spin swiftly round the bobbins, and the engines would revolve with their dull, grinding roar, and through the air would pierce harsh, commanding voices.

The slaves of the machines would go back to their slavery.

Hammers would clang and ring, and men would stand before the glare of roaring fires, and men would stand in the midst of dust, and in the midst of sickly heat. And women who should be at home looking after their babes would be working. And little children would be working.



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For Whit-week had gone. It had passed. It was now only a memory.

But a beautiful memory. A memory that held within it a forecast of the time that would surely come to pass for the workers of the world when labour had come into its kingdom.

IX.—BILL MASON'S BOYS

I.

YEARS come and go and figures pass. And lights die out and appear and disappear, till at last to the one that lingers there is nothing left but the strange phantoms of memory. In the far away depths of the past, through a soft clearness, one sees the faces of those one knew. They live in an atmosphere at once sad and quiet and beautiful. Those that are dead. These people of the past. You sit and think and wonder about them. Do they know that you are thinking of them? Perhaps. Who can tell aught of their life of silence?

II.

From morning till night he moved about the machine shop, going from lathe to lathe inquiring and looking to see as to how the work was going on. A spare gaunt figure clad in overalls. His

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face was long and pale and he wore a beard. His eyes were blue and penetrating and mild. Behind them was perhaps a sternness. He had the face of a man who was at once just and firm and kind.

He was an overlooker in the machine shop of a great ironworks in Manchester.

Some two hundred boys worked under him, and all of them regarded him with respect and affection. He was just. And he was kind and thoughtful. He was a Lancashire man with a heart of gold. How he came to be an overlooker was something of a mystery, for overlookers were, in the vast majority of cases, picked out for the position because they were bullies who were servile and cringing to those above them. They were slaves with an instinct for holding the whip over other slaves.

Bill Mason was a slave born with a sense of justice and freedom. This sometimes happens. He was sorry for the poor little boys who worked under him. And he did all he could to help them. He had children of his own.

All through the long day they were boring and cutting and shaping and polishing at their lathes. The lathes were set down low near the ground

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so that they would not be too high up for the children to work at them. The air was filled with the keen piercing sound of the cutting of metals. Here a lad was boring out brass sockets that were used in the making of machines for spinning cotton. He would wind up his drill and set the point of it fairly in the centre of the solid socket as it whirled in the chuck. It was whirling round at a great speed, for brass—being at once soft and brittle—must spin quickly when being cut.

The lad would work and work his drill through the solidness of the quick - turning socket. His hand was on the wheel of the headstock propelling the drill, and he had to propel it at once quickly and delicately and subtly through the whirling • brass. He had to feel with his hand and his nerves that it was cutting its way through evenly. From the vibrations and resistance it gave out he could tell whether or not if the point of the drill were countering in the spinning brass a hardened place, or a flaw, or a blob-hole that had come into it in the casting. When these difficulties occurred in the drilling he had to work through slowly and delicately. For if he were not very careful the drill would get out of centre—snap—and crash—and fly out of the lathe and

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perhaps strike him in the face. Through and through he would propel the drill till at last it fell slack. A hole was bored clean through the socket. Then with his left hand he would suddenly push the quick-running strap from the drum—stop the lathe dead—work the bored socket out of the chuck—put in another one—and start the lathe again. The boy on the lathe next to him put the bored sockets through another process. He knocked a mandril into them, slipped them into his lathe, and with a steel, square-faced tool cut them evenly to a gauge. Then he put his lathe to a quicker speed and polished them with wood and emery and laid them carefully in rows on his bench in front of him, finished.

A few lathes off a boy was cutting and shaping great pins of wrought iron. In the cutting of wrought iron the lathe had to be run at a much slower speed than in the cutting of brass, and the cutting tools had to be shaped to and sharpened at a more acute angle because of the tenacity and ductility of the metal. And water had to be let drip constantly on the edge of the tool to keep it from getting hot and losing its hardness.

Off here a boy was cutting and shaping small wheels of cast iron. The lathe in this case was

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run at a still different speed and the tool was sharpened on a different principle altogether.

The proper sharpening of the tools took the boys longer to learn than anything else. It was fairly easy to work the lathe. But the thing was to have the tool so that it would cut cleanly and easily. The boys sharpened them on big, slow-turning, yellow grindstones that were fixed—running—in great iron troughs. From morning till night there were always boys grinding diamond points, drills, chisels, and other tools on these stones. Two or three boys could grind on them at once. It was a favourite device for a boy to come up to sharpen a tool when the stone was occupied. In this way he could manage to get a rest from working at his lathe, for he would have to wait till the boys before him had finished.

But the time the boys liked best was when they had to take a tool down into the smithy for the tool-smith to beat it up and temper it. Then they could sit down and watch the smith for perhaps a quarter of an hour. They could take it easy on a heap of coal or cinders. When the tool was given them up they would come to the machine shop and go over to the big stone to grind it. The going wrong of a tool was always a source of satisfaction. It meant a rest.

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Bill Mason was moving here and there and everywhere. He was showing a boy exactly how to put the cutting tool into the rest, or he was tightening up a headstock, or mending a strap that had broken, or showing a boy the proper way to grind a tool. Long calling out through noise and din had made his voice harsh, but there was an undertone of kindness in its harshness. But when the necessity for severity came he could be severe—as all the boys well knew. He would stand no nonsense. If he caught a big boy bullying a small boy he would fall on that boy and clout him. If a boy was too much of a shirker Bill would first reprimand him, and if that did no good he would chastise him. The boys could in no sense impose upon him. And they may have liked him all the better for it.

None of the boys ever called him Mr Mason. They thought of him as Bill. And they called him Bill. But their sense of his authority and the respect due to him never sank in the least because of this. He made no assertion of dignity, and still he was dignified. There was power of command in the straight look of his clear eyes. And the boys had no nickname for him among themselves. Neither did they ever make fun of him nor talk disparagingly about him when his

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back was turned, as boys usually do of those set over them in authority. They liked him and respected him and slightly feared him.

He always impressed it on them to do their work well. He did not care how much time they took as long as they did their work neatly and exactly. "Ah don't care 'ow much time tha takes as long as tha does th' job reet," he would say to a new boy as he was explaining to him the simple principles of the running of the lathe and the work to be done. And the boy would do his work as well as ever he could knowing that Bill would be sure to give him credit for doing his best. And in time the boy would get into the knack of doing the work quickly.

The work was of a nature most interesting to boys, for boys like above all things to handle tools. But they were kept too long at it. They had to work too many hours in the day. If they could have worked in the machine shop for a couple of hours each day it would have been good for them.

Outside the great door of the ironworks men and boys who wanted work used to stand in a group. If an overlooker were short of anyone he would come down and look them over and signal to those or to the one who looked the likeliest.

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In they would go and give their names to a clerk in the office. Then they would be given three brass checks stamped with the same number. At six in the morning a man or boy had to give one in as he passed through the office into the works; the next had to be given in at nine; and the next at two in the afternoon. This check system enabled the clerks to tell quickly who was in the works and who was not.

One morning Bill wanted a boy, and he went down to the door to pick one out of the group which was always there. He beckoned to a strong-looking little boy of about ten who was standing alongside a tall, slouching man. The boy wanted to get work as a full-timer in the ironworks.

"What's thy name?" asked Bill, as the boy came up.

"Jim," he answered.

"Jim what?"

"Jim Byrne."

Bill paused a little.

"'Ast e'er worked in a machine shop afore?" asked Bill, again.

"No," said the boy.

"Weer 'ast been working?"

"Ah worked in th' cuttin' shop."

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“ In th’ glass-house? ”

“ Aye.”

“ ’Ow owd are tha ? ”

“ Ten year and four month.”

“ Does tha want to work full time ? ”

“ Aye.”

“ Aw reet. Come on then. Ah’ll gi’ thee five bob a week.”

And the boy got his three brass checks and went along with Bill through yards and long sheds and up many broad wooden stairs till at last he was in the machine shop.

He liked it better than the cutting shop. He liked the look of the lathes at which boys like himself were working.

Bill put him to work on a lathe next to a boy called Scotty.

Five shillings a week! It was a big rise to get after three shillings. Nearly twice as much. He thought how glad his mother would be when he went home and told her all about it. Five shillings a week! He had to work full time for it, of course, but that didn’t matter. He was tired of going to school. They only told you the same thing every day! He would sooner work full time, for then he was just like a man. All that a man did was to work full time. He

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got more wages a week, but still he only worked full time—just as he was going to do. With five shillings a week his mother could do a lot of things. And perhaps she would give him threepence a week to spend. Threepence a week! Well, maybe, threepence a week was too much. He would take twopence a week if his mother said it was enough.

He liked these nice lathes! He was glad he was working on one of them. He was a bit afraid though of pushing off the strap. He might get his hand crushed between the strap and the drum. But Bill had told Scotty to manage the strap for him till he got used to it.

Bill Mason! That was what he heard the other lads call him. He liked him. He did not shout at him or talk roughly to him when he was showing him how to work the lathe. He was not like the overlooker in the factory.

Bill had told him that if he worked well he would shift him in a couple of weeks on to another lathe where he could make "settlings." This meant that every month he would draw something over his wages. For many of the boys were paid piecework. They were rated at a stated wage, but they were credited according to the work done. At the end of the month they

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were given a lump sum—the amount they had made over the wages paid them. This was what was called “settling.” Often boys doubled their wages in this way.

There were many things, however, that were priced so low that a boy could not make even the wages at which he was rated, however hard he worked at them. And sometimes he might have to work for three or four weeks and find himself in debt at the end. The debt was not stopped out of his wages, but it was stopped out of any “settling” that might be coming to him afterwards. Again there were things that were priced so high that a boy could make three times his wages whilst working at them. Bill used to take account of this when he was marking up a boy’s book at the end of the month. If the boy had worked well and faithfully and was still in debt he would put down more to his credit than he had actually done, so as to get him out of debt and give him the proportion of “settling” he deserved. If on the other hand a boy had too high a sum coming to him, over and above what he had drawn in wages, he would mark it down lower. Bill’s object was to act fairly to the boys according to their merits. So he had to arrange and to be guided by what he considered to be

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the justice of each individual case. If he had acted in any other way he could not have got the work done properly.

Saturday was a great day in the machine shop, for on that day work was stopped at one o'clock and every one was paid his wages. Half-an-hour or so before stopping time the boys put aside their regular work at their lathes and cleaned them thoroughly with oil and cotton-waste. Then they put on their jackets, and when the time was up they rushed down the stairs and into the great yard of the works shouting joyously. They were on the fourth floor and when the engine began to slow down they made a wild dash for the stairway. No one was allowed to make a move till the time was fully up to the second. And the signal was taken from the engine. The boys could not hear the whistle outside because of the noise, and they were not allowed to go by the clock in the machine room. Everyone would listen intently to the great, steady beat of the engine. Thump! Thump! Thump!—thump! It was stopping and suddenly there was a chaos of rushing and shouting. One could almost feel the sudden rushing of men and boys all over the immense works. The boys who

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were first to the stairway slid like lightning down the big, greasy bannisters. They had four floors to go. And they rushed along and slid down to the next floor—and down to the next floor—and down to the next and down into the yard. They were into the yard just before the thick pouring out of men and lads was going at its full. They were in front of the rush by perhaps a second. They heralded the flood. And as they stopped to take breath, they were suddenly caught up and engulfed in this pouring, shouting human flood that was always upon them ere they were a step from the entrance.

On the crowd would move. And then it would stop suddenly. To-day was the day they were to be paid and they must stop in the yard till the cashiers were ready. But they rushed as quickly from their work as on other days.

Over two thousand of them were now standing waiting—expectant. They had quietly arranged themselves in lines according to their numbers.

Suddenly the cashiers were paying. Money was given out at three places at once. Up and up a line moved towards an open window. At the window a cashier was standing with a big wooden tray before him. In this tray were cut round holes with numbers beneath them, and in

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each hole was a small, oblong tin, open at the top. In each tin was a man's or boy's wages.

A man or boy would come up to the window and shout out his number and the cashier would at once lift the tin from the hole and reach it to him. A wages was paid out in a second. The one who was paid would pass on to the gate. He tilted the money from the tin into his hand as he moved. The money was wrapped up in a piece of paper, which had the amount of the sum enclosed marked upon it. At the bottom of the tin was a brass check with his number on it. He threw the empty tin into a big box that was put near the gate for the purpose.

Those who had "settlings" due them had to wait until the regular wages were paid.

Just outside the gate, to the right, a fried fish shop stood on a corner. On Saturdays Bill Mason's boys would go in there to get pennorths and haporths of fried fish. The people of the shop cooked up a supply especially for them. The fish looked so nice and tempting in the window and had on it a delicious looking crust.

"A 'aporth o' fish!"

"A pennorth o' fried fish!"

"Gi' us that piece there, Missis—that nice piece!"

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The woman would hand over the pieces of fish, and the boys would throw down their halfpennies and pennies and then shake pepper and salt or vinegar on the fish to suit their tastes. And they would stand round and in and outside the shop eating it.

Over on the other side of the road there was a shop that sold Eccles cakes. These cakes were a penny for a whole one and a halfpenny for half a one. After eating their fish the boys would come over and get a cake or half a cake as a sort of dessert. Then they would go down to the croft behind the rag - mill and toss for pennies. Not all the boys would gamble, however. The majority of them went only as onlookers. It was exciting to see the two pennies whirling high up in the air. "Heads!" "Tails!" "Two ones!" One of these cries would go up the instant the pennies struck flat on the ground. "Heads!" meant that the boy that was tossing had won a penny — "Tails!" that he had lost a penny. "Two ones!" that the toss had to be made over again. Bets were also made on the side on the results of each toss. A daring boy would now and then stake a sixpence in this way.

Two of the boys acted as scouts. For this

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they were rewarded with the tossing pennies when the gambling was over. Their duty was to keep a sharp watch out for the police who now and then raided these "tossing schools." Sometimes the police were dressed in plain clothes, but the sharp-eyed scouts invariably singled them out. They could tell them by their feet. If by any chance the policemen did surprise the "schools," the boys would rush and scatter in all directions, leaving the "tossing" pennies on the ground behind them. These the police captured as legitimate spoils of the chase. As there were often three or four schools going at the same time on the croft, and as some of the boys were apt to drop money out of their hands in the rush and excitement, the guardians of the peace did not fare too badly in these raids. Indeed, it was said in Pollard Street that the police cared more for the capture of the pence than the capture of the boys.

"Hey!" a boy would shout excitedly, "Gi' them pennies a proper twirl w'en tha'rt tossin' 'em or ah'll gi' thee a slap i' th' jaw!"

"Nay, tha waint."

"Tha'll see if ah waint. Toss 'em proper!"

"Aw reet."

"Two tha loses."

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"Two ah win."

"'Eads!"

"Nay! Nay! Tails!"

"Ta—a—— Nay! It's 'eads. Tha's won!"

"Ah'll bet thee threepence tha loses!"

"A tanner on it! Ah'll go thee a tanner!"

Boys now and then lost their whole wages.

Sometimes the father or mother of a boy who was tossing would appear on the scene and lead the culprit off by the ear. Once Bill Mason himself appeared and broke up the "schools." He laid about him vigorously, clearing the whole of the boys from off the croft.

After the first Saturday or so Jim went to the croft as an onlooker. But after a while he staked a penny on a toss, and soon he was going it with the best of them. He gambled on for a couple of hours and in the end was lucky enough to come away winning over six shillings. He kept the odd coppers and gave the rest to his mother along with the five shillings, his regular wages. He told her it was "settlings."

Fights used to occur on the croft. They would arise in the machine shop out of the most trivial disputes. There was one almost every night.

As a rule a dispute would be manufactured as

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an excuse for a fight. A boy would go and tell another boy that some other boy had said that he would hit him; or he would simply ask a boy if he would fight a certain boy; or there would be a direct challenge from one to another. One would have thought that after a long day's work they would have little stomach for fighting. But such was not the case.

A new boy who refused to fight was clouted and cuffed whenever there was a chance. Indeed, taking it all round, it was much safer and easier to accept a challenge, and go and have it out on the croft when the work was over. If a lad made any sort of a fight of it at all, he was looked upon as being all right, even if he were beaten. He had complied with the unwritten law of the machine shop—that all newcomers should prove their mettle.

There were two boys in the shop who usually arranged the fights. They had what might be called a genius for provocation. They could tell to a nicety what to say and how to say it to anyone who was showing the least disposition to shirk the ordeal. They had to be careful, however, not to let Bill Mason see them as they were going around arranging battles.

The boy who won in a fight was at once

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challenged by some other boy. Winning, therefore, by no means meant peace. It often meant the meeting of a harder foe.

A boy might evade one of these challenges, however, without being thought a coward. But he did not, of course, stand so high in the public opinion of the machine shop as the boy who fought all comers.

Jim took very much to these fights. It was more exciting even than tossing for pennies. He had had three fights, and had chanced to be successful, and was now looked upon in the machine shop as a person of some importance. Occasionally his advice was asked by the arrangers of the fights as to which two ought to fight next.

The boys always fought "fair up," which meant that when a boy fell or was knocked to the ground no advantage was taken of him. He was allowed to get up and resume the fight. Neither was "purring"—kicking—allowed. This brutal method of fighting, which was in vogue in some other Lancashire towns, was never allowed in Manchester. Kicking was considered unfair and cowardly. Even the boys of Pollard Street, which was reckoned to be one of the roughest streets in Manchester, always fought "fair up." The stamina and courage of a boy could be

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better proved in a "fair up" fight than in a "purring" match, for a chance kick might lame and disable the better boy. "Purring" was much more likely to develop cruelty than courage.

Jim's fourth fight was with a boy named Pat. Pat was the bigger and heavier of the two, but Jim's victories had given him confidence.

Pat was not long over from Ireland and it was his brogue that gave the arrangers the cue as to what was the best dispute to bring on a fight. One of them said that Jim had made remarks about the way he talked. So the thing was settled.

The whole of the machine-shop boys went down to the croft that night, for the fight was expected to be a good one. Scouts were put out to give notice of the approach of the police, just as they would be put out when a "tossing school" was going. The police rarely interfered with the fights on the croft, because of the fact, possibly, that there were no spoils to be picked up. But if the fight lasted too long they had a habit of turning up. And the fight between Jim and Pat promised to be a long one.

A ring was formed, and the two boys took off their coats and waistcoats, tightened their leather

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belts well about their waists, and rolled their shirt sleeves high up. Jim took the precaution of bending down to see if his shoes were properly tied, for the experience he had had in the three fights had shown him that in the sudden backing and rushing in it was important that the shoes should be snug on the feet.

The two seconds were the boys who had arranged the fight.

One of them gave the word, and Jim and Pat suddenly faced each other. The crowd circled in on them, but three or four of the strongest lads worked and pushed the circle back again. "Gi' 'em room!" they shouted. "Gi' 'em room to feight!"

"Jim's too much a little un for Pat," said a boy. And Jim felt it himself, too. Though he was strong he felt that Pat was much stronger, and, perhaps, quicker. And all at once it came upon him that he would be beaten. He was sorry now that he had offered to fight Pat. But it was too late to go back. He would have to fight as well as he was able.

They walked round each other cautiously for a little, and then Pat suddenly sprung full at Jim—and Jim was lying on the croft on his back. He did not know how it was done. It came so quick!

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He got up slowly, keeping his eyes on Pat, who was looking at him gloweringly. The blow seemed to have knocked all the fear and nervousness out of him. The idea of winning or losing was gone from him altogether. He only wanted to fight. He sat for a little while on his second's knee, for a knock-down was considered to be the end of a round.

They were close in to each other now, fighting savagely. There was no science shown. It was absolute give and take — as all hand-to-hand fighting must be.

When everything else is equal it is weight that determines the result of a fight. "A good big un will always beat a good little un." This is an axiom of the prize ring. Weight to be sure will not help a man or boy if courage is lacking. If a man or boy is afraid of punishment he will find himself beaten by one half his size.

"Go on, Jim! Go on, Jim! 'It 'im under! Gi' it 'im with left! Aye! That's it! Go on!"

Jim's second was shouting directions to him excitedly. He moved as Jim moved. And all the other boys were shouting at the top of their voices.

Hardly anyone was shouting encouragement to Pat. The general feeling was that the fight was

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not a fair one. Pat was too big for Jim. Even Pat's second felt this. It was only in a half-hearted sort of way that he called out directions to him.

All at once Jim began to get dizzy and confused. He had been knocked down several times and was now fighting wildly. He was getting his breath in quick, short gasps. When he backed to avoid Pat's rushes he felt his legs giving under him. Things were looking badly for him. He might be beaten at any moment now. But an idea came to him.

The next time Pat rushed at him he turned his back completely and ran for a few steps. Then suddenly he swung round meeting Pat's face with his fist. But the shock of his blow staggered him and he fell. It was a chance blow that might have won him the fight, but Pat was of as good a fighting metal as he was—and heavier.

Jim felt a little better now as he sat on his second's knee. His head was clearer, but he was weak. His wind was almost gone. It seemed as if he could get no breath at all. He had never felt like this in a fight before. Pat had given him some hard blows in the body. If he could only get his breath, he thought, he might have a chance to win. Over there was Pat. He had

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blood on his face from the last blow Jim had given him. The idea of "givin' in" did not enter Jim's head. He would fight on. Indeed, he enjoyed the fight. It would be all right if he could only get his breath.

Pat himself was wondering how long the fight was going to last. He could feel that he had Jim beaten, but he was a long time about "givin' in." He would be careful the next time not to follow Jim too closely when he turned. The blow he had got was a great surprise to him. He knew the boys were all on Jim's side because he was not so big as he was. This weighed on him somewhat. In a way it seemed to him as if he were fighting everybody on the croft. But he had not brought the fight on in the first place. It had been forced on him.

They were fighting again, but this time with more caution. Jim was going as easy as he could, so as to get back his wind, and Pat was more sparing of making useless rushes. Once or twice when Jim turned his back on him and ran he stopped dead till Jim faced him again. The blow Jim had given him in the face had made him wary. He would wait now till he got a fair chance to smash Jim down and end the fight.

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He rushed in, and Jim fell down just as he got to him. Pat had barely touched him. Jim's object was to get the benefit of the rest that came at the end of every round. He wanted to get back his wind properly.

The fight now looked as if it might last for some time, and the boys on the croft stopped their shouting. Jim might win after all!

Jim was feeling more confident. The last rest on his second's knee had put him all right. He smiled into Pat's eyes as he watched him circling round him. Pat seemed to be getting a bit tired! He did not do so much rushing now! But suddenly Pat hurled himself upon him. Jim tried to stand against the shock. But he was not strong enough. Pat crushed him down.

And Jim was lying on the ground with Pat standing over him. He tried to get up, but he fell back again. A feeling of helplessness came over him. And there was a curious numbness in his left arm.

His second helped him up and he looked at his arm which now hung limp by his side. It was twisted and bent curiously between the wrist and the elbow. It was broken.

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It was six weeks before Jim could go back again to the machine-shop to work. But the boys were very good to him. On the Saturday after the accident they collected amongst themselves twenty-five shillings for him. It was the habit of the boys to make these collections when one of their number was off work through illness or through being hurt at the lathes. The fact that Jim had been hurt in a fight did not go against him. Bill Mason heard about it, of course, but he made no comment. And no one was more sorry that the accident had happened than Pat.

Jim was now quite a hero. The other boys looked up to him. And he bore himself proudly, because of the fact that he had had his arm broken in a fight just like Tom Sayers had in his fight with Heenan. The first day he came back to work was a great day for him. The boys came crowding up to his lathe to ask him all sorts of questions. They were proud of him.

The boys of this machine shop—Bill Mason's boys! All through the long day they were boring and cutting and shaping and polishing at their lathes—working in the midst of the keen

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piercing sound of the cutting of metals—fighting
on the croft when the day's work was over—
tossing for pennies—having their life and being
in a great, smoke-darkened English town.

Little workers in iron !

X.—THE LONG LINE.

I.

It is a hard thing when one is hungry to have to stand in a long line with others, waiting for a chance to be picked out to go to work. And it is a degrading thing. You are not a man. You are only a thing—a unit. A unit that does not count.

In a way the status of a convict is higher than your own. For a convict has a number. The law has visited him heavily, but at worst it has not deprived him of his right to live. He has the absolute right to food and care and shelter.

But you who stand here in this long line—you are nothing. You have come from without the darkness and the strangeness to beg the privilege to be allowed to earn a crust. You are even lower than a slave, for a slave has someone to look after him. In the scale of the life of civilisation you count lower than the lowest beast. Compared with you a horse or a dog is a being

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favoured by fortune. True, you are free. True, you are not lashed with a whip. But you are free only to die. And you are scored with that most cruel of all scourges—hunger.

Where have you come from, man who is standing here waiting to be picked out! You are a man. One can see that. But who are you? What are you? Where will you go when the group that is standing here is gone?

No one knows and no one cares who you are, or what you are, or where you will go. And you know it. You are only a thing who is waiting here—hoping even for a chance to be put into chains, to be put into slavery.

It may be that once you had ambitions. It may be that once you felt that if only you had the chance you would be one who would be of importance in the world. And perhaps you are right. Chance is a strange thing. There are men whose names ring through the world—men who in the essential are no better than you are—men who govern your country, and who, but for the juggle of chance, would be standing here with you in this line. Aye, perhaps it would be different if you had only had a chance. Who knows?

You are standing here in the richest country

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the world has known waiting with other men for a chance to slave to earn the money to get a bite to eat. Over you waves a glorious and time-honoured flag. For you mighty vessels of war patrol the water of the ocean. For you armed hosts watch throughout the world.

No—not for you! For you are dispossessed. You are disinherited. You have lost even the right to become a slave in your own country. You are only a thing of no account that is blown here and there. You are standing here hungry and shivering. Waiting with other men.

But—quick! The time has come. Be alert. Be at your best for the moment!

Your turn has come in the line! The eye of the one who may employ you is ranging over you as you pass. Be alert! Be at your best!

II.

It was early morning and Jim was standing close to the wall in the long line waiting for a chance to be put to work. He was now a big, tall fellow of fifteen.

It had been snowing all through the day before—Sunday—and all through the night, and it was still snowing heavily. He had heard that the officials of the corporation would probably put men to

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work that morning to clear the streets, and he had been waiting in the line since half-past four that morning. He had watched the line growing and growing. By this time it had extended down the whole of the street and around the corner at the far end into the other street. Only about a third of the men waiting could be put on. He was glad he had come early.

He had been out of work for the last month, and things were going very badly at home. He had left the machine shop, and the loss of his wages had been felt at once. Hunger had come. This morning he had not had a halfpenny to get a cup of coffee at a coffee stall. He would have given anything to have been able to get a cup of hot coffee. He had felt so cold as he was hurrying along through the snow in the darkness.

He did not feel so cold now. He was standing close to the wall, crushed up between two men. The men in the line got up as closely together as they could so as to keep out the cold.

It was a hard winter and there were a good many men out of work.

The only thing that Jim was afraid of was that he would be thought too young to be put on. He was standing here amongst a lot of men, and the fear was upon him that they would be taken

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on before him. He would be turned away! He wished that he was older—that he was a man. The fear that he would be thought too young haunted him. He might have to go home without being put on after all. He was tall and strong and he felt able to do a man's work with anyone. But he was only fifteen and he was afraid it would go against him.

The snow came down and down. It muffled the sounds of the early horses and carts as they came along up the street. The wind caught it now and then and whirled it into the eyes of the men who were waiting in the long line. It deadened everything. Horses and light carts came up and passed in silence—as if in a dream. The snow gave out an effect of dazzling white even in the darkness of the winter morning.

“Ey but it's cowl,” said an old man, blowing on his fingers. He was in the line up above Jim. An old man. Perhaps, unlike Jim, he felt that he might not be put on because he was too old. He had grey hair and a grey beard and a drawn face which showed the marks of hunger. Jim could see him from where he stood. An old grey-haired man waiting as he was waiting for a chance to be

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put on shovelling the snow. "Ey but it's cowl," repeated the old man.

The snow came down. How long yet would it be before they would come out and put them to work? It was so cold here standing doing nothing! One could keep warm shovelling the snow!

The falling snow drowned the sounds of the awakening life of the great town. It drowned the sounds of the hoofs of the horses and the wheels of the carts. It softened the harsh, commanding sound of the factory bells that had begun to ring, for it was getting near to six o'clock. The bells were ringing before the time to warn the people not to be late.

The white snow falling upon the dark, gloomy town! The effect was strange.

Six o'clock! The men in the line could hear the strokes coming from the clock of the old church. It would surely not be long now before they would be put to work.

A quarter past six. And no one had come. Perhaps, after all, there would be no men wanted that morning! But the snow was still coming down.

A man came along the line, and stopped near the head of it. For an instant the men who were waiting brightened up a little. It might be a

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man who had something to do with the work. But this could not be. He had no overcoat! He was only one of themselves.

Suddenly a shout went up. This man was trying to force his way in near the head of the line. He was trying to defraud one of those who had waited so long of his turn for a chance to be put to work.

The line broke and there was a hustle and surge of men. And the man nearest the man who tried to force his way in the line struck him. The man turned and struck back. He was one of those who believed that fighting was the way to win—the way to get a place in life. But another man struck him. And another struck him. And in the end a man felled him with a powerful blow. Slowly he got up and walked back down the line. He had tried to defraud too many people at the same time.

Just as the church clock was chiming half-past six the door at the head of the line opened and a man came out. He wore a long, heavy overcoat the high collar of which was turned up so that his face could hardly be seen. He paused and looked at the men, and then he went back through the door, closing it behind him.

A shiver of excitement ran along through the

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men who were waiting. The time had at last come, and there was a sudden pressing up and tightening of the line. At one place it was broken and forced out from the wall. But by a desperate effort the men forced their way back again.

Again the door was opened.

"Come on!" shouted a voice.

And the men began to surge and shove wildly through the open door.

"One at a time! One at a time! Keep back, there! Keep back!"

It was the man in the long, heavy overcoat who was shouting.

But the men paid no heed. They shoved and pushed as desperately as before.

Finally the door was shut.

"If you don't come in order," shouted the man with the overcoat, as the door was opened again, "not a damned one of you will be put on!"

† The threat had an effect. The men came along more quietly.

They passed in in single file through the door, and then they turned to the right through a smaller door and found themselves in a big yard. The yard was well lit up with gas lamps. Here they were made to stand shoulder to shoulder in a row.

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When a certain number had got in, the outer door was closed. And then an oldish man, who carried a shovel on his shoulder, reviewed them hastily as they stood in the row. He was the ganger. The man with the overcoat stood off from him, looking on.

He stopped before the old man with the grey hair and beard.

"Thee goo whom," he said to the old man. "Tha 'rt too old. Tha'll be no good for shovellin'."

The old man tried to speak. But the words would not come.

He dropped out of the row.

But the man with the overcoat came forward.

"Oh, take him on," he said, to the man with the shovel. "He'll be all right. Take him on."

"Thank you, sir," said the old man, as he came back to the row.

To Jim's joy the man with the shovel passed him without saying a word. He was all right! He was taken on!

Each of them was then handed a brass, numbered check, and they were sent off to another part of the yard where they were given shovels. They were to get three shillings for the day, and they

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were to be paid that night after they had finished work.

The men were joyful and glad as they stood in the big yard with their shovels on their shoulders. They were the lucky ones—the ones who had been able to get work on this snowy day! They were contented and happy at the prospect of being able to earn three shillings.

When the night came they would have three shillings! There was a long day's work in the cold before them—but what of that? It would be all right when the night came. It would be all right when they got their money. And, perhaps, there would be a chance for another day's work to-morrow. Who was to know that the snow would be all cleared away in one day! It might snow for three or four days. What a great piece of luck it would be for them all if it kept on snowing through the whole of the week. The old man with the grey hair and beard told Jim of a time more than twenty years ago, when it had snowed all through a whole week. But it would be too much to expect such a thing to happen now. Still there was no telling!

For a few minutes the men talked, and then the order was given for them to leave the yard. They were formed into squads and were marched

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out through a big gate to different parts of the town.

It was still snowing heavily as they went along. Jim was in the same squad with the old grey-haired man. Already they had grown quite friendly. The old man was telling Jim of the good times that existed forty years ago. Everything in Manchester was different then. Of late years things had gone to the bad altogether. A labouring life was no life, said the old man. He advised Jim to enlist—to become a horse soldier. "'Ave a 'orse under thee, lad, if tha 'as owt." When he was young he had tried to enlist, but they would not take him. "A sojer's life is a gentleman's life," he said. "Tha goos around all o'er th' world, and tha sees summat. Thee be a sojer, lad. Ne'er mind lab'rin' work."

They were at work now clearing up the snow in Market Street. They worked from the centre of the street to the pavement—running the snow towards it with their shovels. At the pavement they shovelled it up into great heaps.

Dawn had broken now. A dull heavy grey was filling the sky.

Jim handled his shovel vigorously. He was glad to be working. It made him feel warm.

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And not only that—he was also getting paid for it. He shovelled away as hard as he could.

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At half-past eight the men were knocked off half an hour for breakfast. But the great number of them had no breakfast to go to. All they could do was to hang about with their shovels till work commenced again. The foremen of the squads were about the only men who had a real breakfast to go to. They were employed regularly by the corporation.

Jim was one of those who did not go to breakfast. In the first place he lived a long way off, in Ancoats, and, again, he knew there was hardly anything to eat at home. It was not worth while going. He might go and see—at dinner-time—if his mother had managed to get anything to eat for him. He would have to do without till then.

But he felt very hungry indeed. He had not broke his fast yet that morning. He had seen a little bread in the cupboard, but he had taken none of it. His mother and his brothers wanted it worse than he did!

He lifted his shovel up under his arm and looked vaguely around.

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There was the old grey-haired man beckoning to him! He went forward.

"Ey, lad," said the old man. "Why doesn't tha goo and get summat to eat?" Jim gave him to understand how things were.

"What!" exclaimed the old man. "'Ast nowt to eat? Well, come along wi' me. Ah've got fourpence. Come along wi' me. Tha can 'ave 'alf of what ah 'ave. Come on."

Jim and the old man took their shovels under their arms and went together into a cheap coffee house near at hand where each of them got a big mug of steaming hot coffee and two thick slices of bread and butter.

It was a pay on delivery place. One had to put down the money the instant the food was handed over. There were no chances taken. Meals could not be eaten here before they were paid for.

Two immense shining urns were standing on the counter—one holding tea, the other coffee. Piles of sliced bread and butter, and cakes, and other articles of food were stacked up high on a shelf behind the counter. There were herrings and haddocks and slices of bacon and other delicacies over at the end of the shelf near the window, but these were not for Jim and the old man. Though the coffee-house had a cheap

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air, still it had at the same time an appetising air. Any hungry man could get all he wanted here, if he had the money.

The tables in the coffee shop were stone-topped, and there were benches to sit on instead of chairs. The walls were hung with framed quotations, mostly scriptural. The patrons were everywhere advised to lead good and honest lives. They were warned of the evil consequences of sin, and they were told especially to beware of intemperance and over-indulgence. "Wine is a mocker." "Use no intoxicating drink." "Trust in the Lord." These were some of the pointed bits of advice that were given—free of charge—on the walls. High up on the wall at the back of the counter, and nearly opposite to the "Trust in the Lord" inscription, was a business inscription which read: "We give no trust."

Jim and the old man took their mugs of hot coffee and their slices of bread and butter from the counter and walked to the back of the coffee shop. They stood their shovels up against the wall and sat down comfortably at a table. The back of the shop was warm and snug. And near the table where they sat a big fire was roaring up the chimney.

It was the nicest coffee Jim had ever tasted

Slavery

in his life! It warmed him and put new life into him. He did not pour any of it out on to the saucer. He supped it slowly from the mug so as to get from it all the heat and warmth there was in it. And the slices of bread and butter were so good! One slice was gone before he knew of it, but he ate the other slice more slowly. He had not thanked the old man in words for sharing with him, but he felt thankful, and looked thankful. Neither he nor the old man were of the class that dealt much in extra words. They had been faced too much with the iron facts of life. Besides, the poor help the poor as a matter of course.

Soon they were again at work together, shoveling the snow. The squad had gradually worked its way from Market Street into Deansgate. As they went along they left great piles of snow behind them. And now they were slowly working their way towards the old church—the church on which was the hoar and grime and blackness of many centuries. It stood there, its bells chiming forth as the men worked. And there was the statue erected to Cromwell—the man of blood. They were clearing the snow from around the statue.

It was still snowing, and the wind came up

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with violence, whirling the snow around the statue. It eddied around, and surrounded, and enveloped the black figure of Cromwell—as if it would bury it from the sight of man. And the bells rang from the old church.

And the bells were silent, and then through the noise of the town there came faintly the sound of the organ of the old church and the sound of singing voices. A service was being held. Some of the men who were working raised their heads to listen. The sounds were faint. But still they were clear and beautiful. And in them there was a warmth and tenderness. Sounds at once faint and clear and beautiful heard through the voice of the great town.

A man fell forward on his face in the snow as he was bending over his shovel.

“Ey! wot’s matter wi’ thee?” exclaimed the man who worked next to him. “Ey! Get up! What’s matter wi’ thee?”

But the man did not move. He lay on his face in the snow with his arms stretched out on either side of him. The loss of consciousness had come so suddenly upon him that he had not tried to shield his face as he fell.

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A couple of the men nearest to him dropped their shovels and went to pick him up.

His face was but slightly injured. The snow was deep and had broken the shock of the fall. But the eyes were wide open and staring, and underneath them were deep blue hollows. It was a wasted, haggard face—a starved face with open, staring eyes. The man had passed suddenly out of life when hunger was upon him.

A policeman came up. The whole of the squad had now stopped work, and had crowded round. Three or four passers-by stopped and came up.

The snow was falling on the dead man's face.

"What's matter?" asked the policeman. And then he could see that the man was dead. He lay as dead men lie—in a limp heap.

He was taken away, and the men went on clearing the snow from the street.

For a while the men who worked near to each other talked about the thing that had just happened. But the thing had happened in such a simple and commonplace way that the effect of it soon wore off. And, besides, they were busy working here in the midst of the falling snow that the wind was still driving and whirling about. Perhaps they would think more of it when they

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got home that night than they did now. When men are in the act of working manually, the most acute impressions that come at the time of working soon fade away.

It was nearly one o'clock and Jim was wondering if he should chance going home to see if there was any dinner for him. The order would soon come for them to knock off work. And then he would have an hour before him. It would take him twenty minutes' hard walking to get home, and twenty minutes to come back again. This would just give him time to get something to eat—that is, if there were anything to eat when he got home! It would be hard on him to have the journey for nothing. It wouldn't be so bad if he were able to leave his shovel behind him. But he would have to carry it with him the whole way.

There was no place to leave it. The understanding was that the squad had to be back promptly at starting time at the part of the street where they had left off to go to dinner.

It seemed a long time to Jim since the man had fallen dead at his work. The two hours that had elapsed since the happening might have been two years. So many things had passed through

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his mind. He knew how it was with the man. He was hungry and he had fallen dead. Jim, himself, was hungry, but still for all that he felt strong and well. He thought of the man now through the lapse of the two hours that had passed since he had fallen—the two hours that seemed such a long time. It was still snowing hard. It seemed as if it had always been snowing—as if it would keep snowing for ever. The man had fallen dead a long time ago. At the moment he had been shocked and startled, but the feeling had soon passed away from him. The sound of his shovel scraping on the stones of the street had driven it out of his mind. And then it seemed to him as if he were not in the street at all. He worked mechanically, forgetful of where he was. He saw himself a rich and powerful man. How he had got rich and powerful did not come to him. All he knew was that it had happened. His mind brought strange visions before him as he worked here in the cold and the driving, whirling snow. He dreamed as he worked on. And he grew to be a man. And he lived in a great splendid castle. He lived a strange and wonderful life. Scenes and dramas passed before him in which he was the moving spirit. At times the sound of the shovel scraping on the stones called him to him-

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self. But it was only for a moment. His mind took him up and carried him along as if with the magic of some genie, mighty and wonderful.

The order had been given to stop work. The men had been told to be back promptly at two o'clock.

Jim was hurrying along up the street with his shovel under his arm. There was a chance that after all there might be something to eat for him when he got home. He was as hungry as it was possible for him to be. The breakfast the old man had given him that morning had not lasted him long. He had felt hungry again an hour after he had eaten it.

It might be that his mother had taken out something and pawned it. In that case he would be all right. And he hurried along faster than ever.

How the snow was coming down. He crossed a street that the squad had cleaned early in the morning. There was almost as much snow covering it as there had been first thing that morning.

He would hardly have known that they had cleaned the street at all, but for the fact that the piles of snow were there heaped up by

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the side of the pavement. They stretched all the way down the street. Great, high piles of snow.

It was a good thing! The more snow that fell the better it would be for him. It meant three shillings a day. Three shillings a day! And he was to get his first three shillings that night. He had never earned three shillings in a day before. He wished the night were here now. How quickly he would dash off home with it! Then all of them would have a good supper. He would like bacon and onions. And all the bread he could eat. When he was going home that night with his three shillings in his pocket, he would stop and buy a four-pound loaf.

He stopped. What was the good of his going home now? There was nothing that his mother could pawn! Not a single thing! He would have his journey for nothing. And, besides, it would annoy his mother to think that he was having to work without anything to eat. There was no good of his going home. It would be better for him to wait till the night time.

And he turned and walked slowly back again. He passed a shop window where there was plenty of food laid out temptingly. For the moment he

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felt as if he could smash the window with his shovel—snatch something—and run for it. There was a loaf, and beside it was a piece of cheese. He felt as if he could eat up the whole loaf in a few bites.

But what was the good of it? He would only be caught and put in gaol! He must try and stand the hunger as well as he could.

He walked on back to the street where work had to be commenced at two o'clock, and there, standing at the corner, was the old grey-haired man who had given him his breakfast that morning.

The old man had no dinner either. He was hanging around till work started at two o'clock.

"Ne'er mind," he said to Jim. "It'll be aw reet when six o'clock comes. Then we'll get our three bob apiece. It'll be aw reet."

To have to work when cold and hungry is a hard thing. There comes a terrible depression. It is not so much that the strength goes. It is the gnawing, consuming pangs of hunger that torture. And with it all there is the sense of the injustice of having to labour when one is hungry. There are moments when the hunger pain is lulled. And there comes a certain warmth into the vitals. But it is only for a moment. Back

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again comes the frightful hunger-pain. This time it is sharper and keener. It is as if the inside of the body were at once being burned and rent and torn. If one could only lie down and rest it would not be so bad. The pain comes in gusts and waves. The effort of the labour adds to the pangs. Curiously enough—at first—the strength does not go at all. The body feels a greater energy. The gnawing, tearing pain goads one on. And the mind becomes affected. One loses the sense of proportion and relation to things. A baleful, terrible intoxication seizes the mind. It is an intoxication that comes from the body consuming itself.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and darkness was coming through the falling snow. Only two hours more! In two hours' time the work would be over and the squad would march along through the streets to the place from whence they had started that morning. There they would be paid. In two hours' time!

Jim was feeling better now. The gnawing pain had left him. Through the whole of his life he had known the meaning and the terror of hunger—but he had never passed through two such hours before. The gnawing terror had left him.

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But would it come back to him? He was afraid it might. But it did not. He felt very much better. He felt a glow and a warmth within him as he worked. The only thing that seemed to be the matter with him was that his head felt light. But this was nothing. As long as the pain that had been tearing him kept away he was all right.

Someone was suddenly working very close to him. He turned to see who it was. There was no one there! It was only his fancy. But he had heard the sound of another shovel quite distinctly. Someone had been shovelling within a few inches of him. But he must have been mistaken. The only one next to him was a man who was more than ten yards away. Still he had heard the shovel sounding on the stones of the street right by his side.

He suddenly fell down. But he was up again in an instant. He had stumbled, somehow, over his shovel. A dizziness was in his head as he stood up straight. But it went off from him in a moment. He was feeling all right. The little lightness that was in his head was nothing.

He would feel better, perhaps, if he did not have to bend down so much. The stooping over the shovel bothered him a little. But this feeling soon wore away.

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It was very dark now. He could see the lamps burning dimly in the street. It would not be long before the work was over. It was five o'clock. The strokes of a bell near at hand gave out the hour. Only one more hour and the squad would be marching along to be paid! He stopped shovelling, and stood up straight. It was too dark for the foreman of the squad to see him. A sudden dizziness came into his head as he stood still. For a moment he felt as if he were about to reel and fall. He thought of the man who had fallen earlier in the day, and the thought steadied him. He was not going to die as that man died. It was only that he felt a little dizzy. He would be all right if he could only stand still for a moment.

His face felt hot, and the veins at his temples were swelling. He let his shovel fall, and he held out his hands to catch some of the snow that was falling. It was still coming down as heavily as ever.

He rubbed the snow he had caught in his hands against his temples, and the throbbing and swelling ceased. But when he bent down to pick up his shovel it came on again.

There was the foreman coming! He bent himself down desperately and grasped his shovel,

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As he did so his head seemed to swim round and round. For an instant he did not know where he was.

He found himself shovelling at the snow. There was a gap in his mind from the time he had reached down and grasped his shovel till now. But he felt better. The throbbing had all gone from his temples.

He felt a little weaker than he had felt at the beginning of the day, but his head was clear.

“‘Ey! ‘ow are tha gettin’ on, lad?”

It was the old man who had spoken to him, Jim could just make him out through the darkness.

“Oh, aw reet,” answered Jim. “‘Ow are tha gettin’ on theself?”

His voice sounded so strange and hollow. It did not seem to be his own voice. And his throat felt dry and hard after he had spoken the words.

“Me and thee’ll soon be aw reet,” said the old man again through the darkness. “It’s nigh on to ‘alf past five. We’ll soon be aw reet now.”

What a long, long day it had been to Jim. He seemed to have lived a whole lifetime out here in the midst of the snow that always seemed to have been falling. The feeling of hunger was all gone

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from him now. What a long day it had been. He was glad that the darkness had come. It would soon be over.

A heavy, strange weariness was upon him.

The squad was marching along. The day was over and they were going to the yard to be paid.

They were talking cheerfully together. There was a prospect of work for three or four more days. It was still snowing heavily.

Here they were at the yard. But other squads from different parts of the town had got there before them. And a line was formed along the street, just as it had been formed early in the morning.

Squad upon squad came up and the line grew longer and longer. They were to pass in through the door as they had done in the morning—give up their shovels—and receive their three shillings. Their brass-numbered checks they would retain till the morning—when they turned up again for work. There was another day's work in the morning. The foreman of each squad had warned them of it.

The men in the long line were now laughing and joking together. In the morning there had been

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silence and expectation and anxiety. No one was quite sure if they would be lucky enough to get the work. Now it was different. Every man had toiled and laboured through the long, snowy day, and to every man was due his wages. They could go off now and use or spend their money in whatever way they wished.

“Eh, but ah’ll ’ave a good pint o’ beer and lots of bread and cheese when ah get my three bob. Ah’ve ’ad nowt all day.”

“So will ah.”

“Ah’ll get a glass o’ th’ best whisky.”

“Ah’m goin’ to get a mug of ’ot coffee an’ a steak. It beats all o’ th’ whisky tha can get. Gi’ me lots of ’ot coffee and a good piece of steak and as much bread and butter as ah can eat, and ah care nowt for no one. Ah don’t care for whisky.”

“Thy three bob’ll not go far, mate.”

“Ah don’t care. Ah’m goin’ to ’ave a good feed. Ah don’t care if ah spend every ’alfpenny on it. Ah’m goin’ to ’ave a good feed.”

“Ey, mate, does tha think there’ll be work for us on th’ day after morrow?”

“Aye, an’ for th’ day after that.”

“Ah think tha’rt reet.”

“Aye.”

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"Eh, lad, ah can feel th' pint gooin' down my throat now."

"So can ah."

"Eh, lad, ah tell thee it's aw reet. Three bob!"

The line was passing slowly up and up as the men were being paid. The man with the long overcoat was standing in the office, watching—the man who had been there that morning when the men were being put on. He smiled as the men came up one by one. He was a good sort, this man with the long overcoat.

The old, grey-haired man, whom he had saved from being sent away that morning, came up to get his three shillings.

"See that you be round to-morrow," he said, as he smiled at the old man. "See that you be round."

"Aw reet, mester," said the old man, touching his cap. "Thanks! Good neet, mester."

"Good night. Here!" he called, as the old man was passing out.

The old man came back, and the man with the overcoat put something in his hand. It was a shilling out of his own pocket!

Soon the whole of the men were off with the money they had earned:—Some of them were taking long, great, fine draughts from pots of

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ale. Temperance is all very well for the people who have too much to eat and drink! But a drop of ale—if it is good—is a fine thing for a man after a day's work.

Jim was hurrying along home. He was wondering how they were getting along at home. That was the one thought that was in his mind. Were they hungry? Well, if they were hungry, it would soon be all right! His mother could soon go out and get something to eat with the three shillings.

He did not feel hungry at all himself. It was strange that he did not feel hunger now after feeling it so much in the middle of the day! He wondered if there was anything wrong with him.

He stopped as he came to a baker's shop and looked in at the window. It was full of nice loaves. There was a big, crusty four-pound loaf that he thought he would take home. Loaves with good crusts on them—not too black—were the best loaves, his mother said.

He went into the shop. The bell rang as he opened the door, and a woman came forward.

"Gi' us that four-pound loaf in the window, missis," he said, pointing to it.

He felt that he could eat some bread now.

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The wholesome, healthful smell of the bread made him almost feel hungry again. He would eat the make-weight as he went along!

The woman put the loaf on the scales, and then she cut a good-sized make-weight and put it on the loaf to bring it up to the right weight.

Jim put one of his shillings on the counter to pay for it.

"Ah'll tek th' make-weight, missis," he said, as she was wrapping the loaf up in paper.

She handed him the loaf and his change, and he went out into the street. Then he took a bite out of the make-weight. But he was unable to swallow it. He was unable to eat at all. What was the matter with him? It was strange that he could not eat!

It was still snowing and the wind was sharp and keen.

He hurried along.

XI.—THE PAWNSHOP.

I.

It was Monday morning and the women were going into the pawnshop. They had with them all sorts of articles wrapped in bundles. It was snowing heavily.

A curious, musty, heavy smell pervaded the pawnshop. It was one of the places where almost anything would be taken in. As low as sixpence would be lent on an article.

It was in these small loans where the chief profit lay. Often the interest on them ran up to hundreds per cent., instead of the twenty-five per cent. laid down by the law. On a loan of sixpence a half-penny had to be paid for the ticket just as it would have to be paid if the loan were five shillings. And, added to that, the same amount of interest was charged on the sixpence as would be charged upon two shillings. This in itself at once ran the interest up to a hundred per cent. And when one came to reckon up what the pawn-

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broker made on the ticket. with the fact that the loan was usually only for a day or two, it was at once plain to be seen that he easily made a thousand per cent. on this kind of a loan. This rate of interest, however, was above the average. Generally speaking, the people paid between two and three hundred per cent. for the money they borrowed.

The young man of the pawnshop had developed a sense of humour—at the expense of others. He was just about as witty as a stipendiary magistrate. Indeed his position was very much like the position of a magistrate sitting in court. He was lord of all he surveyed. He could make feeble jokes and there was no one in the pawnshop to point out to him how feeble they really were. People smiled or laughed, according to the tact they possessed. Perhaps a really good laugh would induce him to lend them a sixpence extra! Pawnshop and magisterial wit. They are one and indivisible.

He was a young man with a pug nose and red ferret eyes. Whilst there was no look of individuality in his face there was in it a certain quality of keenness. He knew his trade.

Usually the women had stories to go with the

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things they were pawning. They had explanations as to why the thing was so shabby, or why they wanted a certain amount on it. The young man with the ferret eyes would pepper the women's stories with shots of wit.

The pawnshop was a gloomy, dark, business like looking place. The ceiling was high, and against the wall, at the back of the counter where the young man was standing, there were set numerous drawers with rows of narrow compartments in them. These were to hold rings and other articles of jewellery.

One drawer was half open and little, square, neatly pinned up packets were showing in its narrow compartments. Each of the packets held a ring or some other trinket. A pair of small delicate scales were standing to the right near the end of the counter. And against the wall up at the extreme left of the counter was a big safe. A big flame of gas was blaring just up above the young man's head.

"'Ow much?" he asked.

A woman had just pushed a bundle across the counter to him, and he was dexterously untying the handkerchief that was around it.

"Ah wants four and six on it. Tom said this morning as 'ow it was aw reet. Ah was gooin——"

Slavery

“I’ll give you eighteenpence on ’em,” said the young man; “an’ that’s two shillin’ too much.”

It was her husband’s Sunday suit of clothes she was pawning. He had worn them a long time, and the trousers were beginning to fray at the ends. The linings of the coat inside at the armpits were also looking worn. But the waistcoat looked well.

“Eh, nay mester,” said the woman, with a slight quiver in her voice, “tha gey me four shillin’ on ’em last week. Tha——”

“Well, why do you ask more on ’em now?” asked the young man sharply. “’E’s ’ad a week wear out on ’em since then. Look at the trousers! They’re givin’ way.”

“Ah told ’im when ah come out,” said the woman, anxiously, “ah told ’im as ’ow it was——”

“Three and six, an’ that’s five bob too much.”

“Three and six!”

“Well—aw reet. Ah’ll tek it.”

The young man threw her back the handkerchief, and neatly and quickly folded up the suit. Then he put a dull looking cotton wrapper—belonging to the pawnshop—around it, pinned it up, and sent the bundle whizzing down the counter to a boy who was making out the tickets.

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“Suit—three and six!” called out the young man to him; “’an good ’uns at that.”

And he began to attend to another customer.

“Wot name?” asked the boy, as he came forward with a ticket. He bent over it and began slowly and laboriously to write out the date.

The woman made no answer. She had just looked around. Someone was coming behind her into the compartment where she was standing. It was perhaps someone she knew!

“Wot name?” asked the boy again.

“Jane Peacey.”

He wrote something down.

“Where do you live?” he asked again.

“On th’ corner o’ James Street. Number forty.”

The boy finished writing the ticket—sprinkled sand upon it to dry the ink—and passed it to the young man. And the young man pulled out the cash drawer in front of him—took out some silver and copper coins and brought them down in his hand with a loud, sharp smash on the counter.

“’Ave you a ’alfpenny?” he asked, pausing with his hand on the coins.

“No,” said the woman.

At once he counted out three and fivepence halfpenny and gave it to her with the pawnticket. She looked at the pawnticket as she was going out

Slavery

of the pawnshop. Her name had not been spelled properly. Neither was the name of the street where she lived put down right. Nor the number.

The asking of the name and the address of the one who pawned an article was, in effect, but a matter of empty form as it is in all pawnshops. The writer of the pawnticket followed the invariable custom of depending on the quickness and sureness of his ear.

“’Ow much on this?”

It was an old bed coverlet. The young man knew it well. It had often been to the pawnshop before.

“N—n—ninepence.”

An old, feeble woman had brought it in. She stood shivering with the cold.

“Oh, ninepence. We’re comin’ up in the world. Say nine bob while you’re at it. But I don’t think I’ll take it in.”

“Oh——”

“Well, it’s been ’ere so often.”

The old woman was troubled. It would be so awful for her if the coverlet were not taken in. She wanted to get a small loaf and some tea and sugar! She had never known him to say anything against taking it in before. She had been bringing it to

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this pawnshop for years. The other young man, who used to be here before this one came, often gave her two shillings on it. Once she had had a half-a-crown on it! But that was a many years ago! When it was new! Gradually it had come down and down, till now she could only get ninepence on it. And this morning even that was being grumbled at. It wasn't going to be taken at all. What would she do?

"You can 'ave sixpence on it," he said with a snap. "Bed coverlet, sixpence," and he whizzed it in a bundle along the counter to the boy who was making out the tickets. He had not asked the old woman whether she were willing to take that amount on it or not. He knew well that she would—that she had to take it. There was no other pawnshop around that would lend even that upon it. In fact it wouldn't be taken in at all! He counted out fivepence halfpenny and handed it with the ticket to the old woman, who took it thankfully and went slowly out.

A young woman came in. She wore a plaid shawl over her head, and was rather good looking. As she came forward with her bundle she managed to pull the edge of her shawl half-way across her face.

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But the young man's ferret eyes were sharp. He saw that one of her eyes was blackened.

"Oh, ist hat you, Lizzie?" he said, jocularly. "'Ow did it 'appen? 'Oo was it this time? 'Oo gave it you?"

"'Ow did wot 'appen?" asked Lizzie.

"Your eye. Where did you get it? 'Oo gave it you?"

There was a general laugh from the other compartments.

"Wot's that to you?" said Lizzie angrily. "You mind yourself. You're not everybody, even if you are in a pawnshop."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Come on, where did you get it?"

"'Ere gi' me eighteenpence on this, and never you mind. Where did you get that face o' yours?"

There was silence in the compartments at this sally on the part of Lizzie. It seemed to be rather a bold thing to beard the young pawnshop man. And Lizzie was no better than she ought to be!

But to do him justice the young pawnshop man did not mind. He was used to being talked back to by Lizzie. It was all in the day's work. He lent her the eighteenpence on the bundle, and she went off.

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At this point a policeman in plain clothes came into the front part of the pawnshop. He called the young man over to him with the mysterious, solemn, and confidential air that is worn by policemen when they are sent out on secret missions. A watch had been stolen the night before from a drunken man in Ancoats. It was not likely that it would be pawned here, but there was no knowing.

The young man was not at all impressed. He had his own opinion of the police. He thought it quite probable that they had stolen it from the drunken man themselves. He had heard of some curious cases. And as a matter of fact the common belief in Ancoats was that if a man were drunk enough the policeman who arrested him took whatever money or valuables he had on him before he got him to the station.

The young pawnshop man, however, did not clothe his suspicions of the probity of the force with words. All he did was to promise to keep his weather eye open.

“I don’t think it’ll come ’ere, though,” he said to the policeman, as he was leaving. “Good mornin’. Snowy day—isn’t it?”

“No, I can’t let you ’ave anything on that.”

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A woman had brought in an old shawl to pawn. It was Jim's mother. Her boy was out, maybe working in the snow, and she wanted to have something to eat for him when he came home to dinner! It was all she had. Her old shawl.

She asked the young man again to take it, but it was of no use. It was no good to him, he said, and he went to attend on another customer.

A rather smart-looking young fellow came in with a ring. He shook the snow from the rim of his hat as he stood in the compartment.

At once the young man was on the alert. He could see that the young fellow did not belong to Ancoats. In fact he had his doubts as to whether he belonged to Manchester at all or not. It was strange that he should come to a pawnshop like this with such a ring!

"'Ow much?" he asked.

He did not try any of his wit on this young fellow. He was a stranger, and out of his regular line of customers.

"Two ten."

He tested it. Yes, it was a good ring. It was worth at least five pounds. A diamond was set in it.

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But he was as sure as he was standing behind that counter that the ring had been stolen! Men like cashiers in banks, and pawnshop men sometimes develop a sixth sense which tells them whether or not the man who is standing in front of them is acting straight. They have no idea how they can tell, but they can tell.

"A pound on it," said the pawnshop man.

"All right," said the young fellow, and a pound was given.

The pawnshop man then went to attend to the women with the bundles. He knew well that the ring would never be called for, but that was not his affair. He was there to do business. It was not altogether his duty to want to know how people came by things they wanted to borrow money on. It wouldn't do to ask questions of people who came in. They might go somewhere else. The main thing to see to was that the article offered was of value. The police were paid to know who stole things. He was not earning his living by being a detective!

"One and sevenpence 'alfpenny," said the young man.

A woman was renewing the ticket on a pledge—paying the yearly interest. She was a middle-

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aged woman, and the trinket she was paying the interest on had been pawned years and years ago. It was a little silver locket that her husband had given when they were first married. He had died soon after, and she had been forced to pawn the locket to get food. It was not a thing of great value in itself, but to her it meant a great deal. Her husband had given it to her. Her husband whom she loved, and who was gone now such a long time. Yes, it meant a great deal to her. In it was a tiny lock of her husband's hair. It could be seen through the glass in front of the locket. Every year when she came to renew the ticket she used to look at it. What nice brown hair, he had. She was let see it, for one was allowed to look at the pledge when they were paying the interest. A tiny lock of a man's hair in a locket that had been pawned nigh on twenty years ago! All she had got on it was five shillings. She had intended to get it out the week after, but things had gone wrong. And the locket stayed in months and months till the year was up. And then she was barely able to pay the interest on it. And from being in months and months the locket had come to be in years and years. Once or twice it had nearly run out altogether. She was very nearly

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not being able to scrape up the money for the interest. She did sewing for the barest of bare livings. The child her husband had left her with had died soon after him. And perhaps it was just as well! The picture of her husband came up before her as she stood here in the pawnshop. What a fine chap he was! He had blue eyes and nice brown hair! He used to take his drop o' drink, but he was none the worse for that. She remembered the day he pushed the bailiffs out when they came to take the furniture out of the house because the rent was not paid. He was a fine chap, was her husband!

"'Ere's the ticket," said the young man, handing it her. "I suppose you want to see the pledge?"

"Aye, ah do," said the woman.

The young man pulled the pins out of the paper that was wrapped round the locket. He held it up before her. There was his hair! She could see it through the glass of the locket.

She left the pawnshop, crying.

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When a pledge had been in a year the law allowed seven days' grace before it could be sold. But it was the custom of the trade to allow a month over the time—thirteen months in all.

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The reason a month's grace over the year was allowed was because—in the vast majority of cases—it was easier and safer to take interest than to sell things at auction. One could never tell how sales were going to go. With articles of jewellery, of course, the case was different. But even then the month's grace was allowed. Interest first and last. That was what the pawnshop system fed upon. The system had attained the usurer's ideal. The law allowed it to lend money at high rates of interest on gilt-edged security.

In the afternoon a man came in and put a carpenter's tool bag on the counter. There was snow around the edge of the bag. In it was a saw and plane and a hammer and wood chisel.

"Ah," said the young man, "you're takin' an 'oliday, I see."

"Aye, gi' me five shillings."

"Call it four."

The man nodded. He had an intelligent face. Why he was pawning his tools was hardly clear. It might be that he had no work to do, or it might be that he was going on the spree, as suggested by the pawnshop man. He hardly looked, how-

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ever, like the type of man who drank. Perhaps the money was wanted at home.

"'Obliged time," said the young man, again, as he was examining the tools, "'obliged time is all——"

"Look 'ere," said the man suddenly, "mind your own business!"

The line of his jaw had hardened, and the words came out with a menace behind them. His face had taken on a look of power. He had taken no notice of what the pawnshop man had said at first. But when he began to repeat it he felt a sudden resentment. There was no particular reason why he should feel resentment. He was of the class that as a rule don't mind much what is said to them. But something in the pawnshop man's tone, when he began to speak the second time, utterly enraged him. Perhaps the way he was handling his tools had something to do with it, too. But whatever the reason was, he felt a rage that seemed to be far out of proportion to the cause of it. He could have taken his hammer and beaten the pawnshop man to death.

The pawnshop man gave a gasp of surprise, as he looked at him. It astonished him that a customer should take offence in such a way at what he said. It had never happened before.

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“What!” he exclaimed, laying the plane that he had been examining on the counter. “What do you mean?”

“I’ll show you what I mean, blast you. What do you insult people for? Isn’t it bad enough for a man to ’ave to pawn ’is tools on a day like this without takin’ any o’ your lip? Gi’ me them tools back. I’ll show you.”

The pawnshop man put the tool-bag warily up on the ledge above the counter. There was something in the eye of the man that made him afraid. He stood there with his elbows resting on the ledge. And then he took his tool-bag, and without saying another word he turned and left the compartment. In the meantime the pawnshop man went as far as he could up towards the end of the counter. The man with the tool-bag had made him afraid. He was glad to hear the door of the compartment bang behind him, and he was gladder still to hear the bang of the outer door of the pawnshop, as the man reached the street.

He wondered how he had come to get so vexed. There was nothing in what he had said. He talked like that to everybody. But this man looked as if he could have killed him. He wondered why. And then he tried to stop thinking about it.

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He made an effort to think of other things.

He had been in a pawnshop almost as long as he could remember, and he had grown to have a feeling of contempt for the people who came there. He had seen but one phase of human nature. He had been faced all the time with the dire and abject poverty of other people. He had seen through every hour of the long days the mean and terrible shifts that poverty forced upon people. In fact, but for the awful poverty of the people, the pawnshop could not have existed. He was there to take advantage of it. He was there to get as much interest on as little money as possible. To manage as often as possible so that there would be an odd shilling or an odd sixpence in the loan so that interest could be charged upon it at the rate of two shillings.

He had grown to like the dark gloomy place with its shadows. It gave him a sense of power to stand under the big blaring flame of gas and determine how much money people were to get. Their fate was in his hands. There was no one to say him nay. He could say and do what he pleased. He had done it up till now.

But there was the man who had just left with the tools! He could still see his eyes looking

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at him. The eyes that made him feel afraid. Murder had been flaming in them. And he had said nothing—nothing at least that anyone else would have taken notice of.

Just now there was no one in the pawnshop. The boy had gone out to get his tea, and it was the hour of the day when business was slack. There were no customers in. Why didn't they come in? He could see the eyes of the man looking at him again. He was nervous.

There was no one here at all. The place was silent. But it seemed almost as if someone were here!

He had heard of places being robbed where money and valuables were kept and of the people who were in charge of them being killed. If someone were to come now when he was all alone! If the man were to come! He felt afraid. Was that the sound of the outside door slowly opening? No, it was not. But the eyes of the man with the bag of tools were haunting him! Perhaps he had no right to say what he had said. Perhaps he had no right to say anything to people who were hard up.

With an effort he shook himself free of his fear of the eyes of the man.

It was a good while since a customer had been

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in. He began to enter into a big book a list of pledges that had run out. But he had to stop. His mind kept running off upon the pawnshop and the man who had brought in the tools.

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In a way he felt sorry for the people who came there to pawn things—the regular people who came every few days. It was bad to be hard up like that. He had a contempt for them, but still he felt sorry for them. Although he laughed and joked at them still down in his heart he felt for them. There was the old woman who fell down in a fit and died in the pawnshop. She wanted to pawn a pair of shoes, but he would lend her nothing on them. They were too old. He was sorry now that he had lent her nothing on them. He might have lent her sixpence on them. And there was the young girl who had come in that day long ago. She told him that there had been no bread in the house for two days. And she looked so starved. But what could he do? One could only take things in that were of value. Still he might have stretched a point.

The door outside was opening. He could hear it plainly. Who was it? Could it be the—
The door of the compartment was opening now.

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There was the sound of a slow footstep coming forward.

“Lend me two shillin’ on this,” said a voice.

It was a woman with a bundle.

A young woman was looking in through the window of the pawnshop. All sorts of things were there. Clocks and umbrellas and walking sticks and pipes and boxing gloves and concertinas and watches and tools of all kinds. And gold and silver chains and brooches and rings and trinkets. And upon everything there was a second-hand air—an air of being worn and used.

The young woman was looking in at the window. But she noticed nothing. Her face was pale and drawn and her eyes were full of tears. She turned from the window to go through the door of the pawnshop, and then she turned back again. She had been standing at the window trying to make up her mind whether she would go in or not. At last she went in.

She was only just married. And the day was cold, and it was snowing, and there was nothing to eat in the house. She was pawning her wedding ring.

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II.

This pawnshop here in a slum of a great town. It was gloomy and sinister and dark. Just as the town. It came down with a merciless, iron hand upon the miserables of the slum. Just as did the town. It battered upon misery and misfortune and necessity. It was a dark place of the damned. As was the town.

Its existence was a paradox.

For it grew fat upon hunger and starvation. It stole and thieved from the poorest of the poor. And its theft was sanctioned by the majesty of the law of the nation—the law made by the sleek rich thieves in Westminster.

It held its secrets and its dark, sad stories. Every article in it had its history. They were locked up in dark places, and upon them was extorted the blood money of interest. This wedding ring here in the dark recess of the drawer! What tears had been shed ere the woman to whom it belonged had parted with it. Outside in the dismal street the wind was blowing cold and the snow was falling. It was a day, dull, heavy, cold, and dark. And here was an overcoat. It belonged to one who was too poor to keep it for this winter's day.

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And here was a woman's shawl.

Here was everything that belonged to those who were stricken with the woe of poverty. It might be said that some of these things had been pawned to get drink. And why not, pray? Surely the people who lived in the hell of hunger and darkness had the right when they could to intoxicate themselves. Surely they had the right to enter the mad, strange heaven of drunkenness. But the things here in the pawnshop were almost all pawned for food. They were pawned to still the voices of children crying out for bread—to ease the terrible hunger pains of families living in wretchedness.

This pawnshop. This place born of the misery and the suffering of the great English town of smoke and flame and darkness.

BOOK II.

I.—FIRST LOVE.

I.

HE often thought of her when he was at work in the mechanics' shop. She was a well-formed girl with dark eyes and beautiful hair, and she was a teacher at St Anne's School. He had known her ever since he was a little boy. He remembered seeing her going down Junction Street years ago with her slate and books under her arm. Then she wore short frocks. Even then he must have loved her. It seemed to him as if he had always loved her. But she had hardly ever spoken to him. She nearly always passed him with head erect. He was only one of the boys who wore a scarf and clogs. She preferred the boys who wore collars and shoes. She was of the same class as he was himself—his father was a shoemaker and her father was a labourer—but the instinct of her sex made her look higher than a boy who wore a scarf and clogs. It might be that she did not care for him, but even apart from this, she certainly showed

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him that she felt herself far above him. And as the time went on, and he was a half-timer whilst she was on the way to become a teacher, this high attitude of hers became still more marked. And when he left school altogether to go to work, and only saw her now and then as she was going to school or to Mass, she ignored him altogether.

He felt this attitude of hers bitterly. But it made not the slightest difference in his feeling towards her. He knew that her assumption of superiority was unjust—that she was no better than he was. In fact, the balance of superiority, if any, was upon his side, for his father was a tradesman, whilst her father was only a labourer. Her attitude was unjust, but he loved her for all that. It is quite possible that if she had spoken to him, and had acted in a friendly manner towards him, and at the same time had given him to understand that she cared nothing about him, this love for her might have died. He might have been attracted by some other girl of the parish. But her scorn gave her for him the charm of the unattainable. It filled him with ambition.

It made him determine to make something of himself.

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But how? How was he to manage it? What chance was there of him bettering himself? Young though he was, he knew that the chances of his rising out of the class and the circumstances into which he was born were a million to one against him. He knew that he was one of the damned—one of those who were condemned into hopeless slavery and poverty. But still there were times when he hoped. It is human to hope. There were times when he saw himself, far away, in the midst of splendid surroundings. Far away. He might have a chance to rise if he went far away!

But he did not like to go away. It was hard to leave his mother and brothers—to leave the people he knew. It was hard to leave Manchester. It was hard to leave St Anne's. No one has so strong a sense of the home and its surroundings as the poor.

It was often in his mind to go away. It was often in his mind to go out into the world and seek his fortune. He could come back, and then, perhaps, this girl would view him with different eyes. He might marry her and be happy with her through the whole of his life.

But how was he to go? What was he to do? What could he do?

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II.

He liked the sound of her voice. It was a deep, beautiful voice, like his mother's. He had often heard her speak, though she had hardly ever spoken directly to him. He had heard her speaking to her friends at parties given in the schoolroom. It was not often that he had the money to go to these parties, and when he was able to go he was never well dressed. At least he was never dressed as were those with whom she talked.

Once she had smiled upon him. It was at one of these parties. She was showing a book to a friend, and she had dropped it. He ran forward and picked it up and handed it to her. And she smiled as she thanked him.

He would never forget it. How beautiful her face was as she looked at him. And the sound of her voice. He would always remember it. He was happy for weeks afterwards.

If only she were in some peril or danger, and if only he were close at hand to save her! If she were drowning how gladly he would plunge after her and bear her to safety. Or if she were in a house that was burning how willingly he would go through the smoke and the fire and rescue her. He would come to her aid whatever the peril she

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was in. He wished that something would happen whilst he was at hand. Then he would show her how much he loved her. He would give his life for hers. If only some danger would come to her whilst he was close at hand. He pictured himself rescuing her from all possible mishaps. He would be her knight. He would do as she commanded. He would go through anything for her. If only she loved him!

III.

She filled his mind with the glow of a wonderful romance. His soul was filled with the fine, glorious intoxication of first love. What mattered it even if she did not speak to him—even if she did not know him? Enough for him that she existed. Enough for him that he saw her.

Upon him had fallen the fine, strange, glorious beatitude of love. It shone into the darkness of his hard, iron life. It shone upon the pitilessness of the circumstances that surrounded him. It shone upon the sombreness of the hell into which he was born.

The illuming, magical glow of love. It warmed the one who was a slave—who had been born a slave. It fired into a wonderful life his imagination.

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It was with him as he walked along the streets. It was with him as he worked here and there, and in this place and that — with him when hunger was upon him. The illuming magical glow of love. It brought to him a strange happiness.

In the happiness was the touch of sadness that is in all happiness.

He saw her but from afar. It was as if he saw her from some place down in darkness. He was far away from her. But still he felt near to her. Always he could summon her image to his mind. She belonged to him even though she never spoke to him.

And so was upon him the fire of a wonderful, golden romance. He was filled with the ethereal intoxication of first love. That strange, magical draught of life fire that mortal can quaff but once. That draught that is as potent for the slave as it is for the king. That brings all that is mortal to a common kin. That fine, strange elixir.

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Love is complete harmony. It is the perfect understanding of the mystery of being.

It opens the eyes to the secrets of this sublime mystery, but denies the lips the power to speak.

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And complete love need not mean the fulfilment of desire. The body is but the appanage of the soul, the mind. The mind has created all things:—the earth, the heavens, the hells, the stars. The body is but the feeble husk that contains the glorious, undying mind.

This consummate, transcendently beautiful mystery of first love! When it comes the body is chastened and purified. And the powers of man arise to their fullest. He sees things more clearly. He grasps and understands. For him the sadness and the misery of the world departs. Strange and beautiful voices sing softly around him. He is thrilled with ineffable music.

He is better and finer than he ever was before. His mind has come into its inheritance. It matters not who he is or what he is. The gods have whispered their best wisdom to him. And he goes along with joy in his heart, for now he knows what life really means. He sees the glorious smile that lies beneath the frown of the world. Wisdom has come to him.

And he goes along, joyful.

II.—STUDYING MUSIC

I.

JIM had begun to study music. A class had been got up at St Anne's, and he had joined it. The getting of the sixpence a week, which had to be paid to the organist, was a great difficulty, but he made up his mind to try and manage it somehow.

When the class was being formed Jim was overlooked by the one who was forming it. It was thought that he was hardly up to the mark to associate with those who were to make up the class. In St Anne's social distinction was regulated by the kind of clothes one wore. The young man who was taking down the names in the schoolroom of those who wished to learn music, belonged to the aristocracy of clerkdom. He wore a starched collar every day of the week and was therefore high up above a person like Jim who habitually wore a scarf. He was a fussy, stupid young man with a pale, weak face

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and a big, ungainly head, the top of which was crowned with a tall hat when he strutted along the street. He was a Sunday school teacher, and he collected the pence from the people during Mass. He was therefore a great personage. And on this Sunday afternoon when he was going around getting the names for the music class he passed Jim over without even asking him if he wished to join it. He was in no sense Jim's equal either physically or mentally. He was just that most poor and despicable type of the working class snob — the clerk. Clerks are a disgrace to the fraternity of Labour. Poor, shoddy, pale wastrels who have the impudence to affect to be ashamed of their superiors—the real labouring men. Clerks. They are indeed the scum of the labouring class.

Jim, however, went up and proposed his own name. He had not as yet come to a sense of self-value, but he felt in a dim way that he was worth far more than the poor, feeble snob of his own class who had tried to ignore him.

The first lesson was given the following Wednesday night at half-past seven in the school-room. The organist was a man with a genuine feeling for music, an artist. He played the

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organ at High Mass and at Vespers every Sunday in St Anne's. He was not a Roman Catholic, but that mattered little to Father Peter. All that he wanted from an organist was the ability to do his duty efficiently. But apart from this, he liked Marlowe, the organist, personally. And hearing that he was not in the best of circumstances he had suggested the getting up of the singing class to help out his income.

In the first lesson Marlowe began to teach his pupils the names of the notes and the names of the lines and spaces in the clefs. Jim was full of excitement. He listened eagerly to all the organist had to say. This talk of notes and clefs and signs made him feel that he was on the threshold of a new world of ideas. And after that part of the lesson was over Marlowe brought his pupils from the schoolroom into the little chapel. How dark was the chapel! And the organist and his pupils felt their way cautiously up the stairs into the loft where the choir sang during the times of service. How dark and mysterious looked the chapel from the organ loft. From the other end the sanctuary light burned dimly through the darkness.

How silent was the chapel. It brought upon one almost a feeling of greater reverence than if

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one were being present whilst the Mass was being sung. It was so dark and quiet. And the sanctuary light burned so steadily and clearly through the darkness.

And suddenly the organist began to play one of Beethoven's sonatas. The sonata that begins with a simple and wonderful joyousness. There was but one light in the loft, and it fell upon the page of the music from which the organist was playing. All the rest was darkness. Darkness save for the clear, distant sanctuary light.

How strange and wonderful the music sounded in the chapel. The full strong organ-tones swelled out to the clear still light that hung aloft in front of the altar. And they swelled back and swelled forth again. Glorious wonderful sounds. Immense, lifting, dissolving harmonies came forth from the organ. And deep, low sounds above which stole soft, silver melodies. And low, deep sounds that arose and died away alone. And clear, high, bell-like, pealing sounds that rang forth with triumphant dominance. And sounds that came forth with a weird, awesome meaning.

Again there were full, glorious, stupendous, voiceful sounds. It was as if the Sacrifice of the

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Mass were being sung by strange, giant voices. Voices that man had never heard before. Infinite, distant, stupendous voices.

And from the organ came beautiful, human, tender voices. They were mingling with voices of angels—voices ringing high up above them. The voices of Heaven and the voices of earth were singing together. Joining in ineffable harmony.

How wonderful and mysterious was the effect here in the dark, still chapel. The still, small, clear, distant, shining light, and the glorious, pealing waves of sound! How mysterious and sacred and religious. And how solemn and noble and strange!

II.

The night of the music in the chapel. He would always remember it. It haunted him through the next day whilst he was at work. For a while he had lived in a strange vast world of mystery. A beautiful and noble world. He thought of it now as he worked here in the midst of the clang and din of the hammers. What could it all mean? Was there in it the promise of a wonderful life in the future? Were there other worlds than this world of darkness and

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hunger and toil? Had the voices of those of the other worlds spoken to him in the music! Surely they must have spoken. He thought of it all as he worked on in the midst of the clang and din of the hammers.

He was anxious and eager for the next Wednesday night to come round. He was almost sure that he could manage to get the sixpence to pay for the coming lesson. His brother—the one next to him—was out of work, but he was almost sure it would be all right. He would do without something himself so as to have it.

In a day or so he had learned thoroughly the lesson that Marlowe had given the class to have by heart for the next Wednesday night. It was a labour of love. And when the night came he was perfect in it. He knew it better than anyone else. The organist complimented him, and he felt proud, indeed.

And a thought came to him.

Perhaps he might some day become a great musician—a great singer. If he studied hard and got to know everything there was no telling what might happen. It seemed to himself that he had a good voice. It was not powerful, but the tones of it were clear. In time it would

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become powerful, and then, somehow or another he would get his chance to appear before the public. And in this way he would be able to escape from having to work at monotonous labour. Yes, it was in this direction that he would escape from his life here in Manchester. He would go and come back again—a great singer. And the girl he loved—the girl who now looked down upon him—would be glad to see him. She would be proud of him when she heard him sing before a great audience. She would be sorry then that she had looked down upon him.

It was the first time that he had seen the glimmer of a way to escape from his circumstances. And the more he thought of it, the more real did his chance to escape appear. Through music he would break from the slavery into which he had been born.

He used to go to the free library in Every Street and get out the books upon music and upon singing. Eagerly he perused them. He read the lives of the great musicians. After he had done his day's work he spent his nights reading everything he could get that in any way bore upon music. It became a passion with him. He loved music for its own sake, but

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deeper even than his love for music was the feeling that through its agency he would escape from his present bondage. Through music he would get out into the great, wide, free world! Through music he would escape from the poverty and monotony into which he had been born.

A month or so passed and gradually the immense difficulties of the task he had set himself were borne upon him. Mastering the theory of music was easily enough done. But the practical part. That was another matter.

The difficulty lay in the mastering of the various intervals of the scale—in the actual reading of the music. Practising the intervals once a week in the class under Marlowe was not enough. His ear did not hear them often enough to be able to retain them properly. When the week had passed by he had all but forgotten them.

At this point the class broke up. A night had come when only four members of it turned up. They had been gradually dropping off from the first and on this night the organist had come to the conclusion that it was no longer worth his while to keep it up. The clerk, who had passed Jim over when he was getting the

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names for the class, was one of the first to stop coming.

It was a blow for Jim. His hopes were wrecked. There was no chance at all now of his gaining a practical knowledge of music. All his ambitions faded away into the air.

But when he thought it over he saw that he could hardly have learned very much more in the class than he had learned.

He was progressing rapidly now. His mother had got him a small organ. She had got it on the hire system. His brother had got work, and things were looking better.

He practised regularly every night and every Saturday afternoon and nearly the whole of Sundays. He was continually singing scales and accustoming his voice and his ear to the intervals. And in time he got to be able to measure the most difficult intervals with sureness and ease.

After he had grounded himself in the scales and intervals he turned his attention to the art of reading at sight. To sing correctly at sight is a most difficult thing. The eye must be as quick and as sure as the voice. One must have a sense of the quick disentangling

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of groups and signs. The notes pass before the eye, often in puzzling, abstruse looking groups. But the eye must catch them, and the voice must give them their full time value and exact pitch as they pass.

Jim worked on the "movable doh" system and in a comparatively short time he was able to apprehend the most intricate changes of key. He was no longer afraid of clouds of flats and sharps and accidentals.

He borrowed vocal scores of masses and oratorios and operas from the free library, and worked through all the vocal parts of the scores from beginning to end. In this way he trained his eye to a continuous grasping of new music.

And slowly but surely he began to be able to sing at sight. He would begin now on a piece he had never seen before, and, if he stumbled in it, he would go back again to the beginning and go on till he made a mistake again. Then he would make another beginning. And he would go on and on till he had read the piece through from the beginning to the end with absolute correctness. And the time came at last when he was almost able to read anything at sight.

It was about this time that he got to know

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Ralph Kirkham. Kirkham used occasionally to sing in the first choir at High Mass. There were two choirs at St. Anne's—the first and second. The first was paid and the second was voluntary. The voluntary choir was a mixed choir, whilst the paid choir was composed solely of men, none of whom were Roman Catholics. Father Peter had liberal ideas on this score. There was a first and second tenor and a first and second bass and they usually sang the Masses that Mercadante had composed for male voices. Their duty was to sing at High Mass and at Vespers on Sunday. The voluntary choir sang at the nine o'clock Mass and at the service given on every Thursday evening. They also sang at the special services that were given on Feast Days.

The second choir looked upon the members of the first in a way as interlopers. Two things were against them. They were not of the Faith, and they were paid for their services.

Paid singers always preferred appointments to Roman Catholic churches because of the beauty of the music at the celebration of the Mass. Men of genius had enshrined the splendid ritual in wonderful music.

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Kirkham was a friend of the first bass, and he used to come to help in the service. He had been a choir boy in the Old Cathedral, and was a thorough musician. His voice was now a baritone, and he sang with taste and expression. He was well up in oratorio music.

He was far better off than Jim was, but there was nothing of the snob about him. Indeed he did not belong to the working class at all. His father was a contractor in a good way of business. He had far less airs about him than the working class snobs of St Anne's who only wore their good clothes at the end of the week—after they had been got out of pawn on the Saturday.

He went home with Jim one Sunday to see the organ his mother had got for him. Jim's mother had taken a house up near the top of Pollard Street. It was a rough neighbourhood, but house rent was cheap in it.

And together he and Jim went through the score of the "Messiah." Kirkham was able to play the accompaniment on the organ. It was the first time that Jim had heard the whole effect of the music.

The vastness and simplicity and spirituality of Handel's music! Kirkham somehow brought

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it out on the small organ. He was not an exact player technically, but he grasped and gave forth the meaning of the music.

“Why do the nations.” That air full of fire and majesty! Ralph sang it. And he sang the noble, prophetic recitative, “For behold!” That recitative where the music murmurs with solemn mystery under the voice as the voice gives forth the prophecy.

Jim’s mother came to the door of the room whilst Ralph was playing. She was glad that her son had such a friend. She had to make great sacrifices to pay the instalments upon the organ. It meant that often she went without food. Jim, himself, did not know this.

But as long as it gave her son a chance, she was satisfied. He had often said that if he had an organ to practise upon he would be able to make a musician out of himself, and that in time he might make a living that way. Whether he could or not she had no notion. The world was a strange world. It would be well if he could, however. He was always a clever boy—the cleverest of her sons!

Jim was singing now and Ralph was playing. How well her son sang, thought the mother.

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And she remembered the time when she was young herself. People used to remark what a good voice she had whenever she sang one of the old Irish songs at home. But that was a long time ago! A great many things had happened since then. "The Harp that once through Tara's Hall." That was the song she sang best. One of the old Irish songs!

Ralph had told Jim that he should try and get into Charles Halle's Choir. He would have, however, to be sure that he was able to sing at sight before he applied. The test was a severe one!

But Jim was confident, and one night he found himself with a great many others in a hall near the end of Peter Street. They were all waiting to be put through the test of reading at sight by the chorus master.

Jim felt a bit nervous and afraid as he stood amongst those who were waiting. He did not know one of them. And they were different people from any that he had ever seen at St. Anne's. All of them were well dressed, and they seemed to be people who were used to being well dressed all the time. Hardly any of them seemed to be even near to the working class people.

The chorus master came in. He was a small old

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man with a red face and a brown beard. He was very quick and decided in his manner and he spoke with a strong German accent. He greeted everyone pleasantly and then sat down at the piano.

First he tried the voices over the scale. He looked keenly at Jim when he came up for his turn to sing the scale. Jim flushed. He felt that he did not look like the others—that he wore a scarf instead of a collar! And the voice seemed to dry in his throat. But the chorus master smiled kindly upon him. The smile gave him courage, and he passed the scale test successfully.

Then came the test for reading at sight. A soprano, tenor, alto, and bass came forward to the piano and were given a voice part each. The chorus master played the accompaniment, and the first of the singers that stumbled or fell in the reading of their part was immediately rejected in a kindly but decided manner. In the majority of the cases the men were better readers than the women. Of the men, the basses were better readers than the tenors; and of the women, the altos were better readers than the sopranos.

One man had a very fine voice indeed. But the chorus master rejected him because of his

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unsure reading. He was sorry, he said, but there was no other course open. The music that was sung at Halle's concerts was often of a most difficult and trying nature and they had to have readers that were safe. He was sorry to reject anyone with a really fine voice, but a good reader, who had only a fair voice was better for their purpose!

Jim was feeling thoroughly confident. He felt sure that he would be able to pass successfully through the test. He had mastered reading so thoroughly at home! He had learned to be able to tell a coming change of key bars ahead.

It came his turn. He was given the bass part of a new piece of music. At a glance he saw that it was easy and simple to read.

The chorus master played the few chords that come in front of the voices. And the soprano led off. Jim followed her voice as she sang the notes. His eye and mind gripped surely the first beat in the bar. He felt safe and cool. And now was coming the bar in which he had to strike in. He counted the first beat in it, but just as he was about to come in with his voice, another voice interposed. He was thrown out. He did not come in in time.

The chorus master stopped and looked at him.

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Jim was confused. He could not understand himself why he had not come in at the right time. The music was in no way difficult. He had read at first sight music that was a hundred times harder to read! He could not understand why he had not come in! He was so surprised that he had not grasped the fact that he had failed in the test.

The chorus master was about to reject him, but something possibly in Jim's air appealed to him.

"Try once more," he said, and he again struck the chords that came in front of the voices.

But the same thing happened again. Jim did not come in in time.

He was rejected! He had failed utterly. Why, he was at a loss to understand. After all his study and practice he found himself unable to read when it came to the moment of trial. All his effort had been useless. He might as well never have studied at all. He was in despair. All his hopes of being successful in music had suddenly crumbled into the dust before him. He was beaten.

The chorus master was now trying another quartette and Jim was standing back from the piano. The part which he had failed to read was

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still in his hand. He was looking at it. It was so simple and easy, and still he had failed in it.

He ought to have gone away now, but something prevented him. He would stay till the end. He would stay and see the whole thing out.

The trial was over, and the chorus master had risen from the piano. He turned round and saw Jim, who was still standing with the part in his hand. He smiled and nodded, and a sudden resolve came into Jim's mind. He came forward to the chorus master.

"Ah can read this easy," he said.

And then in a breathless way he told the old man how hard he had studied. He would like to try once more.

The old man smiled.

"Try this," he said, giving Jim another part. He sat down again at the piano and played the opening bars. Jim sang the music correctly. Then he gave him another part. This he also sang correctly.

"Ah," said the chorus master, "you read well. Why is the reason that you read not so before?"

And then something dawned upon him.

"Ah, you sing not before with others. You have studied to read alone."

That was the secret of Jim's failure. He was

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not used to singing with others. Hearing voices going at the same time as his own confused him and threw him off. He had had no experience in part singing. Marlowe's class had broken up whilst it was still in the rudimentary stage. The chorus master told him that he would do very well after he had practised part singing with other voices. But he needed this practice before he could be taken into Halle's choir!

The old man patted him on the shoulder and told him to come again.

III.

Jim still studied and worked at the music. But some of his confidence had gone. He was beginning to realise the tremendous gulf that lay between him and the one that made his living out of the profession of music. He was confronted with the fact that even at the very best his knowledge of music was still theoretical. It was necessary for him to be in the musical atmosphere, the musical life. And gradually the hope of being able to free himself through music from the circumstances in which he lived began to leave him.

He managed to get into a singing class in another part of Manchester where the pupils were more advanced than they were in Marlowe's class.



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Here he got the necessary practice in part singing, and when he presented himself again as a candidate for admission in Halle's Choir the old chorus master passed him in.

But even this was in a way but a barren triumph. He was only in the supernumerary choir. There were so many musical amateurs in Manchester that the actual choir that sang at the big concerts was full. He might probably never get a chance to sing in this choir at a concert. And even if he did his clothes would not be good enough to sing with the others on the night.

III.—THE SLIP INN.

I.

ONE Saturday night, Harry Platt asked Jim to come with him to the Slip Inn—a noted “free and easy.” The chairman was Tom Kelly, a man with a fine tenor voice and a natural faculty for singing.

The Slip Inn was a quaint, strange old place. It lay in a small, back street near Corporation Street, and on Saturday nights it was crammed full with all sorts and all conditions of people. Not only were Manchester people there:—there were people from the neighbouring towns. And during the intervals of the singing one could hear almost all the grades and shades of the Lancashire dialect. There was the hearty, full ring of the voice of the man from Wigan, and the curious, broad Bolton tones, and the round burr of the voice from “Yowood” (Heywood). All the accents were mixing up together in the loud,

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hearty shouting and talking. The voices in this inn were typical of the full, pleasant-sounding, Lancashire voice. And here was the typical Lancashire face—a face at once shrewd and vital and kindly. Surely are Lancashire men the men of England!

Here they sat in this old inn smoking and laughing and drinking and talking. But when the rap of the chairman's hammer sounded sharply out, silence at once fell upon them. How carefully and attentively they listened to Tom as he sang one of his beautiful tenor songs! And how loudly and heartily they applauded him—and applauded him and applauded him till he gave an encore. And then there was the baritone—a friend of Tom's, who had just dropped in to see how he was getting on! He obliged with the "Village Blacksmith"—that perfect song that tells a toiler's life story. And for an encore he gave that sterling old song—"The Wolf."

The inn was low of roof and was full of irregular spaces and here-and-there nooks and corners. A most individual and interesting place. And the floor ran unevenly. One part of it was three or four feet higher than the other. You had to descend steps from the higher part of the floor to the lower part. The piano stood on the lower

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part of the floor in a corner. And to the left of the piano the chairman sat with his wooden hammer and the small, square, black board upon which he rapped for order before the beginning of the song. As often as not he would make a shrewd and humorous remark when he was introducing the singer.

Sometimes the singing in the "Slip"—as its frequenters called it—was hardly up to the mark. Sometimes people sang who possessed more confidence than ability. But this was, if anything, an advantage. It made the listeners appreciate all the more the good singing when it came. The chairman, of course, could not be singing all the time. He would tire his audience as well as himself. And he used to go around asking for volunteers to oblige the company with specimens of their vocal power. Knowing who to ask and who not to ask was a most delicate and diplomatic task. If he could, he asked those who had acquitted themselves with skill upon some former occasion. But if none of these were around, he had to take chances. He had to endeavour to find out by the expression on a man's face, when he came near to him, whether he could sing or not. An extremely difficult matter. Usually he was afraid of the too ready

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volunteers. Their efforts were as often as not a trial to the patience of the company.

The main idea, however, of the "free and easy" was that the company should amuse themselves. Social and jolly intercourse over ale was its foundation. It was an attempt in the right direction of man to civilise himself. A far better and more effective attempt than the rigid and uncomfortable crowding in theatres to witness the conventional and rule-of-thumb acting of a few professionals. Professionalism ruins everything. And as long as a "free and easy" kept strictly to its original idea it was a perfect place for a man to go and enjoy himself in. Those who did not possess the power to entertain the company, listened and applauded and stood drinks to the entertainers. Whilst the entertainers not only were able to enjoy the hospitality of the entertained, but at the same time were able to enjoy the pleasure of showing what they could do.

On this Saturday night Tom Kelly was looking round for volunteers and his eye fell on Jim.

"Give us a song," he said, with a smile.

But Jim felt shy. He said that he did not know any. But here Harry Platt interposed. He proudly gave away the fact that Jim belonged

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to Halle's Choir. This settled matters and Jim was led reluctantly by Tom Kelly to the piano.

It turned out, however, that the pianist did not have the music of the song that Jim wished to sing. He was glad of this, for he felt very nervous. But he was not allowed to escape. Tom Kelly insisted upon him singing something or another, and at last a compromise was effected. He and Tom sang the duet, "All's Well."

Jim went to the Slip now whenever he had the opportunity. All that one had to do was to order a glass or two of beer. Having done this one could then sit there for at least a couple of hours.

It had got so that Tom Kelly used to ask him to sing whenever he saw him. And the report spread about St Anne's of his success, for to be asked by the chairman of the Slip to oblige the company with a song was considered a great compliment. Some of the finest and best singing in Manchester was to be heard there. Indeed singers that were now famous had sung there. Their names were mentioned at the Slip with bated breath on Saturday nights. And a story was told with awe of a singer who was now

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one of the greatest singers in the world. His first appearance before a real audience had been in the Slip! There was one old frequenter of the inn who made quite a good thing—as far as refreshments were concerned—by the recital of the story during the intervals between the songs. He was there when this great thing had happened! No one thought at the time that a great thing was happening, but he, somehow—yes, he knew somehow that this man was going to make a stir in the world with his voice. Something seemed to whisper it to him. And when he had finished singing he went up to him and clapped him encouragingly on the back, and predicted to him his great future. Yes, it was he that had given this singer, that was famous now all over the world, his first encouragement! It was a great night—that night long ago! And no one present at that time seemed really to understand exactly how things were but himself!

And so this old man used to go on relating the story with infinite detail, only pausing to quaff the drinks pressed upon him by his awe-struck listeners.

These nights at the Slip! Jim liked them very much indeed. No one put on airs. No one could

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put on airs! In the inn was the atmosphere of democracy brought about by the pipe and the flowing bowl and the song. Men were here to enjoy themselves—to forget the vulgar grubbing after money, or the sordid necessity of struggling for a bare existence. They were here to laugh and talk and to know each other. The flowing bowl and the jest and the chat and the song. Does life hold anything finer or better?

Jim got his first real education and his first insight into life in this inn. As he sat and listened to the talk, dim, vague things became clear to his mind. Ideas unfolded themselves to him.

It was here in this inn in the midst of the haze of the smoke and the clink of glasses and the sounds of merry voices that it was first borne in upon the mind of Jim that man after all felt fraternally disposed towards man. It was the first time it was borne in upon him that there is another aspect to the world than that of the pitiless and terrible battlefield where one must take sides in a grim, never-ending fight. Vaguely he saw that the inn taught the grand Christ-like lesson of fraternity—the lesson that no church has ever really taught. His whole life had been one

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struggle against forces that were against him—that pressed him down. Even as a child his attitude towards life had hardened to the fighting attitude. True, there were beautiful things in life, but they were only for him if he won in the battle. But the odds against him in the battle were invincible. He had been born into the world to battle against crushing, invincible odds. Sometimes it seemed to him as if he might conquer these odds, but deep down in his heart he knew that he could not. Often the belief really possessed him that he could conquer, but deep, deep under the belief was the dimness and darkness of doubt. He was not always aware of the fact that it was there, but it was there, nevertheless. A lurking, grisly, vague thing. Yes, the world was against those who were born as he was born. His lot was a terrible struggle for bread in a deep dark pit. Now and then he saw beautiful things from the bottom of the pit. But they were far, far up above him. They appeared in a light and were gone. Yes, the world was against him. He had always felt this. But now—here in the midst of the haze of the smoke and the clink of the glasses and the sounds of the merry voices—he wondered if it were really true. Did not men

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feel a warmth and regard for men, even when they were strangers and of a different class? Was the world so hard as the facts of an iron life had led him to believe? Here, amid the smoke and the clink of the glass and the song, men liked each other. Men were glad to see each other. He wondered about it.

Here in the inn.

He was glad to be asked to sing. It gave him a sense of himself. It made him feel that he was someone. To stand up and to know that people were listening in silence to him—and to him alone—made him feel the strange sense of subdued exultation that comes to the one who is in the very act of wielding power. And the applause when he sat down! It thrilled and exhilarated him. It intoxicated him. Its effect upon him was as the effect of some magical wonderful wine. Applause. That finest and best stimulant that the world possesses. That magical, soul-thrilling wine. That subtlest and most comforting music that is brought forth for one's very self.

The Slip Inn! It was a wonderful old place. It belonged to jollity and merriment and good



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fellowship. It was hearty and free and open. A place of the song and the flowing bowl and the meeting and the fraternising of one man with another. An individual, interesting place of irregular spaces with here-and-there nooks and corners. In it a man could sit down and rest and enjoy himself and listen to whatever was going. No man was a stranger to another man. All spoke and laughed and talked cheerily together.

The Slip Inn ! A fine, jolly old place.

IV.—THE SPELL OF THE MUSIC.

I.

HE stood waiting with the crowd outside the doors of the great hall where the concert was to be given that night. Over the heads of the crowd a dull, small flame was burning in a street lamp. The people were talking together after the inconsequent, disjointed fashion of crowds.

For weeks he had heard of the wonder and the beauty of the music. He had heard of it amid the sound and clang and dust of the mechanics' shop. Some of his mates were always talking about it. Whenever they got a chance they would discuss it. They would discuss it in the few moments they could get for themselves in the meal hours. They would stand outside the gates of the great workshop and talk of the singing of Joseph Maas—the wonderful tenor whose tones rang out as would ring out the tones of some great silver bell. And they would talk of Santley and Foli, and the other artists.

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How deep and sonorous were the tones of Foli!
How grand was the singing of the great baritone,
Santley!

These men of the grime and dust and smear
of the workshop loved music in a way that the
people of the great, brilliant, free world never
dream of. For the strange and wonderful music
meant for a time freedom for these slaves of the
machines. This glorious sound-magic carried
them out of the smear and grime and dust of
their dull lives. It opened for them the gates
of the fine, strange, wonderful realm of
Imagination.

II.

And now Jim was standing here in the
darkness of this Manchester Street, waiting. The
night was damp and cold. There was a rawness
in the air. But he minded little about that. He
would soon be in the great, warm hall, listening
to the music.

People were coming up and coming up, and
the crowd at the door was growing denser and
denser. And suddenly the door was opened
and the crowd pushed forward and surged and
swung and shoved. Jim was in the middle of
it, and it seemed to him that he would be

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crushed to death. But he worked down a little with his shoulders and fought and struggled with the best of them. And at last he was in. Somehow he was in. He raced quickly round up stone stairs. Others raced with him. He must get past them so as to get a good place in the hall. He was going up four steps at a time. Here was a door with a man standing at it. And Jim rushed forward and thrust his ticket towards him—and he squeezed himself through a narrow space. He was in the hall. True, he was standing right at the back of it. But he was in. He would now be able to hear the wonderful music!

It was a hall wide and long and lofty. At present the lights in it were rather dim. At the other end of it was the platform for the orchestra and the singers—a platform shaped in a half-circle, with rows of seats rising upon it one above the other.

The great, long, wide space—stretching from where Jim was standing to the far-away orchestra-platform—was filled with comfortable seats. Ladies and gentlemen in evening dress were going easily along the broad aisle, taking the seats to which attentive and civil attendants ushered them. In this great, long, wide space

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things were going on in an easy, comfortable, and dignified manner. There was not the faintest suggestion of hurrying. It was almost as if the people were taking their seats in a church. Their movements were quiet and calm and dignified. They sat down easily in their seats and looked at the programmes which had been handed to them by the attendants in a most respectful manner.

Where Jim was standing things were different. The crowd was still pushing and struggling in. At times it seemed almost as if the crush of the people would break down the strong barrier that separated them from the quiet and calm and ease of the place where the ladies and gentlemen were taking their seats. The people were rushing into a sort of well that lay at the back of the comfortable seats. They would have to stand huddled up together through the whole of the performance.

The lights were up now, and the conductor rapped with his baton. The rap sounded strangely through Jim's ears through the distance of the hall.

And the music came forth slowly and sonorously. The music of a horn. It sounded out through the great hall at once softly and

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sonorously. It carried with it the air of a lone forest. A horn sounding through a deep, still forest.

It was the overture to Weber's "Oberon." That strange, mysterious immortal overture.

Jim listened spellbound. It was the first time that he had been to a concert where great music was given. He was lifted out of himself and transported into a strange, ethereal realm where the misery and the hardness were gone from life. He was lifted upwards as if on great wings and borne far, far out into a wonderful world. A world of waving, strange soul-sounds. The grime and dust and dulness of the workshop where he passed his days were gone. Gone were the darkness and damp and squalor of the Manchester streets. Gone was the misery and gone was the wretchedness from his life. He forgot all as he listened to these strange, lifting soul-sounds that filled the great hall. He forgot that he was standing crushed up in the midst of others. He forgot all but the wonderful music.

The voices in the music. Surely they were the voices of far-off wonderful beings who spoke forth from some vast world. A world mysterious and magical and profound. A world where

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poverty and darkness existed not. A far-off, mysterious world.

A voice rang forth through the great hall—a beautiful human voice. Joseph Maas was singing “Celeste Aida.” He was Radames, the strong captain-in-arms, and he was telling the woman he loved of the great deeds he would accomplish for her sake. He would go out and conquer and build for her a throne that might stand amidst the stars!

Of all human voices, the perfect tenor is the most beautiful. And Maas had a perfect tenor voice. It was at once smooth and ringing and resonant. And about it was a strange individuality. His upper notes came forth at once bell-like and pure and with great volume. There were notes that rang out as quivering silver swords of sound. And there came soft, faint notes that one could hardly hear and that still had in them a strange quality clear as crystal. And in these faint notes there was an effect almost of stillness. As if one were hearing a beautiful sound that had existed through time. And there were notes that were full and commanding and dominant. And there were notes of a strange quality beyond the power of describing. Joseph Maas had a magical voice.

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III.

There came the radiant and joyful music of Mozart.

The air was filled with interweaving melodies. It was as if all the song birds in the world were singing together. Music of the morning. The music of the birds and the flowers and the trees and the fresh, soft morning light. Music glad and joyful and awakening. It had in it the delicious thrill of spring. In it was the sound of waters. Laughing, dancing, rippling waters upon which sparkled the sunlight. Showers of clear, beautiful notes were coming and going, melodies were weaving and interweaving, and there were full, grateful, and pleasant harmonies. How clear and soft were the rising voices of the violins. They rose and rose till they were lost in the harmonies. And then there came the sound of bells. Little fairy bells. Fairies were dancing in the forest. Round and round they were going. Their little figures could be seen in the pictures that were evoked by the delicious thrilling music. This radiant, glorious, joyful, immortal music. This divine music of Mozart. This music of the sunlight and the flowers and the birds and the fresh, clear morning. This radiant, ineffably beautiful music.

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IV.

Standing here in the densely packed crowd at the end of the hall was tiring and exhausting. Jim had worked hard that day, and he would have given anything to have been able to sit down. Mozart's music had stopped, and he felt almost faint. He had not noticed how tired he was while he had been listening. He had never heard anything like it before. It was so wonderful. It had carried him away completely.

He could see from where he was standing that there were several seats empty in the body of the great hall. The interval was on now, and the people had left them. What would he not have given to be able to sit down and rest—if only for a few moments! This standing, crushed-up, in one place was terrible. His feet were heavy and burning, and he could feel the crush of others upon his body.

If only he could sit down—just for a moment!

The people in the great body of the hall were now coming back leisurely to their seats. He wondered if they would all come back.

The music was unlike anything he had ever heard. It was so wonderful, and it transported him out of himself. It made him forget the toil and grime of the workshop. He had never

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thought that there could possibly have been anything so beautiful in the whole world. He listened to it in a wonder of delight.

But now there was no music. He was standing here, crushed-up, and exhausted. He could move neither one way nor the other.

And the effect of the music began to go from his mind. He still thought of it, but he thought of it as something afar off from him—as something that he had heard a long, long time before.

If only he could rest a little ! If only he could sit down !

v.

And now from the orchestra there came a high, ringing blare of brass. And the blare spread around and around. And then the softer instruments awoke and mingled their voices with the blare of the brass that was rising higher and higher. And then came a sudden immense crash and all the sounds were at war. The music brought before the mind terrible pictures. Gods were shouting and battling. Surely was this the music of the shock of battle and the flowing of blood. The music of hate. Unrestful, terrible music. The music of destruction.

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And out of the hurtling mass of sound there came a song of triumph. The voices of the victors were raised in praise of their deeds. The song was boastful and triumphant and mocking. And at last it died away, and there was silence save for a low, deep, sad under-sound. The boastful, triumphant song of the victors was lost in the distance. And from the under-sound there arose a strange, sad, beautiful melody.

The music now was soft and beautiful, but even in its softness and beauty there was still a vague spirit of unrest. It possessed not the calmness and balance that exist in life even as strife and unrest exist in life. And still it was music of a surpassing beauty. But there was no sense of rest in it.

Again there was the chaos of terrible voices. There were immense shocks and rushes and hurlings. Here in the midst of the crash of the music there sprang up a strange melody, a strange cry. But in a moment it was engulfed in the immense chaos.

.....

Surely was this the music of flame and the music of destruction. The music of terror and death. It held and enthralled. But its enthal-

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ment was the shuddering enthrallment of fear.
Strange and terrible music.

The music of destruction.

VI.

How wonderful and mysterious are the symphonies of Beethoven. He stands alone in the realms of music—a gigantic, vast figure. His genius reaches to the stars. In his hands he grasps worlds. He grasps primality, and lays bare the amorphous beginnings of things. At times in his symphonies there is a slow, vast, rolling—a movement as of worlds. There arise immense, stupendous voices and cries. It is as if there spoke world-gods. As if slow, stupendous voices were rolling through the infinite vasts of space.

One hears the low, deep, thundering voices of the gods of the beginning—vague, threatening amorphous gods. Before the mind is pictured the vast, slow struggling of elemental powers. In the darkness worlds slowly crush into worlds. And there arise awful voices. Voices of mystery. And trumpets blast forth over the chaos, and light comes into the darkness. And then are heard the clear voices of angels. The music

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has left the darkness and mist and rolling of chaos, and is telling of the glorious beauty of the world under the light of the sun. An unbroken, surpassingly beautiful picture passes before the mind. And it is gone. And here is the wideness and loneliness of the ocean. The ocean in its slow-heaving tolerance. Storms arise. The vengeful wind is sweeping, and rushing, and hurling. Ships are broken and torn, and ships are sinking. And the immense music-picture passes and passes, and here revealed before us are the calm, beautiful waters of a sea that is still. Above it stretches the clear of a strangely blue sky. And the music still passes. And now is shown the love and hate and the tenderness and the mercy of humanity. And the music goes on picturing all things in the heavens and the hells and the worlds. Beethoven.

Surely is Beethoven the all-father—the Odin of music.

VII.

The spell of the glorious music was upon him. His soul was taken away and carried off into undreamed-of places. And at times there came upon him a vague, curious desire. He

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felt that he would like to go away with this wonderful music.

He wished that he might follow it through the strange profound places and never again come back to the world.



BOOK III.

I.—THE MAGIC OF CHANGE

I.

THE reason that people of the working class desire to go off to distant and foreign places is not altogether because of their not doing well at home. The fireless grate and the grip and tear of hunger have something to do with the desire to adventure out into the world. But the real reason lies deeper.

It is the desire for change.

This desire has been with man—nay, it has been with all vitality—from the dim beginning. Change is the inner essence of the life principle. It is the power that makes and unmakes worlds and systems of worlds. A subtle, elusive, all-stirring power. It stirs all things and all men. It is in light and heat. It is in cold and darkness. It stirs strangely through all things.

The magic of change. That fine, glorious, entrancing magic that lifts us out of ourselves,

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that makes the blood run wild and free, that clears and makes acute and vivid and active the mind, that discovers to us strange and mysterious and unexplored recesses within the domains of our selves. Change. How wonderful it is! How fine is its magic! It is a greater and nobler god even than chance.

To sit in the one place, to do the same thing day after day, day after day is of all fates the fate most terrible. One is working on an eternal, endless treadmill. And the mind becomes unalert and slackened and the faculties become numbed and clogged. Day after day. Day after day. Ever the same thing. And in the end man loses his soul. He becomes a thing—a machine. His eyes become vacant. He is a dull dead man without a soul. A man working within the sombre shadow of a prison.

He is working for gold, you say. He is piling up treasure upon treasure. He is laying by a store for those who have not yet come. Did he leave his prison-place now his store of treasure would vanish! He would lose the grasp of the threads of his power!

Again you say that he is working for fame! He is working so that uncome generations will be benefited or struck dumb with admiration. He

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is aflame with the egotism of the artist. He is a thinker solemn and deep and profound. One who is vain enough to seek to define the thing that has not yet come to pass.

Again you say that the man who is held in his prison-place is held there by an iron fate. He must earn his bread. He must earn bread for his little ones. He must stay through the years from day into dark, from day into dark. He must do the same thing—the same thing day in and day out, week in and week out, month in and month out, year in and year out. Should he stop he and his will perish from off the earth. He must stay at his prison-place till he is driven forth—or till the time comes when death is upon him.

What you say is true. Men are bound to the hideous wheel of monotony and drudgery by varied shackles. Some of these shackles are clasped and welded upon them by their own foolish, shortsighted grubbing after gold. And the reaper, Death, falls upon these sotted fools and they are gathered into darkness ere they have yet fully gazed upon the light. And the gold they have grubbed up passes. They are as ears of corn that have been trodden under foot before they had ripened in the sun.

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Men sit and plot and plan and spin for fame. Through the years they do the same thing in the same way. And the best thing that can be said at the end of it all is that they will be thought of when they are dead. Stones will be put up in their honour by those who never knew them. A poor lot is the lot of these spiders who spin for the will-o'-the-wisp that is called Fame.

For those that are bound to the wheel of drudgery by poverty one feels pity. Not theirs is the blame. They are the downcast, pitiful slaves of that Moloch—Civilization. But for the gold-grubbers and the thought-grubbers one can only feel contempt. They are in search of nothing that is worth having.

II.

Change—that is the thing. It is the essence of all life and being. Civilization is but a state of things that springs out of man's stupid desire to conserve—to make things stay still. This desire is born out of his egotism. Civilization is the fungus of conservatism. Its art, its laws, its literature is like itself—a disease.

Man is at his best as a roaming savage. Thus he began and to this state he will go back. The

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time will come to pass when man will shake himself free from the laws and the trammels and the pomps and shows of civilization. He will shake himself free from the lying veneer that is called culture. He will go out and roam and fight over the whole world. He will once more become a man.

The grand pirates of the North were the finest men the world has ever known. They were indeed the sons of adventure and change. They went out into the midst of the winds and the waves of unknown waters to find foemen to grapple with. They were great-hearted, wild, fighting men. They bore against the press of strange and terrible winds and they landed in the teeth of iron-girt shores and fought and conquered. Sons of the sea and sons of change. Great, strong, yellow-haired, terrible men.

A debased, slave philosophy puts forth the falsity that monotonous labour is a blessing. And there is a cynical saying to the effect that it contains within it a dignity. Fools are led to believe that work is the great panacea. They are led to believe that to toil and moil and strive from dawn into the dark is a fine and a noble thing.

And so the world is thronged with slaves.

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III.

Change is the only condition under which a healthy life can be lived. It is the only condition under which man can attain to the full flower of himself. Change is the law of life and the worlds.

Man is myriad-sided. He is the result of forces and impulses that have come from countless directions. A being of a myriad facets. He contains within himself all the powers of the earth from the beginning. He is the final result and the last word of all the forms and modifications of vitality from the time it first appeared in a dark frightful world of heated slime. He is a being strange, subtle, and wonderful. Within him is contained the essence of the magic of all the elements. He is of air and water and rock and fire. He is of the thing that flies, the thing that swims, the thing that goes slow and the thing that goes swift. He is built up out of the earth and the rock and the sea and the fire. He is an organism glorious and sublime and wonderful and terrible. He is a thing of light and darkness and hate and joy and terror and love. A thing of beginnings obscure and horrible and bestial. A thing of beginnings glorious and

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sublime. Surely did the genesis of man burst forth long, long ago in a star of unutterable brilliance!

And the god that guided man in his destiny was the god that is called Change. Change led him forth from some wondrous state in the Afar dim, profound—led him down through the slime and darkness of the world in the beginning.

Change led him through transmutations countless and strange.

II.—LONGINGS.

STRANGE impulses stirred him. He wished that he could go away off from the great dark town and never come back again. Surely the world was not altogether like what it was here. Surely there were places of beauty such as he had dreamed of.

Dreams. Was the world itself but a dream? A dark dream that was as this dark town. Or was it a lightsome, wonderful dream such as came to him at moments when he walked along, or when he worked through the long hours of the day, or when he stood at the doors of workshops waiting to be put on.

He longed to be away from Manchester. Surely there would come to him a strange power when he got from out this smoke and darkness! He would conquer the world and enjoy it.

But there were times when a fear came to him. Times when he was afraid to face the unknown. Who was to know what would happen to him

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when he went off? A sense of weakness and helplessness was upon him.

Here—though the life was hard and sad—he felt in a way protected. He knew people. He knew the town. There were times when he seemed to be at one with its very smoke and darkness. How hard it would be to have to go out into the world amongst strangers! He would like always to stay here in Manchester.

But these times passed away, and he longed to go out into the unknown. He longed to be free—to burst away from the life-shackles that bound him.

He cared not what came. He longed to be away. Things could not be more dark and hard than they were.

But how was he to go? How was he to get out into the world? How was he to free himself.

He was bound down in chains.

III.—IN THE MILITIA.

It was when he was out of work that it struck Jim what a good thing it would be for him to join the Militia. Then he would get meat to eat every day, he would have a red coat to his back, and he would be able to lord it around with a shilling a day in his pocket. It can hardly be said that he was afflicted with an intense thirst to go out and fight battles for Her Majesty. Neither was his soul consumed with martial fire. It was the sovereign he would get as bounty and the prospect of a change that nerved him and thrilled him with a desire to go out and drill for the good of his country.

Along with a crowd of other aspirants for military glory he had to pass an examination as to his physical fitness. And he nearly failed in the eyesight test, for he was short-sighted and was therefore unable to tell the number of dots upon the card which the sergeant—who stood some paces back—held

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up before him. When he made a bad guess at it a look of contempt came over the sergeant's face. "He can't even count," he said to the doctor, with disgust. He did not like to lose the commission he got for a recruit.

Again he held up the card, but just as Jim was about to make another wild guess the number of the dots was faintly whispered to him by a long-sighted, would-be Militiaman, who was standing off over to his left. He sang out the correct number and was then passed over into the group who had been selected to drill for the glory of the Queen.

After this he was sworn in by the adjutant. He promised on his oath to do a number of faithful and valiant things in the event of his country coming to a hard pass. And then he received his bounty.

As he was coming away he began to have his doubts as to how his mother would take it when he told her of what he had done. In Manchester the Militiamen were looked down upon. People said that they were the scum of the earth—that they were loafers and corner-boys and drunkards. The fact of their being laden with the honour of being allowed to occasionally wear a red coat was not impressive.

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Even regular soldiers were looked down upon. They were called "shilling a day murderers."

Still he thought it better to be in the Militia than to be out of work and half-starved. At least he would get enough to eat. Want! He was drawn by that great recruiting sergeant, Want!

When he offered his mother the money he had received from the adjutant she began to cry, and would not take it. A neighbour, who had heard what had happened, had gone in a few moments before and told her the news. Nothing that he said could condole her. He had brought disgrace upon her! To think that a son of hers would join the Militia! What an awful thing it was, maybe, to have to go and fight for England! England that had robbed and murdered and oppressed the people of Ireland! Often she had cried in the night-time, thinking over the wrongs of Ireland! And now her son had become a traitor to his blood!

But, knowing there was nothing to eat in the house, he left the money on the table and walked out.

A few days after he was on the way to Lancaster with the rest of the recruits. There were some hundreds of them. They were to

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do two months' training by themselves, and another month with the old hands, when they came up to Lancaster.

At the station in Manchester they had been packed like sardines into third-class carriages. The guard had blown his whistle and waved his flag, and with a few shouts and many waving of hands they had been sent forth to punish Her Majesty's rations. It would be three months before they would again have the pleasure of enjoying the smoke and smells of Manchester. In fact, many of them would not experience this pleasure for a much longer time, for a big percentage of the Militia recruits invariably joined the Regular Army. The glitter and colour and bounce of the fine military life fascinated them. And, again, it offered a relief from a miserable struggle for existence.

During the run of the fifty odd miles to Lancaster they whiled away the time by singing songs. At the request of a red-nosed youth—who enjoyed the distinction of being a Pollard Street corner-boy—Jim favoured the compartment wherein he was squeezed with the “Ivy Green.” The corner-boy, with the coloured nose, flattered him by telling him what a good

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voice he had. Then the corner-boy himself sang "Tommy make room for your Uncle." It was a song most appropriate to the occasion, and likely enough the idea of singing it was suggested to the Pollard Street boy by the crushing he was getting in the compartment.

At last they were in Lancaster. It was a bright, clean, quaint old town, so different from Manchester of the dull, unhealthy air and foul smells. Here in this quaint old town the air was fresh and clean and clear, and had in it the smell of the sea. It was fine to breathe it. For the first time Jim was glad that he had joined the Militia.

They were given their uniforms and shoes in the big barrack-yard. There they performed a lightning-change-act in the open air. Their civilian clothes were taken and packed away, to be given back to them at the end of the training. It would be incorrect to say that they looked excessively martial in their uniforms. They had a raw, unwhipped air.

Soon they were lined up into companies, and the sergeants were reading improving things to them from their order-books. They were being told what a fine and glorious privilege it was to serve Her Gracious Majesty the Queen. The

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nobility of patriotism was expounded to them. They were also told that the status of a soldier was far above that of a man belonging to the working class. And the joys of a soldier's life generally were painted for them in glowing colours.

The sergeant of the company, to which Jim belonged, was a Welshman. It is to be feared, however, that the hoarse droning of his voice rather obscured the literary beauty of the passages he was reading from his order-book. The object of all this literature was to get the men to join the Regular Army. Nothing of course was said about the probable fate of the soldier after he got his discharge. But a great deal was said about the way that the Government worried itself in its endeavour to procure employment of a sinecure nature for soldiers of good character when they returned to civilian life. In a word the passages that were given forth from the order-book were glowing vividly with optimism. And Jim was thrilled with enthusiasm as he drank in the recital of the intended kindnesses of the Government. True, the voice of Sergeant Thomas was of itself hardly a seductive thing to listen to. But kindness is kindness.

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After their minds had received their meed of cultivation, they were sent in small batches all over the town to the various houses on which they were billeted. The people of these houses were hardly too charmed to see them, but they were poor and the inducement offered with the Militiamen was fourpence a night. They had to sleep two in a bed.

Drill commenced at seven o'clock the next morning in the barrack yard. The men were slowly but surely initiated into the deep mysteries of the goose-step and the turning together to the right or left at the word of command. They were shown how to stretch out their hands above their head, and how to bend slowly down and forward till their stretched-out fingers touched their toes. This was to supple out their muscles. And they were shown how to march in step, and how to distinguish their right hands from their left. "That isn't your right hand, you fool!" the sergeant would yell to a confused recruit, who didn't seem to know where his head was, much less his hands and feet. The sergeant was a master in the art of rough sarcasm. Long handling of recruits had given him a sharp and stinging tongue. "Come! come! Can't you

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tell a pace to the front from a pace to the rear? When I say a pace to the front, take a pace in the direction of your nose." And so it went on till half-past eight. Then they were dismissed for breakfast.

It was a sight to see them running down the long street after their dismissal. They whooped and shouted like school-boys, and in less than no time they were at their billets punishing breakfast. Some of them helped down the Queen's rations with halfpenny bloaters, while the more reckless of them indulged in pennorths of bacon. A good half-penny bloater, properly roasted before a red fire, is most appetising. Its flavour is delicious.

After breakfast they went to drill till dinner-time. After dinner they drilled on till the evening. It was drill, drill, drill the whole time.

Jim enjoyed the drill, however. He felt himself becoming supple and strong. The discipline and the food and the work in the pure open air were doing him a world of good.

After he had been up two or three weeks he felt as right as rain. He knew how to turn to the right or left, to dress up in line, to stand up straight, and to salute an officer when

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he saw one. Also he was beginning to understand the way to lay pipeclay evenly on a belt, and to get a proper shine on brass buttons. And he was beginning to take sympathetically to the sharp word of command.

In his billet—as in all the billets—a man stayed away from drill each day so as to be able to go and draw the rations for the rest. At this they took turn about. And all of them looked forward to the day when it would come their turn to be orderly man. One would not have to get up quite so early on that morning, and it was tacitly understood that the orderly man was privileged to cut himself a steak for his breakfast from the general ration of meat. This was his perquisite. On that morning he would not have to skimp his day's pay to get himself a bloater or a rasher of bacon.

Jim soon found out that a big hole was made in the day's pay because of the extra food he had to buy.

When it came to his turn to be orderly man he was warned by his mates to look sharp after the butcher. He was told to mind that he didn't get too many bones with the meat,

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and to watch that the butcher didn't bang the whole lot down quick on the scales so as to shove short weight on to him.

Jim took the tip to heart, and departed—with two big baskets—one for the meat and one for the bread. There were twelve of them in the billet. The rations were given out in a shed in the barrack-yard. On a great counter loaves of bread were piled up. At the other end of the shed the butcher was weighing out meat. He it was upon whom Jim had to keep his weather eye. He was a round-faced, stout man with quick eyes.

Sure enough when it came Jim's turn to get the rations the butcher gathered up a lot of bones with the meat, plumped it down hard on the scales, and pitched it into his basket. "Hey!" exclaimed Jim. "Stop!" "Tha're giving me a lot o' bones!" The butcher looked at him with astonishment. Then he grinned. "Bones go with meat," he said. "Get on!" But by this time Jim's military training had instilled into him a profound disrespect for all civilians. What he had heard from the sergeant's order-book, about the superiority of soldiers generally, had borne fruit in his mind. "All right!" he shouted to the

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stout, well-fed butcher. "Ah'll see th' officer." An officer had to be on duty at the giving out of the rations to hear any complaint as to the quantity or quality of the food.

Jim walked up to him, laid down his basket in front of him, and saluted. "Well, my man," said the officer tentatively. He was a tall slight man, with a bored expression, and he looked at Jim in an abstracted, distant sort of way. "The butcher has given me all bones, sir," he said. The officer looked down uninterestedly into the basket. Then, he drawled out, "Aw." And he signed to a sergeant, who came up and saluted. "Aw," he drawled out again. "Aw, sergeant, see that the ration is changed for this man." The sergeant and Jim both saluted, and walked back together to the butcher. On the way the sergeant volunteered the opinion that Jim must have eaten a tremendous amount of meat in Manchester since he was so particular!

About fourpence a day was what was left out of Jim's pay after he bought extra food. Still, this was fourpence to the good, for he had not as yet formed much of a taste for beer. But an Irishman named O'Brien used to borrow this fourpence from him as often

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as not. O'Brien was the finest and smartest man in the billet, and he had a great taste for beer. He used to buy as little extra food as possible so as to be able to indulge this taste.

Once Jim went with him into a public-house to stand him a pint. The pint came on to the counter with the foam high up over the top of it. O'Brien lifted up the mug and looked at the foam critically. Then he winked at Jim, and, putting it to his lips, he blew it away. He put the mug down on the counter again and pointing to the beer, which was at least an inch below the top of it, he called out, "Missis! Shure this isn't a pint. Fill it, plaze."

Amongst the recruits were many men who had served in the regular Army. The sergeants, of course, knew them at once and they used them as foglemen; or they placed them to the extreme right or left of the company. A fogleman is a man who is put out in front of a company of raw recruits when they are drilling. All of them are told to watch him and to do what he does at the word of command. O'Brien occasionally acted as fogleman for the company to which Jim belonged.

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He was soon made a lance-corporal, but the stripe was taken away from him for coming on parade drunk.

He was a great man to fight. In the night-time a picket of six men and a corporal paraded the streets of Lancaster. Their duty was to keep the Malitiemen in order when they became over-valiant through the drinking of too much beer. On Saturday night there were twelve men in the picket. On one occasion O'Brien came into collision with this picket. They tried to gather him in. But the mighty O'Brien knocked five or six of them down before they knew where they were. He was a tremendous man when he was in beer, was O'Brien. And it would have been all right if he had turned and run, after bowling over half the picket; but no, the Irish was up in him.

"Arrah, come on!" he shouted to the corporal. "Shure, I could bate fifty pickets!" Jim was standing at the door of the billet watching O'Brien with nervous admiration. It was a noble scene. To Jim the Irishman was a hero of the first water. "Hurrah for ould Ireland, and to hell with England!" yelled O'Brien. The wrongs of Ireland had

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got into his head with the beer. The picket came for him. It is a fine sight to see a determined and powerful man standing his ground for all he is worth. O'Brien punched this fellow, butted that fellow, knocked two down together, and so on. But at last numbers told. They gathered him in. And they bore him ungently to the guard room. However, the next day, the corporal said nothing about the fighting. He only made a charge of drunkenness, and O'Brien got off with two days' pack drill. His magnificent fighting qualities had appealed to the corporal.

A religious society in Lancaster took an intense interest in the moral and mental welfare of the Militiamen. They made a short cut to their souls by the pleasant path of gentle and elevating amusement. They had a hall to which they invited them every evening. Here they gave them books and papers and periodicals to read. And they got up concerts for them. Of course they also presented the Militiamen with good advice, but one can bear up under good advice when it is salted with material benefits. Mildly they warned the devourers of the Queen's rations against the crimes of drinking beer and smoking and swearing and fighting.

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On Sunday afternoons Jim would go a little way out of town with some of his mates to bathe in the river Lune. The water was soft and cool and clear. He enjoyed this bathing. There was no fear of being poisoned if one swallowed a mouthful of water. He often thought of the canals in Manchester where he had learned to swim, and where he had to keep his mouth firmly closed so as not to run any chance of even tasting the foul water. Here in the Lune it was so different. So pure and clear. So fine to swim in.

Morecambe Bay! How beautiful it was. Off across was Great Orme's Head, looking dim and mysterious in the distance. The bay was only four miles away from Lancaster—a grand walk through a country lane. It was here that Jim first looked out upon the sea.

To look out upon the sea for the first time is a curious and wonderful experience. You have thought of it, dreamed of it, wondered about it, and here it is stretching out before you—vague, vast, and shining. Its waves as they beat upon the shore give out a deep, strange sound. You are filled with wonder and an admiration in which there is a fear. The deep, cold, sea, full of

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mystery. Far down beneath its shining heave is monstrous, strange darkness. The weird, wonderful sea.

Lancaster Castle! What a grand old building it was! It was worn by the passing of the centuries, but still it looked noble and massive and strong. A relic of the days of the strong arm and iron hand, when none but men of tested power were dominant. It was free and bold and rugged of outline. An immense, towering emblem of might. Surely the men who built this place were not as the men of modern time. Surely their character and spirit were shrined in these massive stones and wonderful battlements. And John o' Gaunt's gate up to which ran a short, rugged, tortuous road built for the travail of besiegers! How this gate must have been held in times of old by brave hard men!

Fine old castle! Emblem of that wondrous power—Brute Force. That power that is now blind, but from whose eyes will one day fall the scales. Glorious power that shall in the ripeness of time dower man with the gift of liberty.

The first time that Jim was put on sentry it seemed to him that he was really becoming a

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soldier. It was rather fine to stand there with the power to challenge anyone who passed. And, as he was thinking of this, he saw coming through the barrack gates the adjutant, Captain Wyman. He was a hard-looking man, soldierly and severe in his bearing. He stalked along as if the earth and all that was on it belonged to him. One is apt to wonder how these war gods manage to exist when they sink back into the unauthority and obscurity of civil life. It must be galling for a supreme person to find out that he is only a common ordinary nobody.

Captain Wyman had to pass through the door where Jim was posted as sentry. The officer stared hard at him as he came up and this so confused Jim that he forgot to salute him as he was passing. Wyman stopped and turned, "Why the devil didn't you salute me?" he asked angrily. Jim trembled. He had been guilty of sacrilege. He had insulted the sacred person of an officer. He mumbled out something, and then the truth slowly penetrated its way into the adjutant's intellect. He saw that Jim meant no offence—that he was only a stupid, confused recruit! He gathered himself together, and passed magnificently on.

The difference between a private and a sergeant

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is calculable. But the difference between even a sergeant and an officer is incalculable. It is a difference that is neither to be weighed nor measured nor bridged over. The officer is surrounded with an aura that is more potent even than the aura of authority. He may be, and, as a matter of fact, often is too stupid to come in out of the wet when it rains, but for all that he is a far removed, superior person.

The band played every night in front of the officers' mess. Through the large windows the men could see them as they raised glasses of wine to their lips, and drank patriotic toasts. There were always a number of the Militiamen standing there for the double purpose of hearing the band play and seeing their superiors feed. It gave one an appetite to watch them. They looked so graceful and well-groomed and gentlemanly. And all the time the band discoursed fine music.

These gentlemen had more reason for giving way to patriotic enthusiasm than the men had. If the men drank the Queen's health they would have to drink it in four ale.

In the afternoon the whole regiment went out to drill in a great field outside the town. Here they went through all sorts of movements.

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Adjutant Wyman, who drilled them, had a fine word of command. He could be well heard all over the field. "Move to the right in echelon!" The regiment would move at his command in this curious and beautiful formation. "Form square! Prepare for cavalry!" Bayonets would glisten in the bright sunshine.

Again, the men would rush from skirmishing order to prepare for cavalry in companies. An officer would hold up his sword, or a sergeant his rifle, and the men would quickly cluster about them. The great field would be studded with small, round, compact blocks of men from which sprang hedges of murderous bayonets. These small blocks of men, with the sun shining on them, looked at once cruel and sinister and beautiful.

Again, they were charging to the smash and rattle of drums.

Now they would form into a great line. They would wheel and wheel, and then break and form again. And all through was the powerful directing voice of the adjutant. His voice rang out to the sergeants and officers who acted as markers—it rang out to the whole regiment. The moving, turning regiment.

Jim liked this drilling with the regiment in the

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great field. And as they marched home to the inspiring, ringing music of the band it seemed to him that the life of a regular soldier must be the most beautiful life in the whole world. He got enough to eat, and he did not have to wear himself out working in ugly, dirty surroundings.

And so the life went on till the three months were over.

Again the men were lined up in the barrack-yard by the sergeants. This time they were to be given back their old civilian clothes. All of them now were bronzed and straight and fit. No one would have known them for the pale-faced motley crowd who had come up for the training.

And here were their old clothes. How shabby and mean they looked!

On the morrow Jim would have to go back to the smoke and dulness of Manchester. He would have to leave this quaint old town with its bright, clean air. Again he would have to endure a sordid, undisciplined struggle for existence. He felt sad.

He did not like to leave the Militia.

IV.—BACK TO MANCHESTER

I.

THE train bore its load of militiamen back to Manchester, and then they dispersed in their own ways and directions all over the town. They were free now to go where they liked till the following year. The Government had no immediate use for them. They were just so many men who had been broken in a little to the use of arms. They could be called from their hovels if the need arose.

Jim was very sorry to leave Lancaster. He had tried to join the Regular Army whilst he was up there, but the doctor had rejected him. He was unable to pass the eye-test because of his short sight. There had been no friendly recruit at hand to whisper to him the number of dots on the card when it was held up.

His ambition had been to join a cavalry regiment. He had thought of what the old man had told him when they were shovelling snow together the winter before. He had advised him to join

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a cavalry regiment! He wondered where the old man was now. Perhaps he was dead!

He had no idea of what he would turn his hand to. He disliked the idea of going from place to place looking for work. He disliked standing with a group of others waiting to be picked out for a job. In the Army a man was not bothered by trying to find work. If he did his duty everything was all right. His meals were there at regular times, and he was always sure of a place to sleep. And he could keep clean. And there was no worrying of his wits as to how he could get on next week or next month. But they would not take him! The Army, he had been told, was better than the Militia. There was only about half the drill to be done. But he had liked the Militia very much. He would be glad when the time came round next year for him to be called up again to Lancaster.

He had about thirty shillings in his pocket—the back pay that had been kept back till the end of the training. He gave this to his mother—all but a shilling or two—and then he went out to have a look round.

All his friends were glad to see him. They remarked upon the straight, soldierly way he held himself up. He was looking so brown and well

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and strong! Yes, being in the Militia had certainly done him good!

He was up early next morning to try and get a job at the dye-house. It was a rainy, misty, ugly morning, and he felt dispirited as he stood with the usual group of men at the gate. How different things were but a few days before! In Lancaster the mornings were bright and clear. The sun was shining and the air was pure and good to breathe. He missed the blowing of the bugles, and the sight of the red coats and the rifles, and the sharp, quick tramping through the streets. Lancaster was a cheerful, bright, clean place. He had grown even to like the hoarse, grating voice of old Sergeant Thomas.

And now he was here waiting in the rain and the mist and the ugliness of Manchester. He was waiting for a chance to get an odd day's work.

He could see through the gate into the dye-house. It was an ugly-looking place. A place of darkness and dirt and steam and damp. He would hardly care to get work in it, he thought. A curious, pungent smell came from it.

Yes, soldiering was a million times better than a game like this! But they would not take him!

He was not sorry when the foreman failed to put in an appearance at the gate. No one was

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wanted that morning. He had waited there with the group for a half-an-hour, and in the end the chance of being put to work had made him almost afraid. He had no fancy for going to work in a place like that. It was necessary, however, for him to work at something or another to get a living. There was no escape from that. But the dye-house—He was glad to get away from it. And he walked quickly along towards Ancoats Lane.

II.

At last he got work that was in a way congenial. His father proposed that he should come and help him at the shoemaking till he could get something better to do. He could lend a hand in the mending of the shoes.

There was simple work in the mending of shoes that a beginner could manage easily enough :—such as riveting soles on to shoes, or heeling shoes, or sewing patches on to shoes, or finishing and polishing up the edges of the newly put on soles and heels. This finishing and polishing was done with a small, steel-faced tool—made hot at the time of using—and a kind of black enamel.

Jim's father made shoes by hand—the only good way to make anything. He was an artist at his work. His speciality was stitched work :

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—that is he sewed the welts on to the uppers and the soles on to the welts with waxed thread. The sewing was all done by the strength and skill of his hands and his body. He was as careful over every stitch as a boiler-maker is over every rivet that he puts into a battleship. He did not earn very much money. But that was because he had the temperament of the artist—of the skilled maker of things by the hand. He only worked when the mood was upon him.

He had tramped and wandered through the whole of England. He had worked at his trade in almost every town of it. In fact he was a survival of the good old days when a man who worked at a trade was an artist as well as a craftsman. Such men, alas, are dying out in England now. Machinery has killed them. And let this fact be put forth :—

Machinery has been the curse and the deadly enemy of the working-men of England. The tree is known by its fruit. Machinery has been the agency by which the working-man has been enslaved. The Luddites were absolutely in the right of it when they went round England destroying machinery. They were wise in their generation. To make things by the hand. That is the only way. Workmen are foolish and weak

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to allow the incoming of any labour-saving device. Facts are the things to go by. The fact is that workmen have always suffered by the introduction of machinery. The much-heralded blessing has always turned out to be a curse. The only people who have ever benefited by machinery have been the sweaters. The tree is known by its fruit. The Luddites were wise.

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Jim's father could make a pair of shoes fit the wearer at once exactly and comfortably. He knew where a shoe should fit snug, and where play should be given. He knew how to allow for the slight spreading of the foot that comes after one has been walking for some time. He could make shoes that suited individuals exactly, a feat that can only be accomplished by the workman who depends solely upon the skill of his hands.

He was by nature a clever and able and ready man, but circumstances had weighed too heavily upon him. The best horse going can have too much weight upon its back. He was a great hand at argument, and he took a keen interest in politics. Perhaps he was not altogether a man of powerful character. And he had the instinct to wander about, which had not been altogether

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for the good of his family. But he was an individual man.

He was illiterate, but he had the quickness and power of grasp of mind that goes with illiteracy. He was not able to write his own name. In fact he had received none of the advantages of education.

In speaking of the advantages of education I do not mean advantages in the sense of developing and tempering the mind. For the education of the schools possesses no such advantages. It only dulls and clouds the mind. I mean advantages in this sense :—

The world is governed by men conversant with signs. They learn these signs from the stupid professors in the stupid universities. And they dole out the fat and easy places to those who are conversant with these signs.

A college is only a place for the manufacturing of fools. A man but learns a slang there. That is all.

But it is a good thing in life for him to know this slang, for in England, at least, things are run on the mandarin principle. There are men holding the reins of government this very day in England who would be unable to earn a pound

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a week if they started fair and even in the life-race with other men.

School education is a good thing—for those who have nothing in them. It is no wonder that healthy, normal boys rebel against it. And still it is, in a way, necessary. It is part and parcel of that huger blessing, civilisation. It is inextricably mixed up with it just as usury and impudent theft is mixed up with the banking system.

The world bends under the domination of signs and books. And I, personally, think that it would be a very good thing indeed if all the books in all the libraries of the world were destroyed by fire.

We would then get a few new ideas.

Jim's father worked in a cellar in Butler Street, for which he paid a shilling a week rent. He sat on a low bench, and waxed his threads, and stitched and worked away at the shoes. On the bench—handy to his right hand—lay his tools:—awls, knives, a ball of hemp, a small rule for taking the measure, a tape, a hammer, and steel-faced tools set into thick wooden handles for finishing and polishing. And there were rivets and nails of all kinds]:—hob-nails, straight, headless nails,

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steel nails, and brass and iron rivets. And a pot of thick paste, and sand-paper and emery-paper.

He used to sing Irish songs as he hammered the leather on the lap-stone. It was a most important thing, this hammering of the leather. It had to be brought to an even hardness all over. Then it would wear long and well. The leather was first steeped for a time in water. And when it was properly softened it was put evenly on the round, smooth lap-stone—which lay on the knees—and struck carefully with the hammer. One had to mind and not cut it by striking it with the edge of the hammer-face. And as the hammering went on the blows were made heavier and heavier till in the end the leather was so hardened that it almost gave out a ringing sound. It would now wear well and long.

Jim sat on a box next to his father and helped as well as he could. He hardly liked the sitting down through the whole of the day. It was too cramping for a big young active fellow who wanted to be out in the open air. But he was there to make the best of it till he could get something better. He could never, of course, hope to learn to be a shoemaker. He was too old for that now.

The idea of making a living by music had gone

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from him by this time. The difficulties in the way of realising that ambition were too much. He would keep on in the cellar with his father till something turned up.

The cellar was an interesting place. People used to drop into it to gossip and chat. Jim's father was a man of fluent words and ready ideas. He had something to say on any subject that was likely to come up. He had the retentive memory of the man who has not suffered from education. He could make exact quotations from political speeches that he had heard years before. He felt that he knew exactly how the government of England should be run—which was probably true enough. The two great governing agencies in England are chance and the rule of thumb. And it would be paying this shoemaker but a poor compliment to say that he was at the very least as intelligent as the general run of English ministers of State.

Once or twice he had visited the gallery of a theatre when the Irish actor, Barry Sullivan, was playing Hamlet. It was his only introduction to Shakespeare—this seeing of the play of Hamlet. But he had a better grasp of the great poet's work than many a literate, bookish student. He would argue for hours as to the meaning of certain

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passages in the strange play. And he would give them out in the cellar as he had heard Barry Sullivan give them out on the stage. He would drop the shoe he was working on, stand up, and deliver the passage with the appropriate gesticulations.

He was strong on Irish politics. Being an Irishman, he had inherited a hatred of the harsh and foolish misgovernment of his country by England. But he had too much tact to show this feeling too openly. And, besides, he had learned from experience that the English Government by no means represented the English working-man. And he also found that England was a better place to live in than Ireland—a much freer place. Ireland was governed by a military force—a force that was falsely called a “police force.”

Jim's father was shrewd and acute. When a customer came into the cellar to have a pair of shoes half-heeled, and to have toe-bits put on the soles, he knew how to inveigle them into getting the shoes soled and heeled. Sometimes he would take shoes up and look from them to the customer, and from the customer back again to the shoes. He would first agree that it was the right thing to have them only half-heeled and toe-bitted. And then the conversation would wander off in

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some other direction. An argument would ensue in which the customer would get the best of it. Then would come a pause. And after that Jim's father would gently lead the conversation back to the shoes. After his victory in argument, the customer was more willing to listen to the recital of the benefits that would accrue from having the shoes properly soled and heeled.

He had, of course, different methods for different customers.

He never worked on Mondays or Tuesdays. These days he looked upon as his legitimate holidays. Usually he spent them going around looking for jobs. He would call on his customers to see how their shoes were getting on. He had a shrewd idea concerning the time a customer would next want his shoes mending. He knew how long the soles would wear that he had last put on.

Saturday was his busy day. Then everyone wanted their shoes at once. They would come in demanding them and he would give them all sorts of excuses if they were not ready. This, that, or the other thing had happened. He had not been well, or he had not been able to get the right kind of leather in time, or he was taking his time over them so as to make a thoroughly

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good job of them. He was never at a loss for an excuse that saved the situation.

He would work right through the whole of Saturday night, and he would work all day Sunday. He let down his shutter on the Sunday and worked by the light of his lamp. It would not do for him to have the shutter of his cellar up whilst he was breaking the Sabbath. The shutter saved him from part of the scandal.

Father Peter often spoke to him about this Sunday work, and he promised time and time again to try and avoid it. But it was of no use. A good job was always certain to come in late on Saturday night. If it had been a hard, difficult, ugly job he would not have taken it in—or he would have taken it in solely on condition that he would do it during the following week. But it was always some good, easy, profitable job—a job where the soles had only to be clumped on—and it had to be ready for the customer by Sunday night. So, working on Sunday, could hardly be called his own fault.

He made up, however, for this Sabbath-breaking by taking his ease on Monday and Tuesday.

V.—ON THE RAILWAY

I.

At last the time came when Jim left the cellar. He had managed to get work as a porter on the railway.

He was appointed to a station a few miles out of Manchester, and his wages were sixteen shillings a week. He had been told that if he were active and wide-awake he would be able to bring his wages up to a pound a week through the tips he would get from passengers.

He was sorry to leave the cellar where his father worked. He had grown to like the place and its ways. But, after all, there was not very much for him to do. His father could have done all the work that came in himself. And there was no chance at all for him to learn the trade properly. But he liked to be there, listening to and joining in the arguments that were continually coming up. His father interested and amused him.

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He was here now, working in the bright open air. He was away altogether from the smoke and darkness of the great town. Manchester was but a matter of ten miles away, but its influence was as far off as if it were hundreds of miles away. It is thus with a great town. Its influence extends no farther than its shadow.

But he felt lonesome.

His duties were simple and numerous. When it was his turn to come on early in the morning, he swept up the waiting-rooms and the platform and made the fires. It was but a small station and there was only another porter besides himself. They took turns at the work in the station—one coming on in the early morning and going away in the afternoon, whilst the other came on in the middle of the day and stayed till the last train was gone.

There was a stationmaster—a round-faced young man with goggle eyes. But he helped in no practical way with the work of the station. All that he did was to walk around trying to look important.

The porters had to do everything. They had to satisfy the incessant thirst of the passengers for all kinds of possible and impossible information, and at the same time to act as booking clerks.

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They had to look out for parcels and boxes and trunks and children, and see that grown up people did not cross the line in front of the train when it was rushing into the station. Women especially had a mania for trying to get in under the wheels of the engine. They would wait till the engine was within twenty yards of where they were standing on the platform and then they would dash wildly across the line. Why they did this was a problem too deep for the understanding. But it was the duty of the porter to see that they came to no harm. He had to be able to tell when they were on the point of performing this feat and to warn them strongly against it. He was a sort of watch-dog over the lives and the affairs and the inclinations and the belongings of the passengers. A maker of fires, a sweeper of rooms, a shutter of doors, a reckoning machine, and a changer of money. And last, but not least, a taker of tips—when he got the chance.

To tell the truth, this taking of tips was the art most studied by the porter. He dreamt about it during the night and thought about it during the day.

Jim soon got into the way of it. There was the irritable, crabby man who was always good for a tip, but he had to be handled in such and

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such a way. If there was the slightest deviation from the proper method of handling him the tip was lost. And there was the mean man whose object in life seemed to be the avoiding of giving the porter his proper and legitimate tip. The way to handle this man was to get in front of him and keep right in front of him till shame stepped in and made him do the right thing. If this did not bring him to a sense of his duty, the only course left was to accidentally let his trunk fall heavily and often when next he appeared on the scene. Women were not as good at giving tips as were men. A man was good for fourpence, and sometimes sixpence, where a woman was only good for the modest twopence or for an arid and unprofitable "thank you!"

There was a certain excitement and interest in the work and Jim soon grew to like it. It was healthy, open-air work, and had none of the monotony of the work in a Manchester factory or machine shop. There was always something going on. A train was either nearly due, or coming in, or going out, or thundering swiftly through the station. There was a fascination about the trains that did not stop. He could just catch a blurred glimpse of the faces in the carriages as the train roared and thundered through the

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station. He wondered who the people were, and where they were going, and what they were going to do when they arrived at their destination. Sometimes he saw several faces distinctly. And sometimes but one face showed up clearly out of the passing blurr.

In the night time the effect of the trains coming in the distance and passing through was wonderful. There was the low booming roar of the train growing and growing. Becoming louder and louder. And yonder the lights were cutting and flashing through the dark distance. Far up above the roaring and the flashing lights were the still, clear stars. And the roaring was louder and louder. And there came the sudden click of the signals. The train was breaking into the station. It was as if the station would fall with the immense, deadly shaking. The train was thundering past the platform. It roared terribly in the ears. It was as if it were bearing right down upon one. It was gone. It was out of the station. There were its lights going, going again into the dark distance. And silence.

II.

Jim had lodgings at the house where the other

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porter lived. He paid two and sixpence a week. He used to buy in his own provisions which the old woman of the house cooked for him. It cost him about twelve shillings a week to live. He was, therefore, able to send his mother a few shillings every week. His brother was again out of work and things were tight at home. Work was also slack with his father in the cellar in Butler Street. It was always the way. When one or two in the family were working, the others were not!

After he had been at the country station a few months he made an application to be shifted to the big station in Manchester. It would be better for his mother if he lived at home. Every little helped. And the two and sixpence that he had to pay for lodgings in the little town would help the house in Manchester. Besides, he had a longing to get back again to the old haunts. He wanted to see his old friends. Life went slowly in the little town. His thoughts went back to the Slip Inn where he used to go and sing occasionally on Saturday night.

His ambition to make a living at some time in the future at music had left him. He would have to work on now at anything he could get just as other people had. But he might as well

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work in a place where there was some life going. Manchester, with all its smoke and darkness, was after all the place where he had been reared up. It was a hard place, but there was life in it.

The goggle-eyed stationmaster did his best for Jim in the matter of having him shifted to Manchester. The truth of the matter was that he did not like him. Jim was not servile enough for him.

At last he was home again. He had been shifted a month after his application.

At the station in Manchester the work and the life was altogether different. Things went with a rush and a bustle the whole time. A porter had to be a porter and nothing else. There were quite a number of them. It was winter time, and ticket collectors and shunters and guards and signalmen came in an almost continual stream to warm themselves at the great fire in the porters' room. The porters always kept a roaring fire.

The ticket inspectors were the aristocrats amongst the men who worked in the station. They wore blue cloth suits and impressive caps, and they got a little more a week than the porters. They were in the habit of warming themselves in a condescending manner at the fire in the porters' room. They had a room of their own, but the fire in it was not much, and the room

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itself was not handy to get at when they were down at the end of the station and there were only a few minutes before a train was due. So they patronised the porters' fire and at the same time hardly ever deigned to exchange a word with the porters.

One day Jim pitched one of these lofty persons out of the room. The lofty person was warming himself before the fire in a manner that was at once lordly, composed, and gracious. Jim was bringing in a bucket of coal and by accident he brushed against the coat of his superior. His superior thereupon turned upon the luckless Jim and upbraided him in a harsh and dignified manner. And Jim fell on him at once. He caught his superior by the scruff and pitched him out. The composure and lordliness and dignity of the superior person, who was getting a shilling or two a week more than he was, melted as snow would melt before a furnace. He vowed vengeance, and said he would never come into the porters' room again, and then he wended his way—in but a half-lofty manner, it must be confessed—up the platform. He could make no complaint against Jim to the stationmaster, for a ticket inspector was not supposed to honour the porters' room with his noble presence.

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The shunters and the signalmen were a far better and more companionable class. They had to do real work.

Shunting was—and is—most dangerous work. The men took their lives in their hands. According to the clearly and beautifully-printed rules of the company, shunting was an easy and harmless occupation in which a babe almost might indulge with perfect safety. If a stranger read these rules, and then heard that a shunter was hurt or killed, a vast wonder at the mystery of the happening would come upon him. He would surely think that the shunter must have done it on purpose—that he was a man inclined to suicide.

But the rules were only a fake. Fake is a good, slang word that exactly and absolutely describes these clearly and beautifully printed rules. The real intention of these rules was not to save the life or the limb of the railway shunter. The real intention was to save the pocket of the railway company. They had been sanctioned by a Parliament which always was — and always will be — as dishonest and treacherous to working-men as the men in whose interest these lying rules were framed.

For if a man went by these rules he would be unable to do the work. In fact, he would be at

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once discharged by the very company that was so solicitous for the welfare of his life and limb. It was only by the disregarding of the fake rules that he could do the work quickly enough. He could only be a good and effective shunter by going into danger—by taking his life in his hand.

These rules were only typical of the sinister hypocrisy and humbug of our curious country.

Jim did not get as many tips in this big station as he had got in the station in the country. Somehow, the head porter seemed to get in the way of most of the money that was going.

The big station was one continual rush and hurry and roar. A great confusion that was guided into an orderliness by the men who were on guard there. People were for ever coming and going, and walking quickly, and running hither and thither, and asking questions, and watching and inquiring anxiously after their luggage, and shouting and bidding farewell to each other. A chaos of coming and going through the livelong day. A place of noise and bustle and commotion. Of whistling, of hissing, escaping steam, and sounding trains. A strange, ordered confusion.

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One of the porters was a character. He was a big, jovial-looking man with a red face, and had been in the Army. He was always ready with a quip and a joke, and was a great favourite with everybody. He was liked, especially by the booking-clerks.

He had about him a natural and breezy air, and was a man of great personal magnetism and charm. Had he been in another station in life he would have made a mark in the world.

The whole porters' room used to roar with laughter over his droll stories of the Army. They were so free and easy and devil-may-care. He told of the fine times he had in India. There a soldier led the life of a gentleman. He was waited on hand and foot by the niggers. The climate was a bit hot, but that was nothing when you got used to it.

Jim listened eagerly to his stories, and was sorrier than ever that he had not been able to pass into the Army. True, the jovial ex-soldier was now only a porter. But he had seen something of life in far-away parts. And Jim envied him.

A certain thing happened, however, one day. A small hamper containing rabbits had mysteriously disappeared. It was searched for high and low through the station, but it could not be

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found. And then it was reluctantly remembered by several that the hamper was last seen in charge of the jovial ex-soldier. The head porter remembered seeing him carrying it along the platform. And one of the booking-clerks said that he thought he saw him carrying a hamper out of the station. But he only thought so. He was not quite sure.

The stationmaster questioned the jovial ex-soldier porter as to whether or not he knew anything about the missing hamper of rabbits. He said he did. He had left them in a corner at the other end of the station, and he had forgotten about them. He would go at once and get them.

He knew a thing or two, did this magnetic, breezy porter. He knew enough to come in out of the wet when it had begun to rain. For the stationmaster waited and waited for that missing hamper of dead rabbits. But they never turned up. Neither did the magnetic, ex-soldier porter. Perhaps his soul was pained to think that even the slightest suspicion should have fallen upon him. Anyhow, he never returned. He may have been shy—but shyness had never appeared to be a distinctive quality of his.

His bright, jovial ways, and rich stories never livened up the station again. And everybody

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missed him. Everybody was sorry. Even the head porter was not quite sure now that he had seen him with the hamper. And the booking clerk was almost certain that it was not him whom he had seen taking a hamper out of the station.

Such was the tribute paid to that rare thing, a magnetic personality. The breezy porter may have been an ex-burglar as well as an ex-soldier. But he was a good sort, whatever he was.

A cheery, jovial, shady person whom everyone likes should surely be given more rope than the honest, irreproachable person who has nothing in him and who bores the life out of people.

Honesty is often built on the rock of cowardice. And let it never be forgotten that theft is the key stone of our glorious civilisation.

VI.—KNOTT MILL FAIR

THINGS were going lively at the fair. It was Jim's day off and he was in the middle of it. There was a thronging and crushing and crowding and shouting. The great Manchester fair. People were here from all over Lancashire. One could hardly move in the vast, turbulent crowd. People were jammed and knocked about and almost crushed to death, but they were enjoying themselves. There is something in the wonderful magnetism of a crowd that thrills the individual.

Pickpockets were plying their trade with great industry. All the roughs of Lancashire were here assembled. Crushing and shoving and fighting —when there was enough elbow room—and cursing in all varieties of keys. Respectable people were jostled and pushed against people who were not respectable, often enough to the latter's financial advantage. Policemen were here, but policemen counted for nothing in the crush and excitement of the fair. Even if a pickpocket

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were caught absolutely in the act of making a sudden borrow, it was almost worse than useless to try and arrest. People had to watch their pockets themselves. The policemen only acted as undignified, knock-about ornaments in the vast crowd.

All sorts and varieties of music were going at the same time through the length and breadth of the great fair. Brass instruments blazed crudely forth. Horns and trumpets were blowing discordantly, and drums were being thumped and pounded. It was a saturnalia of noise :— of the noise of innumerable instruments and drums and trumpets and barrel organs and hoarse voices and clear voices and husky voices, and shouting, laughing, singing, and roaring voices. Friends caught tightly hold of each other in the surging crowd in the effort to try and not be parted. But the effort was useless. Parties were split up and lost. The immense crowd had become a crowd of people that were strangers to each others. But all were united by the crowd-magnetism that is at once subtle and overpowering. People exchanged words and sentences, and then were crushed past each other.

The booths were doing a wonderful business. Human and animal curiosities of all kinds were to

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be seen for the sum of a penny:—fat men, tall men, fat women, skeletons, hairy and bearded women and mermaids. All the wonders of the earth and the sea were to be seen at this fair. Mysteries that science had never even dreamed of were made plain to the eye—if one but paid a penny. There were animals that were even outside the pale of Humboldt's vision—weird, inscrutable animals. All for the sum of one penny.

Here was the booth where the prize-fighters indulged in the noble and manly art. At present one of them was standing on the platform of the booth, dressed in the costume of the ring. He had a determined beery-looking face. He had evidently trained for a long time upon the contents of the flowing can. But he still looked fit in a half sort of a way. He said nothing but looked calmly upon the crowd with folded arms. The crowd in front of the booth was solid and still and compact. A small, motionless crowd in the midst of the surging, shoving outer-crowd.

The beery-looking prize-fighter said nothing. But a man beside him was saying everything. In a hoarse, fog-horn voice, he was going through the many fights and the many victories of the silent prize-fighter with the folded arms. He

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had been a wonderful man! He was still a wonderful man! And his skill could be seen inside in the booth for the modest sum of twopence a head. Only twopence! Come and see what you never saw before, shouted the man with the booming, fog-horn voice. Walk up! Walk up! At times his voice seemed to boom above all the other voices and noises in the fair. Walk up! he shouted. And then he impressively gave forth a challenge. He would give ten pounds to anyone who would stand before the man of many victories for a certain number of rounds. At this, the prize-fighter straightened himself up and looked more determined than ever.

Poor old prize-fighter! There was something pathetic in his standing out there on the platform of the booth before the crowd. A shade of sadness had come into his face. It may have been that he was thinking of the old, victorious days when he was in form—when he was at his best!

Here were the thimble riggers, and the “under seven and over seven” men with their boxes and dice, and the three-card men. These were the out-and-out, open-and-above-board sharks of the great crowd. They were keen, intelligent, courageous looking, shifty-eyed men. They were against the law and everyone knew it. They were out to

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cheat, and everyone knew it. They had the quick, keen wits that come from a life fighting against odds and taking chances. At any moment they might be arrested. But the crush of the tremendous crowd would be well in favour of their getting away. Policemen or plain clothes men would have more than they bargained for in trying to get them through it.

How they managed to do any business in the stupendous crush was a mystery. It was nothing short of a miracle the way they managed to keep their thimbles and peas and dice and cards on the boards. But they managed somehow. They were men who made their living in crowds such as this. They were at all the fairs that were going at different times in England. Even a vast crowd has its laws of movement. And through long use and practice these men knew them. They knew the directions that the shovings and the surgings of a vast crowd were apt to take. They knew them as a skilful sailor knows the way that the great waves rush and break in a storm. And so they were able to manage in the midst of the crowd, and to ply their trade. They knew when to give way, when to push forward, when to stay still. They knew how to keep themselves from being carried away in the rush. They could dexterously

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keep in front of the man they were fleeing. They were men with eyes at the back of their heads. They could see this way and that way, up and down, and every way. They could tell the people who were about to bet on their sure things—the people who were not—the people who were indifferent. They could spot a plain clothes man or a detective twenty yards off in the depths of the crowd. At these times the implements of their trade would be into their pockets in a twinkling, and they would be innocently shoving and pushing their way through the crowd. Or they would disregard the presence of the hawks of the law, depending for safety upon the difficulties that would attend their arresting. They were keen, quick, sharp men, who were, on the whole, worth the salt they got out of life.

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To see the booths from the outside was to see the best part of the show. For the people on the platforms bestirred themselves to their utmost to get the crowd in. When the people got into the booths they were safe enough. The crushing and the confusion outside had dulled them and made them uncritical. They really wanted a rest more than they wanted to see the show, or the performance, or the wonderful sight, or

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whatever it chanced to be that the people of the booth were displaying. So things inside went pleasantly and easily. And even if one of the sightseers were disposed to be critical, he would hardly be able to examine into things closely, for the light inside the booth was invariably bad. And, again, the people were not allowed to remain long in the booth. It was quickly in and quickly out.

Some of the sights in the booths were, to say the least, not what the people on the platforms said they were. They were nothing near so wonderful as the pictures outside that were alleged to represent them. And sometimes they were obvious, whole-cloth swindles. But they were in the main swindles that were salted with humour. They represented but a play on the eloquent words that were given forth by the very sharp person outside on the outside of the platform. The spectators were made pay for allowing themselves to be made fools of. It is the way of life.

But such is the vanity of human nature that when they came out of the booth they would say nothing about their being sold to the people who were going in. If they were sold, why should not other people be sold ! And they stood by in the crowd and grinned when the next batch of people

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came out with blank faces. And so the game went merrily on to the advantage of the people of the booth. The humour of the swindle saved it from being denounced.

Here were the actors—the strolling players. They were a class apart from the actors who played in the big theatres in the towns. Honest, simple, kindly Bohemians who had not been spoiled by an undiscerning Press. They had travelled in their own wagons and were here to earn a little money from the great, surging crowd. They were here to-day and gone to-morrow. Roamers over the face of the land. The true exponents of the acting art. These poor, strolling players. They were artists, and they lived their lives together, away from the people of the outside world—as artists should.

Night was now coming over the fair and things were going louder and stronger still. A new vigour had come into the voices and the gestures of the people of the booths. The thick of their harvest time was now upon them. They were telling vociferously of the wonders they had to show the great, surging crowd. The man with the hoarse, fog-horn voice had put several new

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victories to the credit of the prowess of the silent prize-fighter with the folded arms. The fighter was standing now on the platform in front of the booth as he had stood earlier in the day. It may be that a tired and weary look had come into his face. But when the challenge was given forth for any man to stand before him for ten pounds, he straightened himself up in the old way and looked determined.

Here the dobbyhorses were whirling quickly round in a circle—wooden horses with great flowing manes. They were suspended—by an iron rod—from the top of the circular frame-work, and men, women, and children were sitting on them as they spun quickly round. It was wonderful the quick way people managed to get on and off them. And it was hard to keep out of the way of being struck by them in the crush of the crowd that was now vaster than ever. One would have thought that the children would have been hurt. But they were not. They bore charmed lives. And they enjoyed themselves hugely on the dobbyhorses. A ride for a penny! Around and around and around. A ride for a penny!

Here were girls dancing in front of a booth. One of the girls was beautiful. She had fair hair and blue eyes. A typical English girl. Her

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father was the showman. The relation between the man and the girl was plain to be seen. He stood there, inviting the people to walk up and see the show. And the stout woman, who sat taking the coppers at the entrance of the booth, was probably the girl's mother. A contented expression was on the face of the woman. Business had been good that day.

The thimble riggers, and the "under seven and over seven" men, and the three card men seemed to have vanished. Their business flourished best under the light of the day. Working in the crowd in the glaring lights and the dark shadows was awkward for them. But the pick-pockets were plying their audacious industry more vigorously than ever.

Here was the clown with his curiously painted face. He was talking to the crowd after the manner of clowns from the beginning. Cracking old jokes and wheezes and telling funny stories. A young man thumped a drum beside him whenever he paused to take breath. At times, however, the young man began to thump the drum in the middle of a joke or a story. And the clown would turn and catch him by the ear. This by-play always provoked a great laugh from the crowd. And then the clown took up the thread



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of what he had been saying. He would make a grimace and roar it out at the top of his voice.

It was late now, and the life of the fair was beginning to slacken. The crowd was gradually beginning to grow less dense. People were going home. The great noise was dying down. The showmen on the platforms of the booths were losing the robust vigour of their hoarse voices. It had been a long, hard day for them, and they would have another long, hard day on the morrow.

And suddenly the crowd seemed to melt away all at once.

And the lights were put out and darkness and quietude reigned.

VII.—AN ANCOATS WEDDING

FRIENDS of Jim's were getting married. And they came out of the little chapel man and wife. The priest had made them one. From now on they would share each other's lives. They would share joy and stress and whatever lay for them in the future together. Their lives had been woven together by the sacred and beautiful marriage rite. Come hail, come wind, come storm, come snow. What mattered it? And they came bravely out together from the protecting shade of the little chapel into the full light of the sun which was glowing up the chapel yard.

The world was smiling upon them. It was a day in Whit-week, and the sun had burst through the heavy, hanging clouds of dim Manchester—the town of cotton and iron and factories and chimneys and smoke. She was a factory girl, and he was a factory lad. They had lived through the whole of their lives in the great, strange work-town. How beautiful and full of promise it looked to them now in the light of the sun.

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Here were the people who knew them. Laughing and talking, and crowding forward, and throwing rice and making jovial remarks. The bridegroom had to shield his face, and dodge as well as he could the shower of rice. He smiled and looked awkward, and pressed forward with his newly-made wife on his arm. How well she looked. Her face was pale through the long hours and the long days of the work in the factory, but behind the paleness there was a faint rosy flush. Life was coming to her in its fulness and mystery and beauty. Only a factory girl dressed in simple white. Only a factory lad dressed in his Sunday best. And still life held for them as fine and as glowing a promise as it would hold for the best in the land. And why not? Why should not life smile and look fondly upon them? These workers were the only true, and the only real best in the land.

At last they had got to where the big wedding coach was standing waiting. And the bride and bridesmaid and the bridegroom and the man who stood for him got in.

What a splendid coach it was. It had white hangings and white cushions and two horses. And the coachman was in uniform. It had cost a great deal—fifteen shillings. But that mattered

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nothing. It would be a poor thing if they could not have a wedding coach at their wedding.

The coachman cracked his whip, and they were off up Junction Street, leaving the little chapel behind.

They passed by Pollard Street, and went on up Carruthers Street, and over the bridge, and they turned towards the left, cutting through mazes of old, narrow streets till they reached Woodward Street.

The people came to the doors to look at them as they passed. Everyone knew that it was a wedding party. A cab was not often seen in that part of Ancoats, let alone a splendid coach with a pair of prancing horses.

They were getting out at the house of the bride's mother in Woodward Street. The house was one of a row of small, low houses. The rent of it was five and ninepence a week—altogether too much for that kind of a house in Ancoats. It was here as elsewhere. The poorer the people the less value they got for their money.

However, one could not think of such things as this on such a day. The splendid coach drove off, and the wedding party entered the parlour—the principal room of the house—which was entered directly from the street door.

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Right in the middle of the parlour were two tables, pushed close up together, and on these tables were all sorts of good things. The bride's mother had been busy in the house, whilst her daughter was away getting married in the little chapel. She had been getting the wedding feast ready. And a great feast it was. There were three big plates of nicely sliced ham—and more to come when it was wanted—and there were plates of sliced currant bread, and sliced seed bread, and plates of plain bread and butter, and cheese and pickled onions, and mixed pickles, and fancy biscuits and plain biscuits, and sliced meat and watercress and radishes. Cups and plates and knives and forks were ready and waiting for everyone. Indeed, there was everything there that anyone could want. The sight of all the good things on the tables was enough to make anyone feel hungry. And occupying the place of honour in the middle of the good things was a decanter of port.

How pleased the mother of the bride looked. It was indeed a day of triumph. Her daughter was now safely married, and all was well. She kissed her son-in-law, and they all sat down together to eat. There was a good deal of squeezing past between the big dresser and the chairs to

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get to their places. But at last everything was going comfortably and merrily. The ham and the bread and the butter and the seed and currant cake were passed around. And the port was passed around in the little glasses that the bride's mother had got for the occasion.

Luck was heartily wished to the newly-married pair, and the whole of them drank their little glasses of port together. And then the cups of tea were poured out. And the whisky appeared on the scene. Everyone had a little tot of whisky in their tea.

Whisky in a cup of tea. It is an old Lancashire idea, and it is perhaps the best way of all to take whisky. The flavour of the tea and the milk and the sugar softens and mellows the hard grip and tang of the whisky. In a way, one drinks it without knowing it.

Occasionally little children came and peeped in at the feasters through the half-open door.

The laughter and talk grew louder and stronger. They were enjoying themselves thoroughly. A day such as this did not come every day—and a day in Whit-week, too. So they were making the best of it. To-morrow would come and they might be gone. They were people who worked from day to day through the whole of their lives

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—people who lived from hand to mouth—who had been born of people who lived from hand to mouth. Their only chance of joy or pleasure lay in the present. The past was behind them, the future was vague. Simple, honest workers in a great strange work-town.

At last they had eaten their fill. They got up, and the bride helped her mother to clear the things away. And then the tables were pushed out of the way into a corner so as to give room in the middle of the floor when the dancing came. And Travis, the bridegroom, pulled off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and went into the kitchen. He had to look after the beer. A nine-gallon cask of it had been lying in the kitchen these last three days so as to clear properly. And Travis had been deputised by his mother-in-law to draw it and hand it around to the guests.

There came an anxious moment. Had the beer cleared properly? Travis turned the tap carefully, let the beer run into the glass, and then held the glass critically up to the light. Yes, it was all right. The beer was of a beautiful colour, and was as clear as the clearest amber. He had been a bit afraid that it might not turn out well. He came into the parlour and handed the glass he had drawn to his mother-in-law.

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They all settled down now for a bit of a chat and a gossip. Mrs Gaylor told of all the weddings she had seen through these many long years. The wedding coaches were different now to what they had been twenty years ago. And the bride's uncle—who had given her away—also had his say. He was a mechanic, and from talking of weddings he drifted into talking of the ups and downs of the trade with Harry Platt. Lizzie—Harry's sister-in-law—talked to her friend Annie of the curious methods of the customers who dealt at her little provision shop. She had had to take out a summons against one of them last week who had owed her eleven and three-pence for a long time. The talk drifted vaguely here and there as talk will. There was Janey—Janey who ought to have been married, and who never was. What had become of her. Poor Janey! And Polly. Polly had done very well. Her husband was a manager now in a mill, and was getting four pounds a week. Think of that! And she was not stuck up about it either. She still spoke to her old friends when she saw them.

Travis, the bridegroom, was bustling around seeing that all got their beer when they wanted it. He was too excited and too busy to join in

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the conversation. His life had altogether changed now. He had lived with his two cousins Lizzie and Nelly ever since he was able to remember. From now on he was going to live with his wife in his mother-in-law's house.

Someone called for a song. And a young man got up in front of the fireplace with his hands behind his back. After two or three coughs of preparation, he trolled forth the latest serio-comic song. He had rather a nice voice, but his method of delivery was a bit tame. Things brightened up, however, when Cornelius produced his piccolo. Cornelius was a mechanic who improved his odd hours by practising music.

He rattled off an Irish jig on the piccolo. But the time was not yet. The company had not yet risen to the dancing point. The beer in the the nine-gallon cask was good beer, but its full, enlivening effect had hardly arrived. The company would have to give it a chance—to drink some more of it. And the day was still young.

A young woman began to sing. The song was of a sentimental order, and Cornelius essayed to accompany her on the piccolo. But somehow or another things hardly went along in the smoothest manner. Quite often there was disagreement between the tones of the piccolo and the tones of

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the young woman's voice. And at last Cornelius stopped playing and took refuge in a glass of beer that Travis handed to him.

It was at this point that Jim came in. He stepped rather quietly, so as not to disturb the young woman's singing, and sat down near Harry Platt. Lizzie caught his eye, and nodded and smiled. He was the next one who had to sing.

At last the dancing was going merrily and vigorously along. Cornelius had struck up another jig, and this time there was a response. First one got up on the floor and then another got up. And soon nearly the whole of the party were jigging for all they were worth. Whoop! They stepped gaily as they faced each other, and whirled, arm locked in arm, and passed and re-passed. The place was small, and one bumped into the other now and then. But that was nothing. The bride's mother especially distinguished herself. She insisted on her son-in-law dancing with her. But she soon beat him at the dance. She soon wore him down. In fact in the end she wore every one of the party down. She was ready to go on even when Cornelius laid the piccolo down and signed to Travis to get him a glass of beer. His throat needed mending and refreshing.

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It was after this that the young man who had sung the first song showed up in his best form. He was a skilful player on the concertina. First he stood in the middle of the floor and executed a solo whilst he swung the concertina round in the air. And then he sat down and played waltzes of all kinds and descriptions. There was only space enough in the parlour for three couples to waltz at the same time, and turns had to be taken. But everything went well and gaily.

And so the afternoon wore away into the evening, and the evening wore away into the night. And the dancing and the merriment and the singing still kept up. To-day was Saturday, and the bride and the bridegroom would have to be at work in the mill on Monday morning at six o'clock. They would join in the clamping of the clogs through the streets. Man and wife. They would go forth together to work. They would go out into the grey of early morning.

VIII.—THE ROUND HOUSE

I.

HAMMERS were clanging and steel was ringing and sparks were flying from the heads of great long chisels which the sledges were striking. Men were swinging these big, long-handled sledges over their heads and delivering blows steadily. The head had to be cut off a bolt, or a rusted nut had to be cut through, or a plug had to be driven out or in, or heads had to be beaten on the rivets of fire-boxes or boilers. Engines. Engines were everywhere. The great locomotive engines. They were standing over the pits in all stages of repair and being. Some without smoke-stacks—some without sheathing or wheels—some with cylinders open, out of which pistons had been taken. Engines disabled, or building, or being taken apart. Men were working on them :—filing out the axle-boxes, or grinding in the valves, or chipping down rough surfaces, or putting in or taking out tubes, or

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jacking and blocking up an engine so as to run the wheels out from under her. Men were doing everything to an engine that may be done to her when she is out of repair. They were in and out and here and there and everywhere. Moving slowly. Moving quickly. Moving hither and thither. As ants. Working in all sorts of positions, lying on their backs beneath the engines—standing at their vices filing—working over their heads at the roofs of fire-boxes—crawling into boilers—standing on ladders and working on the sides—carrying things to and fro. Hammers were clanging, steel was ringing, engines were looming.

It was the great round-house :—a level-floored amphitheatre with pits intersecting it. The pits ran in oblongs and were about four feet deep and five feet across.

Huge doors opened into the round-house for the locomotives to pass through. And in the middle of the round-house was an immense revolving table upon which the engines were turned till the tracks met the tracks of the pit over which they had to stand to be repaired.

Clang! clang! Clang! clang! Hammers were falling on the anvils in the smithy which

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could be seen through the north door of the round-house. Clang! clang! To one coming from the distance the multitude of sounds from the round-house and the smithy had rhythm—a strange, vast rhythm embodying proportion and disproportion—a rhythm curious and multiplex. As of life. Here in the smithy men were working with faces blackened with smoke and sweat, and fine-flying iron dust and coal dust. They were shaping and welding iron and steel. The steel-faced hammers were crushing and smashing and beating into shape the soft, glowing, pieces of metal that were being twisted and turned on the anvils. One! two! three! four! Here the strikers were following each other in turn in the beating into shape of a great, red, massive bar of iron which half covered the anvil. Then were guided by the eye of the smith—who was holding it with a pair of big-jawed pincers — as to how and where to strike it. Schehe! sch! Schehe! sch! Bellows were blowing full and steady and strong. Men were swinging on the handles. Forges were roaring and blaring and throwing out a great heat. Sparks whirled and flew around. Cinders and clinkers rattled and shook and fell. And from the forges came a full deep glow. Red as blood.

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Here in the great workshop iron was being fashioned into things of use and power. Iron. The true gold of the world. As gold its primal home was down in the bowels of the earth. As gold it was mined and brought up to the light and crushed and sifted and fused. But after this gold went one way and iron another. Iron was shaped into ploughs that made fruitful the earth's face. It was shaped into all things of use and mighty power. It was shaped into wondrous guarding ships—into swift engines—into keen swords—into great anchors and great chains that held ships safe through furious storms—into belching, destroying cannons. Iron. It was a thing of power, and a thing of might in peace and war. With it brave heroes cut their way to freedom. With it men pierced rocks deep, deep down in the darkness of the earth. With it they spanned great rivers. This sombre, earth-coloured metal had dowered man with the might of a god. It had brought him from out of the thick dark forest of ignorance into the glorious wide plain where was shining the sun of light and knowledge. Iron was a sombre, magical metal. A dark strange metal from which came light and power and grandeur and dominance. A thing of darkness from which burst

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flame. It was man's wand of magic. But for it man would still have lain grovelling in mist and darkness. Iron. A strange, sombre, earth-coloured metal. The metal of power.

II.

Jim was working in the midst of the noise of the clanging hammers of the round-house. He was no longer a porter at the station. The railway company made and repaired its own engines, and he had got work at fitting.

He had worked at the mechanics' trade before, but only as a turner in a machine shop. However, there would be time enough for him to learn to be an engine fitter before he was twenty-one. He would then, a year or two after that, get a fitter's full wages—thirty-two shillings a week. However long he stopped at portering on the railway the most he could get would be eighteen shillings or a pound a week. He had stated his case to the stationmaster—a crusty old fellow, but a good sort. And the result was that he was transferred to the engine shop at the same rate of wages that he was receiving as a porter.

Each pit in the round-house had its own gang of fitters over whom was a foreman. And at the end of each pit—up against the wall—three or four

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vices were bolted to a rough, strong, wooden bench. The men worked at these vices when some small belonging of the engine had to be filed or shaped down. Usually, however, they were working up on the engine itself as it stood over the pit. Generally, the gang of fitters on a pit numbered nine, including the foreman. They worked in pairs, because the weight of the parts of the engine that had to be lifted up, or taken down, usually called for the power of two men. There were also light jobs that needed two men. The work on the engine was often cramped and awkward. A man might have to work in a stooped position, or lie on his side, or on his back, or work with only one hand. And his mate would either hold the light, or keep the thing steady upon which he was working.

Besides the fitters there was a labourer, making the tenth man in all. But he was only there for the purpose of giving a hand if something were too heavy for the fitters to lift. He had also to keep the pit as clean as it was possible to keep it, considering the kind of work that was being done. His wages were seventeen shillings a week, and he had to confine himself strictly to the unskilled work about the pit. Under no circumstances was he allowed to do any work that partook of

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the nature of the work of a fitter. He was not allowed even to take a hammer in his hand. He might have the greatest natural aptitude for the becoming of a skilled workman, but it made no difference. He had to confine himself strictly to the labouring work of the pit. If he did not do this, the fitters would go on strike. They belonged to the Engineers' Society, and the society was alive to the tendency of employers to put labourers to work at fitting—when possible—at less than the union rate of wages. This unfairness of the fitters to the labourer, in the sense of not allowing him a chance to learn a trade, was a matter of self-preservation.

It may as well be said here that the workmen who comprised the Engineers' Society—engineers, as they were called generally—had, as a class, one grave fault. They looked down upon all men who chanced to be unskilled labourers. There were certain kinds of labouring work—such as navvying, for instance—where the labourers earned as much as the engineers themselves. But the engineers looked down upon them, nevertheless. They felt that they were far above these unskilled labourers. They would not allow their children to play with the children of un-

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skilled labourers. They would not drink in the same part of the public-house with unskilled labourers. They must go and drink in the bar-parlour. In a word, the engineers were snobs. They were too conceited, or not intelligent enough to see that the cause of all labour—skilled or unskilled—is the same.

It was this attitude of theirs that was at the root of the great beating they got in the last strike. They were too blind and selfish to join in with labour generally. In fact they styled themselves "the aristocrats of labour."

And if ever foolish workmen needed a beating to let a little sense into their heads, they did. They were smashed and broken. And serve them right. Their attitude towards their fellow labourers was a treacherous one. Men who work with the hands must try and learn not to be snobs. They must learn to unite and fight together.

The working class will be slaves as long as they are snobs.

Jim got on very well at the pit where he was put to work. The foreman was a rough, good-hearted fellow from the north of Lancashire, and he took a fancy to him. And, taking it altogether on that pit, he had a good time.

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He was slow and backward, however, at getting a grasp of the work. To him an engine was a most mysterious and complicated thing. It seemed to him but an intricate and puzzling mass of wheels and cranks and rods and bars and cylinders and handles and nuts and bolts. He did not possess the instinct for mechanics. He watched everything and helped as well as he could in the process of taking the engine apart. But he was never able to solve for himself the mystery of its propulsion. And it was of no use asking questions. One had to understand for one's-self.

There were times when he was able to do nothing but stand and watch another man work. And he felt humiliated. Often he would have to stand in this manner for hours. And often he wished himself back on the platform of the station. He wished that he were a porter again.

A feeling of helplessness and awkwardness was upon him as he stood doing nothing. He used to feel that the eyes of the head foreman of the round-house were always upon him. He was standing there, idle, in the midst of the noise of busy, clanging hammers. In a way it was the hardest experience of his life.

But gradually he became more useful. He became able to help with the work. He was very

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slow, however, in learning to use the hammer and chisel. One had to be able to keep one's eye on the edge of the chisel as it was cutting—to be able to strike the head of the chisel fully and heavily with the hammer without looking at it. Often he struck and maimed the hand which was holding the chisel. But in time he became surer of his blow. But he never became really deft and skilful with his tools. It was hardly the work for which he was suited. He was naturally somewhat awkward with his hands.

It was smearing, blackening work, because of the oil and smoke-grime and dust which covered the engines when they came into the round-house to be repaired. Still, it was really healthier to work at repairing engines than at building new engines. The oil kept the dust from flying.

The smell in the round-house was hardly to be described. There was at once the full, heavy smell of the oil, and the sharp, healthful smell of the iron, and the faint, unpleasant, almost sulphur-like smell of brass, and the curious, acrid smell of soot that brought a choking into the throat, and the smell of the small, coke fires where the holders-up for the boilermakers heated their rivets, and the smell of the thick smoke that was issuing from the chimney of some engine which

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had been fired up before leaving the round-house for the running-test outside. All these smells together made an overwhelming, all-pervading smell not to be described. The smell of an immense workshop in iron.

The men used to sing at their work. Many of the holders-up were Welshmen, and they sang as they heated the rivets at their small fires. In the round-house there were always at least three or four engines having their boilers repaired. The Welshmen had sung at their festivals in Wales, and they brought their love of singing here to the great workshop. They had to keep silent, however, when the manager was coming round—a big, old, slow-moving, stern-eyed man with a white beard. It was not that the singing interfered with the work. It helped it. But the manager was one who believed in keeping the men under as much as possible. Although he was slow, he had a way of appearing suddenly without warning—a trick that overlookers and managers learn.

The fact of Jim belonging to Halle's choir, and of singing now and then at the Slip Inn, stood in his favour. The men were musically inclined as men are apt to be who work with the ring of hammers in their ears. And besides, a couple of the men in the round-house had heard him sing

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in the Slip. The word had passed round that he had talent that way, and, curiously enough, it partly excused him for his backwardness and awkwardness at his work.

There was always a good deal of talk going on about singers. In fact, taking these men generally, they had a far keener and truer sense of the beauty and wonder of the art of music than the leisured people of the great world outside.

Music was often discussed in the breakfast half-hour. The men usually went to have breakfast in the joiner's shop, because it was a more comfortable place than the round-house. There were comfortable places in it to sit down. And after breakfast they chatted upon whatever subject came up. Two or three minutes before the half-hour was up they had to go down the long yard and deposit their brass, numbered checks in the office, so that the timekeeper could book up their time. The timekeeper, by the way, was a long, black-bearded, sallow-faced fellow who was insolent in his manner towards the men. Because he was a clerk, and therefore worked with his coat on, he felt above them.

Usually the water for the men's breakfast was boiled at fires outside the round-house. A few minutes before the knocking-off time for breakfast

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the labourer of the pit collected the men's baggin' cans—plain, straight-up-and-down tin cans, holding between a pint and a quart. He filled them with steam-heated water, and set them on and around the open fire to boil. He received a trifle a week from each of the fitters for doing this. Occasionally, he might fry a bit of bacon or roast a herring for one of the men. But this was rather troublesome. As a rule the bacon or the meat, or whatever it was that the men had to eat with their bread, had been cooked by their wives the night before. It was rarely that they had milk with their tea or coffee. It was unhandy to carry, and was apt to turn sour.

When possible, some of the men preferred to fill their baggin' cans with cold water and boil them over a gas-flame. They had a prejudice against the steam-heated water. But in doing this they ran a great risk. If the old manager came around and found a can hanging over a gas-flame, he immediately discharged the man to whom the can belonged. The company went in for burning as little gas as possible. It was rarely, however, that a man was caught. There were all sorts of ways of managing so that the flame from the gas-jet would not show.

The men who lived close by the works went

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home to their breakfast. And at dinner-time—
an hour being given for the meal—almost every-
one went home.

III.

Men get to know each other best of all when they work together. Under the stress of actual work a man becomes natural. He shows clearly what is in him. And he becomes tolerant towards his fellow worker. He sees his peculiarities, and the things in him that are called faults, with a sharp enough eye, but he bears with him just as he knows that he himself is borne with. He may have an active dislike for the man who is set over him to watch him, but for the man who is on a level with him he has full understanding and toleration. In fact this understanding and toleration that comes of working together has such great effect that men, who are enemies instinctively, will in time bury their dislike and distrust of each other. Each will realise that the other is a man and has the rights of a man. The fact of this toleration and comradeship, that comes of men working together, shows that the idea of democracy is based on a sound and deep understanding of the instincts of human beings.

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IV.

“Hot Jobs” came into the round-house. A “hot job” simply meant an engine that had to be repaired in a hurry. The men had to go at it night and day till the work on it was finished. They did not even stop the full time for meals. The engine was wanted, and they had to work at break-neck speed. It might be that there was only a trifling thing wrong with it—that it was but a matter of two or three hours’ work. Or it might be a job of from twenty-four to forty-eight hours long.

In a way the men liked these hot jobs. The excitement attending them broke up the monotony of their usual work. There was a certain fascination in working at dead of night in the silence of the great round-house. The hammers rang around and through the stillness and darkness. Even the voices of the men reverberated strangely. And they could hear the chiming of the bells of the world outside. The metal clanked weirdly as they worked. They were as men working in a place that was dead.

The best time of all, however, for the men was when they were trying an engine after it had been

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repaired on the pit. At four o'clock in the morning—two hours before they came to work—a fire was put into it so that steam would be up, or nearly up by the time they arrived. And then they worked it slowly along the track from over the pit. They bore down their weight upon long pinch-bars. They pushed the sharp, turned-up ends of the bars in between the wheels and the rails so as to get a bite on the wheels. And they bore down and down on the long bars, and the engine moved slowly, and slowly till at last they had got it on to the tracks of the immense revolving table in the middle of the round-house. And now they all jumped on to the engine, and the foreman caught hold of the throttle and moved it slowly to let the steam into the engine.

Now was the time to know if they had made a good job. The engine had lain dead over the pit for perhaps two months. It had lain lifeless whilst they had hammered and worked upon it day after day. And the crucial test of fire was now brought to bear upon it. The moment had arrived to know if the work done upon it was steam-tight and airtight and fire-tight and water-tight. Were the joints well and evenly and snugly laid in? Had the valves been ground to a perfect and absolute fit with the valve-facings? The valves that

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let in the steam—the life - blood — into the engine.

The moment had arrived to know if Joe or Tom or Bill had done his work faithfully and well. The wonderful, ruthless, and potent steam—that terrible child of water and fire—was about to test it. A man bent down and listened eagerly as the throttle—the lever—was moved slowly. He could tell by the sound if all were well. Nay, even if there were no sound, he could feel if all were well. For he knew the engine and his work upon it as he knew himself. He had become at one with this thing of many metals.

The engine moved—it was off the immense revolving table—it was out of the round-house—it was speeding along the track—speeding along in the open air. All was well !

It might be that there were small leakages—small imperfections. But the fire though it was ruthless was still kindly. It but asked for certain things. And when these were given it, it relented and aided man in his work. It would cure these small imperfections. It would make the work of man still more sound and strong.

All day long they would run with the engine in the open air. Either they were sitting on the heap of coal needed for firing up, or they were

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standing on the footplate of the engine watching sharply its workings, or they were going cautiously around it feeding it with oil from long-spouted oil-cans. Now and then they stopped to do a slight thing here and there, or to feel if the axle-boxes were running cool and sound and well.

And as the hours passed the engine ran better and better. The valves had now worked into their facings with a fitness and an absoluteness that was beyond the power of the hand of man to achieve. Metal had come to know metal. The engine had become a being with a sentience of its own. It had become at one with all its parts. It had acquired a personality that no human would ever understand. It had come to the inner, hidden knowledge of its own secrets.

v.

One day a change occurred. Jim was shifted to a pit off over on the other side of the round-house.

He did not like to go, for he had grown used to his mates. But the word of the head foreman of the round-house was all-powerful.

Going on to another pit meant, practically, a complete change in his life. He was going amongst strangers, for the men of different pits

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rarely came into contact with one another. True, they saw one another at meal times, or when they were going to or coming from work, but this meant very little. The men of different pits were, in effect, strangers to one another. Each pit was a little world of its own. It had its own quarrels and misunderstandings and friendships and tolerations. Each worker knew his fellow worker's faults and failings and good and bad points.

The fact of the matter was that there had been a great row in the pit on the other side of the round-house. The foreman had been unable to agree with one of the fitters who worked under him. As a rule the foremen of the pits agreed with their men. But this foreman was an exception. And the result was that Jim was transferred to his pit in place of the other man.

The foreman was an old Welshman. He had the lofty, bold forehead and the strong lower jaw of the man of power. In another place and under other circumstances he would have come out as a hard ruler of men. He had it in him to be one of the world's forces. But the narrowness of his life and his chances and his work had turned him into a petty tyrant—one who made life miserable for the eight men who worked under him.

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There are men who lust after power as a miser lusts after gold. He was one of these. To be able to order men about, to shift them here and there, and to show his authority in a hundred little and exacting ways was a mania with him. And besides this he was continually having rows with one or other of the men. He was the sort of man who causes mutiny aboard ship—who causes men to become sullen and to move around with black murder in their hearts.

It is a curious fact that in the main the worst tyrants over working men are men who are raised from their own ranks. It is useless to shirk this fact. It exists. But the reason of it is not because working men are inherently unsympathetic towards each other. The reason of it is because working men inherit the meanness and the vices of slaves. There are a few of them who are capable of becoming fine and noble. But only a few. Taking the working man generally, however, he is just as any man would be under the circumstances—even were he descended from a king. These slaves of labour must be born again. And baptized in blood.

Life had become hard for Jim in the round-

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house. At first he had got on all right with the old Welshman, but as the time passed he had gradually taken the place of the man who had been forced to leave the pit. The Welshman had at last made him almost the sole object of his spite and ill-temper. Jim had applied to the head foreman to be shifted from the pit, but his application had been refused. In fact he had been given to understand that he could leave altogether if he were not satisfied to work under the Welshman.

He would have left gladly, but if he left there was nothing before him but starvation. Even as it was there was barely enough money earned by him and his brothers to keep food in the house. The family had again fallen on a bad time. Things in Manchester were slack and work was hard to get. And there was another thing. If he left now, there was no chance of his learning the fitters' trade properly. He was backward enough already as it was. So he had to bear with the tyranny of the Welshman as patiently as he could.

But there were times when he felt that he could kill him. There were times when he was all but on the point of going up to him and striking in his head with a hammer. The desire to kill him would flash suddenly upon him. But if he killed

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him he would be put into prison, and he would be hung. He had to restrain the terrible promptings. He had to be patient.

To be dumb and restrained under tyranny has a strange effect upon the mind. It engenders within it a subtle and sinister power. It is the power that wears away and in the end kills the tyrant. A strange, maleficent power.

This power that comes from being dumb and restrained under tyranny may not tell for years. It may not tell for centuries. But in the end it withers the thing that has evoked it. Or it finds effective and terrible expression in an agent of destruction.

This curious power lives in the air. An undying, intangible, far-reaching, maleficent agent. It lives through the centuries. It passes on from mind to mind. A heritage grim and slow. It wreaks its vengeance upon the great slayers and oppressors of men. It withers and slays oppressive institutions and empires. Naught can evade it in the end. A subtle, sinister power. But there is enclosed within it a fine and wonderful meaning. There is enclosed within it the irrevocable and ultimate justice. This power is at once fine and awful and terrible.

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Dulness and heaviness had now come upon the mind of Jim. The ambitions that had once possessed him had gone from him. There was nothing for him now but to work on and on. The horizon had become clouded and darkened. The old dreams had faded away.

Things were so different where he worked now. Always he felt the eye of the tyrant upon him. Always he felt the slow, growing hatred.

And he lost interest in music. His mind sank back again to the level of the mind of the slave for whom there is neither present nor future.

Could it be that he had once dreamed of a life in the great, free world outside? This thought came to him sometimes as he worked here in the midst of the clanging hammers—as he worked here in the dimness and half darkness. But even the thought itself was vague. And in time the thought did not come to him at all. He became a clod. The blight had fallen upon him—that blight that in time falls upon all men who work with the hands at monotonous labour.

What chance was there for him? What hope was there for him? He was only a clod with other clods. And the only brightness—if it were a brightness—was the feeling of comradeship he felt for the men who suffered the same lot as



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himself. He worked under a tyrant of his own class. What chance was there for him ?

And darkness settled about him. Dreams and ambitions were killed in him. He was but a slave who worked with the hands.

He worked dully on.

IX.—ON A WINTER MORNING

It was a dark winter morning and Jim was holding a long chisel while his mate was striking down on the top of it with a sledge. They were cutting away nuts near the axle-boxes of the engine, and Jim had to bend down low so as to be able to get the chisel-edge in the exact place. It was hard to see this morning. He had to hold the little tin oil-lamp with his left hand close up to the side of the engine. With his right hand he grasped the stock of the long chisel, the end of which rested upon his shoulder. His back was therefore turned to his mate, who was striking with all his might down upon the top of the chisel. Had his mate missed his stroke Jim's shoulder would have been broken by the blow of the heavy hammer. But Joe was sure of eye and swing. For years he had handled hammers and chisels and files and wrenches and all kinds of tools that an engineer uses. He had become skilful and sure and deft.

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The great round-house was filled with darkness and gloom. The fitful lights—shining and flickering here and there and off over yonder—only brought out the more the effect of darkness. It was as if men were working down in some underworld. Unseen men. Labour gnomes, working in dimness and darkness. The bright, clear sounds of their hammers were piercing the gloom.

The morning was cold. Jim's hand was feeling numbed as he grasped the long chisel. He felt the jar through his whole body as Joe came down with his sledge upon the steel. It was almost as if he were receiving the blow himself. The reason of this may have been because of his not grasping the chisel properly. His hand became more numbed, and soon he could hardly feel whether he was grasping the chisel or not. He would have liked to have taken a turn at the striking. The haft of the sledge was of wood, and in the cold it was better to grasp wood than to grasp iron! But this was impossible. He was not used to striking, and he might miss the head of the chisel and hurt his mate.

“What's matter wi' thee, lad?” said Joe.
“Tha'rt gooin' asleep.”

Jim had fallen forward against the side of the engine as the nut against which he was holding

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the edge of the chisel had been struck away by a powerful blow from Joe's hammer. The flying nut had smashed hard down on the floor, and Jim had barely saved his face from being cut as he fell forward.

Perhaps he had been half asleep. He could not have told. He was cold and his fingers were numbed. He felt miserable and tired. Before coming to work that morning he had had to tramp nearly three miles through the dark streets. He had been wakened before five o'clock by the old man knocking on the shutters — the old man who went the rounds, calling people up to go to work. And he had stopped in bed till he came round and knocked again on the shutters. And then he got up. He dressed himself slowly. His moleskin trousers felt icy cold. They seemed to take the warmth and life out of him. They were soaked with oil through his work at the engines during the day, and through the night they had become stiffened and half-frozen. They felt as cold as ice. And then he had lifted the latch of the door and walked out into the dark street. The morning was bitter cold, but what he felt even more than the cold was the strange, heavy, despairing numbness that comes from want of sleep! Sleep! He had never had enough of it through

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the whole of his life. It seemed to him that he had always been wakened up before five o'clock in the morning. Oh, if he could only sleep! He would like to sleep for hours and hours, and days and days. He would like to sleep for weeks and weeks, and years and years. He would like to sleep on and on till he died. If he could only sleep! All through his life he seemed to have been wishing for this. This thought was with him as he walked through the dark streets to his work. It was with him as he stopped at a coffee-stall to get a halfpenny cup of coffee and halfpenny bun. It was with him as he went on and on till he came to the door of the great workshop. It was with him as he heard clanging the great bell of the works. It was with him now as he grasped the long steel chisel here in the round-house.

Dawn began to struggle in through the smoke-grimed windows in the dome of the round-house. But it was dawn without the beauty of dawn. A cold, cheerless dawn, struggling into a place of grime and dust and smoke-stacks and dismantled engines. A dawn falling upon the gnomes of labour. Gnomes who were moving here and there and around and about, and holding chisels and striking with hammers, and twisting and turning bolts, and filing, and taking things apart, and

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putting things together. Dawn was coming into this place of grime and gloom and movement and the sound of hammers. A dawn that held within it a sinister promise of toil and moil and weariness. A dawn falling upon men born into the damnable heritage of labour, incessant and never-ending. A grey, strange dawn ushering in a day of gloom and darkness.

Jim began to think in the curious, disconnected way that belongs to men who work with the hands. The coming of dawn had banished from him the desire to sleep. He was now awake and alive.

Would he always have to work as he was working now? He had known nothing but blackness and dulness through the whole of his life. He had known nothing but hunger and poverty and the obeying of orders and working from morning till night. He remembered having to work when he was six years old. Nothing but work! Nothing but work! He would have to work all through the hours of this day! He would have to work all through the hours of to-morrow! And the next day! And the next day! And till he died! Nothing but work!

Gentlemen did no work! Why not? He was unable to tell. It was beyond him.

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In books he had read of a bright world outside. He would like to go there. But how was he to go? How was he to start?

Nothing but work! Nothing but work!

And suddenly there came to him some words of fire that he had once read in a book. They were words such as the words that shake and overthrow empires. Words splendid and terrible.

A man had written them in a book! What was this man who wrote the book like? Where was he? Where did he live? But perhaps he was dead.

The thought of these words filled him with a strange and awful feeling. The man who had written them had written them for one like himself. They burned him. They fired his blood.

He forgot that he was holding the chisel here in the round-house. His fingers were no longer numbed. Fire was breaking into him. He could lead forth men like himself to kill and destroy! He could arise and strike dead the whole world!

Suddenly he stood up and looked out through the door of the round-house, and off into the great smithy. The dawn had now fully broken. A greyness was in the air. He could see the forges

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flaming through the grey of the dawn. He could see men beating with hammers a huge, red-hot bar of iron.

Through the distance the bar of iron seemed to be taking the shape of a great sword.

A strange great light was now in his mind. It was as if the veil were being torn away from the darkness of the future.

He heard immense shouts and the shock and thunder of battle. Men of his kind had risen up and were slaying. It was as if the battle were raging over the whole world.

The world was filled with frightful flame.

Burning were the fine and splendid fires of Revolution. And high up in the Heavens there shone a great, flaming sword.

There came into his face a terrible smile. He was working here in the round-house, but his mind had gone far out.

These men who were destroying the world were men who were yet to come. These fine, avenging, terrible men were divided from him by a gulf of darkness. Plainly he could see their faces. Radiant, frightful, avenging faces.

His kind would have to pass through this dark gulf and then they would emerge and win

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for themselves the right to live. In front of them would stalk the dread herald, Death.

They would come through the darkness to their kingdom, guided by the glorious torch of Revolution.

But he and his kind of the present would die in the gloom. They would die, but they would live again in a grand and beautiful future. They would win Heaven not by prayers.

They would win it by blows.

But he must live in the darkness and die in the darkness. He had been born a slave, he would die a slave. He had come from darkness, was going through darkness, and would end in darkness.

But the time would come to pass.

And the winter morning wore on. And the slave worked on, his mind far out in the future. There passed before him scenes of tumult as he worked here in the midst of the clanging hammers.

And he smiled.

The time would come !

EPILOGUE

THE LOGIC OF REVOLUTIONS

I.

REVOLUTIONS are vast upheavals. They are the periodic purifyings of civilisations. They arise and cleanse them out as did the mighty Hercules the Augean stables of old.

Naught can stay them. Resistless they sweep. Great blood-oceans whose tides engulf all.

Revolution.

Through it sounds the terrible cry of the slave as he rises to smite the mighty that was. Through it sounds the exulting shout of humans who have lain beneath the heel till with a vast effort they arose. Through it sounds the triumphing yell of the new mighty as it crushes the old mighty Revolution. An expression splendid and terrible of choked desires and wants. A realising of strange portents and omens. A chaos of dust and blood and ideas. A turning of the wheel.

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A rising of the yeast. A storm fearful, vague, and withering.

Revolution.

Men arise with vast, sympathetic intellects, who say that it should not be—that it should be averted. As well say that a cyclone should not be—that the ocean should not engulf a ship in its fury—that an apple should not rot—that a world should not wear away. These are the philosophers who know fear. They fear the fine move and hurtle of Destruction. They would stay the whirling of the world.

The mightiest intellect that has ever analysed cannot nullify the law that compels a stone to fall when it is cast into the air. A fire would destroy the greatest works of man. A sword would slay a Buddha.

Philosophy avails not against the unknown laws that govern matter. It is at best but man's deduction from what he sees and comprehends—and he neither sees nor comprehends all. Therefore does his logic perish on absolute occasions. The philosopher withers before the flaming fire of events. One revolution will override the calculations of centuries.

Revolution is the prelude to change. A power glorious and terrible. The linking between the

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broken, illimitable harmony of Being. The moulding tool of the First Cause. It has led man upward from the protoplasm. It will lead him upward till he becomes a god. Since the first two atoms met in space and formed the beginning of the world, progression thereon has moved along the line of Revolution.

It is based upon the logic of climax. Throughout nature all that rules is climax. Sudden transformation. Man springs from his mother's womb—the flower, with a burst of bud, opens its beauty to the light—the crater instantly belches forth—floods overwhelm cities—civilisations die abruptly.

Even in the heavens occurred revolution.

Lucifer defied God.

II.

And again it is coming. It is approaching. The dust from the wheels of its frightful car is to be seen in the distance. The horizon is beginning to be illumed with the reflection of its awful, eating fire.

It is coming.

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And who knows? On one side is the ignorance of fatness, and gorging, and lust, and oppression. On the other side is the ignorance of leanness, of starvation, of dirt, of slavery, of the endeavouring to ape the oppressors.

But fire. Does this eating thing of blood purify? Does this thing with mighty, roaring voice chasten? Fire! Do you hold within your terrible self a jewel inestimable?

We shall see. It may be well, it may be ill for us all. We may be plunged into a deeper blackness, or we may emerge into glorious light.

But come.

All hail, Revolution! All hail to thee. Change! Thou transmuter! Thou fine thing of magic! Power that creates the glistening gem, that opens paths, that makes worlds!

Let us pledge to thee in this mighty coming fire. Let us all pledge to thee—worker, slave, oppressor, all. We are all men. Red is the blood of us all. We are humans—vital things that possess the wondrous power of genius.

Remember that it is men who conquered even fire.

We have conquered the ocean, the world, the



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air, and the things therein. Aye, men have strange, grand powers.

So let us be bold and resolute. Let us fear not. Nay, let us exult and face with bold brows this frightful, coming Change.

