HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

THROUGH THE FRAY: A TALE OF THE LUDDITE RIOTS

George Henty

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Содержание

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PREFACE

My Dear Lads:

The beginning of the present century, glorious as it was for British arms abroad, was a dark time to those who lived by their daily labor at home. The heavy taxation entailed by the war, the injury to trade, and the enormous prices of food, all pressed heavily upon the working classes. The invention of improved machinery, vast as has been the increase of trade which it has brought about, at first pressed heavily upon the hand workers, who assigned all their distress to the new inventions. Hence a movement arose, which did much damage and for a time threatened to be extremely formidable. It had its ramifications through all the manufacturing districts of England, the object being the destruction of the machinery, and a return to the old methods of work. The troubles which occurred in various parts of the country were known as the Luddite Riots, and the secret body which organized them was called King or General Lud. In the present story I have endeavored to give you an idea of the state of things which prevailed in Yorkshire, where, among the croppers and others employed in the woolen manufactures, was one of the most formidable branches of the secret association. The incidents of the murder of Mr. Horsfall and the attack upon Mr. Cartwright's mill are strictly accurate in all their details.

In this story I have left the historical battlefields, across so many of which I have taken you, and have endeavored to show that there are peaceful battles to be fought and victories to be won every jot as arduous and as difficult as those contested under arms. In "Facing Death" my hero won such a battle. He had to fight against external circumstances, and step by step, by perseverance, pluck, and determination, made his way in life. In the present tale my hero's enemy was within, and although his victory was at last achieved the victor was well nigh worsted in the fray. We have all such battles to fight, dear lads; may we all come unscathed and victorious through the fray!

Yours sincerely,

G. A. Henty

CHAPTER I: A FISHING EXPEDITION

It has just struck one, and the boys are streaming out from the schoolroom of Mr. Hathorn's academy in the little town of Marsden in Yorkshire. Their appearance would create some astonishment in the minds of lads of the present generation, for it was the year 1807, and their attire differed somewhat materially from that now worn. They were for the most part dressed in breeches tight at the knee, and buttoning up outside the close fitting jacket nearly under the arms, so that they seemed almost devoid of waist. At the present moment they were bareheaded; but when they went beyond the precincts of the school they wore stiff caps, flat and very large at the top, and with far projecting peaks.

They were not altogether a happy looking set of boys, and many of their cheeks were stained with tears and begrimed with dirt from the knuckles which had been used to wipe them away; for there was in the year 1807 but one known method of instilling instruction into the youthful mind, namely, the cane, and one of the chief qualifications of a schoolmaster was to be able to hit hard and sharp.

Mr. Hathorn, judged by this standard, stood very high in his profession; his cane seemed to whiz through the air, so rapidly and strongly did it descend, and he had the knack of finding out tender places, and of hitting them unerringly.

Any one passing in front of the schoolhouse during the hours when the boys were at their lessons would be almost sure to hear the sharp cracks of the cane, followed sometimes by dead silence, when the recipient of the blows was of a sturdy and Spartan disposition, but more frequently by shrieks and cries.

That Hathorn's boys hated their master was almost a matter of course. At the same time they were far from regarding him as an exceptional monster of cruelty, for they knew from their friends that flogging prevailed almost everywhere, and accepted it as a necessary portion of the woes of boyhood. Indeed, in some respects, when not smarting under the infliction, they were inclined to believe that their lot was, in comparison with that of others, a fortunate one; for whereas in many schools the diet was so poor and bad that the boys were half starved, at Hathorn's if their food was simple and coarse it was at least wholesome and abundant.

Mr. Hathorn, in fact, intended, and as he quite believed with success, to do his duty by his boys. They were sent to him to be taught, and he taught them through the medium then recognized as most fitting for the purpose—the cane; while, as far as an abundance of porridge for breakfast, and of heavy pudding at dinner, with twice a week an allowance of meat, the boys were unstinted. He would indeed point with pride to his pupils when their parents assembled at the annual presentation of prizes.

"Look at them!" he would say proudly. "None of your half starved skeletons here—well filled out and in good condition every boy of them—no stint of porridge here. It keeps them in good health and improves their learning; for, mark you, a plump boy feels the cane twice as much as a skinny one; it stings, my dear sir, it stings, and leaves its mark; whereas there is no getting at a boy whose clothes hang like bags about him."

This was no doubt true, and the boys themselves were conscious of it, and many had been the stern resolutions made while smarting in agony that henceforward food should be eschewed, or taken only in sufficient quantities to keep life together. But boys' appetites are stronger than boys' resolutions, and in the end there was never any marked falling off in the consumption of viands at Hathorn's.

Like other things punishment fails when administered in excess. There was no disgrace whatever in what was common to all, for although some of the boys of superior ability and perseverance would escape with a smaller amount of punishment than their fellows, none could hope to escape altogether. Thus it was only the pain that they had to bear, and even this became to some

extent deadened by repetition, and was forgotten as soon as inflicted, save when a sudden movement caused a sharp pain in back or leg. Once in the playground their spirits revived, and except a few whose recent punishment incapacitated them for a time from active exercise, the whole were soon intent upon their games.

One only of the party wore his cap, and he after a few minutes left the others, and went toward a door which led from the playground into the road.

"Don't be long, Sankey; come back as soon as you can, you know we agreed to go fishing this afternoon."

"All right, Tompkins; I will come back directly I have done my dinner. I expect I shall have finished quite as soon as you will."

Edward Sankey, who was regarded with envy by his schoolfellows, was the only home boarder at Hathorn's; for, as a general thing, the master set his face against the introduction of home boarders. They were, he considered, an element of disturbance; they carry tales to and from the school; they cause discontent among the other boys, and their parents are in the habit of protesting and interfering. Not, indeed, that parents in those days considered it in any way a hardship for their boys to suffer corporal punishment; they had been flogged at school, and they believed that they had learned their lessons all the better for it. Naturally the same thing would happen to their sons. Still mothers are apt to be weak and soft hearted, and therefore Mr. Hathorn objected to home boarders.

He had made an exception in Sankey's case; his father was of a different type to those of the majority of his boys; he had lost his leg at the battle of Assaye, and had been obliged to leave the army, and having but small means beyond his pension, had settled near the quiet little Yorkshire town as a place where he could live more cheaply than in more bustling localities. He had, when he first came, no acquaintances whatever in the place, and therefore would not be given to discuss with the parents of other boys the doings in the school. Not that Mr. Hathorn was afraid of discussion, for he regarded his school as almost perfect of its kind. Still it was his fixed opinion that discussion was, as a general rule, unadvisable. Therefore, when Captain Sankey, a few weeks after taking up his residence in the locality, made a proposal to him that his son should attend his school as a home boarder, Mr. Hathorn acceded to the proposition, stating frankly his objections, as a rule, to boys of that class.

"I shall not interfere," Captain Sankey said. "Of course boys must be thrashed, and provided that the punishment is not excessive, and that it is justly administered, I have nothing to say against it. Boys must be punished, and if you don't flog you have to confine them, and in my opinion that is far worse for a boy's temper, spirit, and health."

So Ned Sankey went to Hathorn's, and was soon a great favorite there. Just at first he was regarded as a disobliging fellow because he adhered strictly to a stipulation which Mr. Hathorn had made, that he should not bring things in from the town for his school fellows. Only once a week, on the Saturday half holiday, were the boys allowed outside the bounds of the wall round the playground, and although on Wednesday an old woman was allowed to come into those precincts to sell fruit, cakes, and sweets, many articles were wanted in the course of the week, and the boys took it much amiss for a time that Ned refused to act as their messenger; but he was firm in his refusals. His father had told him not to do so, and his father's word was law to him; but when the boys saw that in all other respects he was a thoroughly good fellow, they soon forgave him what they considered his undue punctiliousness, and he became a prime favorite in the school.

It is due to Mr. Hathorn to say that no fear of interference induced him to mitigate his rule to thrash when he considered that punishment was necessary, and that Ned received his full share of the general discipline. He was never known to utter a cry under punishment, for he was, as his school fellows said admiringly, as hard as nails; and he was, moreover, of a dogged disposition which would have enabled him, when he had once determined upon a thing, to carry it through even if it killed him. Mr. Hathorn regarded this quality as obstinacy, the boys as iron resolution; and while the

former did his best to conquer what he regarded as a fault, the boys encouraged by their admiration what they viewed as a virtue.

At home Ned never spoke of his punishments; and if his father observed a sudden movement which told of a hidden pain, and would say cheerfully, “What! have you been getting it again, Ned?” the boy would smile grimly and nod, but no complaint ever passed his lips.

There was no disgrace in being flogged—it was the natural lot of schoolboys; why should he make a fuss about it? So he held his tongue. But Mr. Hathorn was not altogether wrong. Ned Sankey was obstinate, but though obstinate he was by no means sulky. When he made up his mind to do a thing he did it, whether it was to be at the top of his class in order to please his father, or to set his teeth like iron and let no sound issue from them as Mr. Hathorn’s cane descended on his back.

Ned Sankey was about fourteen years of age. He had a brother and a sister, but between them and himself was a gap of four years, as some sisters who had been born after him had died in infancy. Ned adored his father, who was a most kind and genial man, and would have suffered anything in silence rather than have caused him any troubles or annoyance by complaining to him.

For his mother his feelings were altogether different. She was a kindly and well intentioned woman, but weak and silly. On leaving school she had gone out to join her father in India. Captain Sankey had sailed in the same ship and, taken by her pretty face and helpless, dependent manner, he had fallen in love with her, knowing nothing of her real disposition, and they had been married upon their arrival at the termination of the voyage. So loyal was his nature that it is probable Captain Sankey never admitted even to himself that his marriage had been a mistake; but none of his comrades ever doubted it. His wife turned out one of the most helpless of women. Under the plea of ill health she had at a very early period of their marriage given up all attempt to manage the affairs of the household, and her nerves were wholly unequal to the strain of looking after her children. It was noticeable that though her health was unequal to the discharge of her duties, she was always well enough to take part in any pleasure or gayety which might be going on; and as none of the many doctors who attended her were able to discover any specific ailment, the general opinion was that Mrs. Sankey’s ill health was the creation of her own imagination. This, however, was not wholly the case. She was not strong; and although, had she made an effort, she would have been able to look after her children like other women, she had neither the disposition nor the training to make that effort.

Her son regarded her with the sort of pity, not unmingled with contempt, with which young people full of life and energy are apt to regard those who are weak and ailing without having any specific disease or malady which would account for their condition.

“All the bothers fall upon father,” he would say to himself; “and if mother did but make up her mind she could take her share in them well enough. There was he walking about for two hours this evening with little Lucy in his arms, because she had fallen down and hurt herself; and there was mother lying on the sofa reading that book of poetry, as if nothing that happened in the house was any affair of hers. She is very nice and very kind, but I do wish she wouldn’t leave everything for father to do. It might have been all very well before he lost his leg, but I do think she ought to make an effort now.”

However, Mrs. Sankey made no effort, nor did her husband ever hint that it would be better for herself as well as her family if she did so. He accepted the situation as inevitable, and patiently, and indeed willingly, bore her burden as well as his own.

Fortunately she had in the children’s nurse an active and trustworthy woman. Abijah Wolf was a Yorkshire woman. She had in her youth been engaged to a lad in her native village. In a moment of drunken folly, a short time before the day fixed for their wedding, he had been persuaded to enlist. Abijah had waited patiently for him twelve years. Then he had returned a sergeant, and she had married him and followed him with his regiment, which was that in which Captain Sankey—at that time a young ensign—served. When the latter’s first child was born at Madras there was a difficulty in obtaining a white nurse, and Mrs. Sankey declared that she would not trust the child to a native.

Inquiries were therefore made in the regiment, and Sergeant Wolf's wife, who had a great love for children although childless herself, volunteered to fill the post for a time. A few months afterward Sergeant Wolf was killed in a fight with a marauding hill tribe. His widow, instead of returning home and living on the little pension to which she was entitled at his death, remained in the service of the Sankeys, who soon came to regard her as invaluable.

She was somewhat rough in her ways and sharp with her tongue; but even Mrs. Sankey, who was often ruffled by her brusque independence, was conscious of her value, and knew that she should never obtain another servant who would take the trouble of the children so entirely off her hands. She retained, indeed, her privilege of grumbling, and sometimes complained to her husband that Abijah's ways were really unbearable. Still she never pressed the point, and Abijah appeared established as a permanent fixture in the Sankeys' household. She it was who, when, after leaving the service, Captain Sankey was looking round for a cheap and quiet residence, had recommended Marsden.

"There is a grand air from the hills," she said, "which will be just the thing for the children. There's good fishing in the stream for yourself, captain, and you can't get a quieter and cheaper place in all England. I ought to know, for I was born upon the moorland but six miles away from it, and should have been there now if I hadn't followed my man to the wars."

"Where are you going, Master Ned?" she asked as the boy, having finished his dinner, ran to the high cupboard at the end of the passage near the kitchen to get his fishing rod.

"I am going out fishing, Abijah."

"Not by yourself, I hope?"

"No; another fellow is going with me. We are going up into the hills."

"Don't ye go too far, Master Ned. They say the croppers are drilling on the moors, and it were bad for ye if you fell in with them."

"They wouldn't hurt me if I did."

"I don't suppose they would," the nurse said, "but there is never no saying. Poor fellows! they're druv well nigh out of their senses with the bad times. What with the machines, and the low price of labor, and the high price of bread, they are having a terrible time of it. And no wonder that we hear of frame breaking in Nottingham, and Lancashire, and other places. How men can be wicked enough to make machines, to take the bread out of poor men's mouths, beats me altogether."

"Father says the machinery will do good in the long run, Abijah—that it will largely increase trade, and so give employment to a great many more people than at present. But it certainly is hard on those who have learned to work in one way to see their living taken away from them."

"Hard!" the nurse said. "I should say it were hard. I know the croppers, for there were a score of them in my village, and a rough, wild lot they were. They worked hard and they drank hard, and the girl as chose a cropper for a husband was reckoned to have made a bad match of it; but they are determined fellows, and you will see they won't have the bread taken out of their mouths without making a fight for it."

"That may be," Ned said, "for every one gives them the name of a rough lot; but I must talk to you about it another time, Abijah, I have got to be off;" and having now found his fishing rod, his box of bait, his paper of books, and a basket to bring home the fish he intended to get, Ned ran off at full speed toward the school.

As Abijah Wolf had said, the croppers of the West Riding were a rough set. Their occupation consisted in shearing or cropping the wool on the face of cloths. They used a large pair of shears, which were so set that one blade went under the cloth while the other worked on its upper face, mowing the fibers and ends of the wool to a smooth, even surface. The work was hard and required considerable skill, and the men earned about twenty-four shillings a week, a sum which, with bread and all other necessities of life at famine prices, barely sufficed for the support of their families. The introduction of power looms threatened to abolish their calling. It was true that although these

machines wove the cloth more evenly and smoothly than the hand looms, croppers were still required to give the necessary smoothness of face; still the tendency had been to lower wages.

The weavers were affected even more than the croppers, for strength and skill were not so needed to tend the power looms as to work the hand looms. Women and boys could do the work previously performed by men, and the tendency of wages was everywhere to fall.

For years a deep spirit of discontent had been seething among the operatives in the cotton and woolen manufactures, and there had been riots more or less serious in Derbyshire, Nottingham, Lancashire and Yorkshire, which in those days were the headquarters of these trades. Factories had been burned, employers threatened and attacked, and the obnoxious machines smashed. It was the vain struggle of the ignorant and badly paid people to keep down production and to keep up wages, to maintain manual labor against the power of the steam engine.

Hitherto factories had been rare, men working the frames in their own homes, and utilizing the labor of their wives and families, and the necessity of going miles away to work in the mills, where the looms were driven by steam, added much to the discontent.

Having found his fishing appliances Ned hurried off to the school, where his chum Tompkins was already waiting him, and the two set out at once on their expedition.

They had four miles to walk to reach the spot where they intended to fish. It was a quiet little stream with deep pools and many shadows, and had its source in the heart of the moorlands. Neither of them had ever tried it before, but they had heard it spoken of as one of the best streams for fish in that part. On reaching its banks the rods were put together, the hooks were baited with worms, and a deep pool being chosen they set to work. After fishing for some time without success they tried a pool higher up, and so mounted higher and higher up the stream, but ever with the same want of success.

“How could they have said that this was a good place for fish?” Tompkins said angrily at last. “Why, by this time it would have been hard luck if we had not caught a dozen between us where we usually fish close to the town, and after our long walk we have not had even a bite.”

“I fancy, Tompkins,” Ned said, “that we are a couple of fools. I know it is trout that they catch in this stream, and of course, now I think of it, trout are caught in clear water with a fly, not with a worm. Father said the other day he would take me out some Saturday and give me a lesson in fly fishing. How he will laugh when I tell him we have wasted all our afternoon in trying to catch trout with worms!”

“I don’t see anything to laugh at,” Tompkins grumbled. “Here we waste a whole half holiday, and nothing to show for it, and have got six or seven miles at least to tramp back to school.”

“Well, we have had a nice walk,” Ned said, “even if we are caught in the rain. However, we may as well put up our rods and start. I vote we try to make a straight cut home; it must be ever so much shorter to go in a straight line than to follow all the windings of this stream.”

They had long since left the low lands, where trees and bushes bordered the stream, and were in a lonely valley where the hills came down close to the little stream, which sparkled among the boulders at their feet. The slopes were covered with a crop of short wiry grass through which the gray stone projected here and there. Tiny rills of water made their way down the hillside to swell the stream, and the tinge of brown which showed up wherever these found a level sufficient to form a pool told that they had their source in the bogs on the moorland above. Tompkins looked round him rather disconcertedly.

“I don’t know,” he said. “It’s a beastly long way to walk round; but suppose we got lost in trying to make our way across the hills.”

“Well, just as you like,” Ned said, “I am game to walk back the way we came or to try and make a straight cut, only mind don’t you turn round and blame me afterward. You take your choice; whichever you vote for I am ready to do.”

“My shoes are beginning to rub my heels,” Tompkins said, “so I will take the shortest way and risk it. I don’t see we can go far out of our way.”

"I don't see that we can," Ned replied. "Marsden lies to the east, so we have only to keep our backs to the sun; it won't be down for another two hours yet, and before that we ought to be in."

By this time they had taken their rods to pieces, wound up their lines, and were ready to start. A few minutes' sharp climbing took them to the top of the slope. They were now upon the moor, which stretched away with slight undulations as far as they could see.

"Now," Ned said, "we will make for that clump of rocks. They seem to be just in the line we ought to take, and by fixing our eyes upon them we shall go straight."

This, however, was not as easy to do as Ned had fancied; the ground was in many places so soft and boggy that they were forced to make considerable detours. Nevertheless the rocks served as a beacon, and enabled them to keep the right direction; but although they made their way at the best of their speed it was an hour after starting before they approached the rock.

When they were within fifty yards of it a figure suddenly rose. It was that of a boy some fifteen years of age.

"Goa back," he shouted; "dang yer, what be'est a cooming here vor?"

The two boys stopped astonished.

"We are going to Marsden," Ned replied; "but what's that to you?"

"Doan't ee moind wot it be to oi," the boy said; "oi tell ee ee can't goa no further; yoi've got ter go back."

"We shan't go back," Ned said; "we have got as much right to go this way as you have. This is not your land; and if it is, we ain't hurting it."

By this time they were at the foot of the pile of rocks, and the lad was standing some ten feet above them.

"Oi tell ee," he repeated doggedly, "yoi've got vor to go back."

The boy was so much bigger and stronger than either Ned or his companion that the former, although indignant at this interference, did not deem it prudent to attempt to climb the crag, so he said to Tompkins: "Of course we ain't going back, but we had better take a turn so as to get out of the way of this fellow."

So saying they turned to the right and prepared to scout round the rock and continue their way; but this did not suit their obstructor.

"If ee doan't go back at oncet oi'll knock the heads off thee shoulders."

"We can't go back," Tompkins said desperately, "we are both as tired as we can be, and my heel is so sore that I can hardly walk. We shouldn't get to Marsden tonight if we were to turn back."

"That's nowt to oi," the boy said. "Oi bain't a-going to let ee pass here."

"What are we to do, Ned?" Tompkins groaned.

"Do!" Ned replied indignantly. "Why, go on, of course. Marsden cannot be more than three miles off, and I ain't going to walk twelve miles round to please this obstinate brute."

"But he is ever so much bigger than we are," Tompkins said doubtfully.

"Well, there are two of us," Ned said, "and two to one is fair enough when he is as big as the two of us together."

"We are going on," he said to the boy, "and if you interfere with us it will be the worse for you."

The boy descended leisurely from his position on the rocks.

"Oi don't want to hurt ee, but oi've got to do as oi were bid, and if ee doan't go back oi've got to make ee. There be summat a-going on thar," and he jerked his head behind him, "as it wouldn't be good vor ee to see, and ye bain't a-going vor to see it."

But Ned and Tompkins were desperate now, and dropping their rods made a rush together against him.

CHAPTER II: THE FIGHT ON THE MOOR

The lad threw himself into a position of defense as the two boys rushed at him.

"Oi doan't want vor to hurt ee," he said again, "but if ee will have it, why, it won't be moi vault;" and swinging his arm round, he brought it down with such force upon the nose of Tompkins that the latter was knocked down like a ninepin, and, once down, evinced no intention of continuing the conflict.

In Ned, however, the lad found an opponent of a different stamp. The latter saw at once that his opponent's far greater weight and strength rendered it hopeless for him to trust to close fighting, and he worked round and round him, every now and then rushing at him and delivering a telling blow, and getting off again before his heavy and comparatively unwieldy companion could reply.

Once or twice, indeed, the lad managed to strike him as he came in, each time knocking him fairly off his feet; but in the fair spirit which at that time animated English men and boys of all classes he allowed Ned each time to regain his feet without interference.

"Thou bee'st a plucky one," he said, as Ned after his third fall again faced him, "but thou bain't strong enough for oi."

Ned made no reply, but nerved himself for a fresh effort. The blows he had received had been heavy, and the blood was streaming from his face; but he had no idea of giving in, although Tompkins, in spite of his calls and reproaches, refused to raise himself beyond a sitting position.

"It's no good, Ned," he replied, "the brute is too big for us, and I'd rather try to walk home all the way round than get another like the last. My nose feels as big as my head."

Ned hardly heard what his companion said. He would have been killed rather than yield now, and gathering all his strength he sprang at his opponent like a tiger. Avoiding the blow which the boy aimed at him, he leaped upon him, and flung his arms round his neck. The sudden shock overthrew him, and with a crash both boys came to the ground together.

Ned at once loosened his hold, and springing to his feet again, awaited the rising of his opponent. The latter made a movement to get up, and then fell back with a cry.

"Thou hast beaten me," he said. "Oi think moi leg be broke."

Ned saw now that as the lad had fallen his leg had been twisted under him, and that he was unable to extricate it. In a moment he was kneeling before the prostrate lad.

"Oh! I am sorry," he exclaimed; "but you know I didn't mean to do it. Here, Tompkins, don't sit there like a fool, but come and help me move him and get his leg straight."

Although the boys did this as gently as they could, a groan showed how great was the agony.

"Where is it?" Ned asked.

"Aboove the knee somewhere," the lad said, and Ned put his hand gently to the spot, and to his horror could feel something like the end of a bone.

"Oh! dear, what is to be done? Here, Tompkins, either you or I must go on to the town for help."

"It's getting dark already," Tompkins said; "the sun has set some time. How on earth is one to find the way?"

"Well, if you like I will go," Ned said, "and you stop here with him."

The lad, who had been lying with closed eyes and a face of ghastly pallor, now looked up.

"There be soom men not a quarter of a mile away; they be a-drilling, they be, and oi was sot here to stop any one from cooming upon em; but if so bee as thou wilt go and tell em oi has got hurt, oi don't suppose as they will meddle with ye."

Ned saw now why the lad had opposed his going any further. Some of the croppers were drilling on the moor, and the boy had been placed as sentry. It wasn't a pleasant business to go up to men so engaged, especially with the news that he had seriously injured the boy they had placed on watch. But Ned did not hesitate a moment.

"You stop here, Tompkins, with him," he said quietly, "I will go and fetch help. It is a risk, of course, but we can't let him lie here."

So saying, Ned mounted the rock to get a view over the moor. No sooner had he gained the position than he saw some thirty or forty men walking in groups across the moor at a distance of about half a mile. They had evidently finished their drill, and were making their way to their homes. This at least was satisfactory. He would no longer risk their anger by disturbing them at their illegal practices, and had now only to fear the wrath which would be excited when they heard what had happened to the boy.

He started at a brisk run after them, and speedily came up to the last of the party. They were for the most part men between twenty and thirty, rough and strongly built, and armed with billhooks and heavy bludgeons, two or three of them carrying guns.

One of them looked round on hearing footsteps approaching, and gave a sudden exclamation. The rest turned, and on seeing Ned, halted with a look of savage and menacing anger on their faces.

"Who be'est, boy? dang ee, what brings ye here?"

Ned gulped down the emotion of fear excited by their threatening appearance, and replied as calmly as he could: "I am sorry to say that I have had a struggle with a boy over by that rock yonder. We fell together, and he has broken his leg. He told me if I came over in this direction I should find some one to help him."

"Broaken Bill's leg, did'st say, ye young varmint?" one of the men exclaimed. "Oi've a good moinde to wring yer neck."

"I am very sorry," Ned said; "but I did not mean it. I and another boy were walking back to Marsden from fishing, and he wouldn't let us pass; it was too far to go back again, so of course we had to try, and then there was a fight, but it was quite an accident his breaking his leg."

"Did'st see nowt afore ye had the voight?" one of the other men inquired.

"No," Ned replied; "we saw no one from the time we left the stream till we met the boy who would not let us pass, and I only caught sight of you walking this way from the top of the rock."

"If 'twere a vair voight, John, the boy bain't to be blamed, though oi be main grieved about thy brother Bill; but we'd best go back for him, voor on us. And moind, youngster, thee'd best keep a quiet tongue in thy head as to whaat thou'st seen here."

"I haven't seen anything," Ned said; "but of course if you wish it I will say nothing about it."

"It were best for ee, for if thou go'st aboot saying thou'st seen men with guns and clubs up here on the moor, it ull be the worsest day's work ee've ever done."

"I will say nothing about it," Ned replied, "but please come on at once, for I am afraid the boy is in terrible pain."

Four of the men accompanied Ned back to the rock.

"Hullo, Bill! what's happened ee?" his brother asked.

"Oi've had a fight and hurted myself, and broke my leg; but it wa'nt that chap's fault; it were a vair voight, and a right good 'un he be. Doan't do nowt to him."

"Well, that's roight enough then," the man said, "and you two young 'uns can go whoam. Marsden lies over that way; thou wilt see it below ye when ye gets to yon rock over there; and moind what I told ee."

"I will," Ned said earnestly; "but do let me come up to see how he is getting on, I shall be so anxious to know."

The man hesitated, but the lad said, "Let um coom, John, he bee a roight good un."

"Well, if thou would'st like it, Bill, he shall coom."

"If thou coom oop to Varley and ask vor Bill Swinton, anyone will show ee the place."

"Goodby," Ned said to the boy, "I am so sorry you have got hurt. I will come and see you as soon as I can."

Then he and Tompkins set off toward the rock the man had pointed out, which by this time, in the fast growing darkness, could scarce be made out. They would indeed probably have missed it, for the distance was fully a mile and a half; but before they had gone many yards one of the four men passed by them on a run on his way down to Marsden to summon the parish doctor, for a moment's examination had sufficed to show them that the boy's injury was far too serious to treat by themselves.

Tired as the boys were, they set off in his footsteps, and managed to keep him in sight until they reached the spot whence Marsden could be seen, and they could no longer mistake the way.

"Now, look here, Tompkins," Ned said as they made their way down the hill; "don't you say a word about this affair. You haven't got much to boast about in it, sitting there on the grass and doing nothing to help me. I shan't say anything more about that if you hold your tongue; but if you blab I will let all the fellows know how you behaved."

"But they will all notice my nose directly I get in," Tompkins said. "What am I to say?"

"Yes, there's no fear about their not noticing your nose," Ned replied. "I don't want you to tell a lie. You can say the exact truth. We were coming home across the moors; a boy interfered with us, and would not let us pass; we both pitched into him, and at last he got the worst of it, and we came home."

"But what's the harm of saying that you and he fell, and he broke his leg?"

"A great deal of harm," Ned replied. "If it was known that a boy's leg got broke in a fight with us it would be sure to come to Hathorn's ears; then there would be an inquiry and a row. Like enough he would go up to see the boy and inquire all about it. Then the men would suppose that we had broken our words, and the next time you and I go out on a fishing expedition there's no saying what mightn't happen to us. They are a rough lot those moor men, and don't stick at trifles."

"I will say nothing about it," Tompkins replied hastily; "you may rely on that. What a lucky fellow you are to be going home! Nothing will be said to you for being an hour late. I shall get a licking to a certainty. How I do hate that Hathorn, to be sure!"

They now came to the point where the road separated and each hurried on at his best speed.

"You are late tonight, Ned," the boy's father said when he entered. "I don't like your being out after dark. I don't mind how far you go so that you are in by sunset; but, halloo!" he broke off, as he caught sight of the boy's face as he approached the table at which the rest of the party were sitting at tea; "what have you been doing to your face?"

Captain Sankey might well be surprised. One of the boy's eyes was completely closed by a swelling which covered the whole side of his face. His lip was badly cut, and the effect of that and the swelling was to give his mouth the appearance of being twisted completely on one side.

"Oh! there's nothing the matter," Ned replied cheerfully; "but I had a fight with a boy on the moor."

"It is dreadful!—quite dreadful!" Mrs. Sankey said; "your going on like this. It makes me feel quite faint and ill to look at you. I wonder you don't get killed with your violent ways."

Ned made no reply but took his seat at the table, and fell to work upon the hunches of thick brown bread and butter.

"I will tell you about it afterward, father," he said; "it really wasn't my fault."

"I am sure I don't wish to hear the story of your quarrels and fighting, Edward," Mrs. Sankey said; "the sight of you is quite enough to upset my nerves and make me wretched. Of course if your father chooses to support you in such goings on I can say nothing. Neither he nor you seem to remember how trying such things as these are to any one with a broken constitution like mine."

Captain Sankey, knowing from experience how useless it was to attempt to argue with his wife when she was in this mood, continued to eat his meal placidly. Ned seized his mug of milk and water, and took an impatient drink of it.

"Is there anything I had better do for my face?" he asked his father presently.

"I don't think anything you can do, Ned, will make you presentable for the next few days. I believe that a raw beefsteak is the best thing to put on your eye, but is not such a thing in the house,

and if there was, I don't think that I should be justified in wasting it for such a purpose. I should say the next best thing would be to keep a cloth soaked in cold water on your face; that will probably take down the swelling to some extent."

After tea Ned repaired to the kitchen, where Abijah, with much scolding and some commiseration, applied a wet cloth to his face, and fastened a handkerchief over it to keep it in its place. Then the boy went into the little room which his father called his study, where he used to read the papers, to follow the doings of the British armies in the field, and above all to smoke his pipe in quiet. He laughed as Ned entered.

"You look like a wounded hero, indeed, Ned. Now sit down, my boy, and tell me about this business; not, you know, that I have any objection to your fighting when it's necessary. My experience is that it is the nature of boys to fight, and it is no use trying to alter boys' nature. As I have always told you, don't get into a fight if you can help it; but, if you once begin, fight it out like a man."

"Well, I couldn't help it this time, father, and I will tell you all about it. I promised not to tell; but what was meant by that was that I should not tell any one who would do anything about it; and as I know you won't, why, of course I can tell you."

"I don't know what you mean in the least, Ned; a promise, whatever it is about, is a promise."

"I know, father, but all that was meant in my case was that I would say nothing which would cause injury to those to whom I promised; and it will do them no injury whatever by telling you in confidence. Besides, it is probable you may learn about it in some other way; because, unfortunately, I broke the other fellow's leg very badly, and there is no saying what may come of it, so I think you ought to know all the circumstances."

"Very well, Ned," his father said quietly; "this seems to be a serious business. Go on, my boy."

Ned related the whole circumstances, his father saying no word until he had finished.

"You have been in no way to blame in the matter, nor could you have acted otherwise. The breaking of the boy's leg is unfortunate, but it was a pure accident, and even the boy's friends did not blame you in the matter. As to the illegal drilling, that is no new thing; it has been known to be going on for many months, and, indeed, in some places for years. The authorities take but little notice of it. An outbreak of these poor fellows would, indeed, constitute a considerable local danger. Mills might be burned down, and possibly some obnoxious masters killed, but a few troops of dragoons, or half a regiment of light infantry, would scatter them like chaff.

"The Irish rebellion thirteen years ago was a vastly more formidable affair. There it may be said that the whole country was in arms, and the element of religious fanaticism came into play; but in spite of that the resistance which they opposed to the troops was absolutely contemptible; however, it is just as well that you did not see them drill, because now, if by any chance this lad should die, and inquiry were made about it, there would be no occasion for you to allude to the subject at all. You would be able to say truthfully that finding that he was hurt, you went off, and happened to come upon four men on the moor and brought them to his assistance."

"I promised to go up to see the boy, father. I suppose that there is no harm?"

"None at all, Ned, it is only natural that you should entertain the wish; in fact you have injured him seriously, and we must do all in our power to alleviate his pain. I will go in the morning and see Dr. Green. I shall, of course, tell him that the boy was hurt in a tussle with you, and that you are very sorry about it. The fact that he is some two years older, as you say, and ever so much stronger and bigger, is in itself a proof that you were not likely to have wantonly provoked a fight with him. I shall ask the doctor if there is anything in the way of food and comforts I can send up for him."

Accordingly, the next morning, the first thing after breakfast, Captain Sankey went out and called upon the doctor. Ned awaited his return anxiously.

"The doctor says it's a bad fracture, Ned, a very bad fracture, and the boy must have had his leg curiously twisted under him for the bone to have snapped in such a way. He questions whether it will be possible to save the leg; indeed, he would have taken it off last night, but the boy said he would

rather die, and the men were all against it. By the help of half a dozen men he got the bones into their places again, and has bandaged the leg up with splints; but he is very doubtful what will come of it."

Ned was crying now.

"I would give anything if it hadn't happened, father, and he really seemed a nice fellow. He said over and over again he didn't want to hurt us, and I am sure he didn't, only he thought he oughtn't to let us pass, and as we would go on he had to stop us."

"Well, it can't be helped, Ned," his father said kindly. "It is very natural that you should be grieved about it; but you see it really was an accident; there was nothing willful or intentional about it, and you must not take it to heart more than you can help."

But Ned did take it to heart, and for the next fortnight was very miserable. The doctor's reports during that time were not hopeful. Fever had set in, and for some days the boy was delirious, and there was no saying how it would turn out. At the end of that time the bulletins became somewhat more hopeful. The lad was quiet now from the complete exhaustion of his strength. He might rally or he might not; his leg was going on favorably. No bad symptom had set in, and it was now purely a question of strength and constitution whether he would pull through it.

Mrs. Sankey had been kept in entire ignorance of the whole matter. She had once or twice expressed a languid surprise at Ned's altered manner and extreme quietness; but her interest was not sufficient for her to inquire whether there were any reasons for this change. Abijah had been taken into Captain Sankey's counsels, and as soon as the fever had abated, and the doctor pronounced that the most nourishing food was now requisite, she set to work to prepare the strongest broths and jellies she could make, and these, with bottles of port wine, were taken by her every evening to the doctor, who carried them up in his gig on his visits to his patient in the morning. On the third Saturday the doctor told Ned that he considered that the boy had fairly turned the corner and was on the road to recovery, and that he might now go up and see him. His friends had expressed their warm gratitude for the supplies which had been sent up, and clearly cherished no animosity against Ned. The boy had been informed of the extreme anxiety of his young antagonist as to his condition, and had nodded feebly when asked if he would see Ned should he call upon him. It was therefore without any feeling of trepidation as to his reception that Ned on the Saturday afternoon entered Varley.

Varley was a scattered village lying at the very edge of the moor. The houses were built just where the valley began to dip down from the uplands, the depression being deep enough to shelter them from the winds which swept across the moor. Some of those which stood lowest were surrounded by a few stumpy fruit trees in the gardens, but the majority stood bleak and bare. From most of the houses the sound of the shuttle told that hand weaving was carried on within, and when the weather was warm women sat at the doors with their spinning wheels. The younger men for the most part worked as croppers in the factories in Marsden.

In good times Varley had been a flourishing village, that is to say its inhabitants had earned good wages; but no one passing through the bare and dreary village would have imagined that it had ever seen good days, for the greater proportion of the earnings had gone in drink, and the Varley men had a bad name even in a country and at a time when heavy drinking was the rule rather than the exception. But whatever good times it may have had they were gone now. Wages had fallen greatly and the prices of food risen enormously, and the wolf was at the door of every cottage. No wonder the men became desperate, and believing that all their sufferings arose from the introduction of the new machinery, had bound themselves to destroy it whatever happened.

A woman of whom he inquired for John Swinton's cottage told him that it was the last on the left. Although he told himself that he had nothing to be afraid of, it needed all Ned's determination to nerve himself to tap at the door of the low thatched cottage. A young woman opened it.

"If you please," Ned said, "I have come to see Bill; the doctor said he would see me. It was I who hurt him, but indeed I didn't mean to do it."

"A noice bizness yoi've made of it atween ee," the woman said, but in a not unkind voice. "Who'd ha' thought as Bill would ha' got hurted by such a little un as thou be'st; but coom in, he will be main glad to see ee, and thy feyther ha' been very good in sending up all sorts o' things for him. He's been very nigh agooing whoam, but I believe them things kept un from it."

The cottage contained but two rooms. In a corner of the living room, into which Ned followed the woman, Bill Swinton lay upon a bed which Captain Sankey had sent up. Ned would not have known him again, and could scarce believe that the thin, feeble figure was the sturdy, strong built boy with whom he had struggled on the moor. His eyes filled with tears as he went up to the bedside.

"I am so sorry!" he said; "I have grieved so all the time you have been ill."

"It's all roight, young un," the boy said in a low voice, "thar's no call vor to fret. It warn't thy fault; thou couldn't not tell why oi would not let ee pass, and ye were roight enough to foight rather than to toorn back. I doan't blame ee nohow, and thou stoodst up well agin me. Oi doan't bear no malice vor a fair foight, not loikely. Thy feyther has been roight good to oi, and the things he sends oi up has done oi a power o' good. Oi hoap as how they will let oi eat afore long; oi feels as if oi could hearty, but the doctor he woin't let oi."

"I hope in a few days he will let you," Ned said, "and then I am sure father will send you up some nice things. I have brought you up some of my books for you to look at the pictures."

The boy looked pleased.

"Oi shall like that," Bill said; "but oi shan't know what they be about."

"But I will come up every Saturday if you will let me, and tell you the stories all about them."

"Willee now? That will be main koinde o' ye."

"I don't think you are strong enough to listen today," Ned said, seeing how feebly the boy spoke; "but I hope by next Saturday you will be much stronger. And now I will say goodby, for the doctor said that I must not talk too long."

So saying Ned left the cottage and made his way back to Marsden in better spirits than he had been for the last three weeks.

From that time Ned went up regularly for some weeks every Saturday to see Bill Swinton, to the great disgust of his schoolfellows, who could not imagine why he refused to join in their walks or games on those days; but he was well repaid by the pleasure which his visits afforded. The days passed very drearily to the sick boy, accustomed as he was to a life spent entirely in the open air, and he looked forward with eager longing to Ned's visits.

On the occasion of the second visit he was strong enough to sit up in bed, and Ned was pleased to hear that his voice was heartier and stronger. He listened with delight as Ned read through the books he had brought him from end to end, often stopping him to ask questions as to the many matters beyond his understanding, and the conversations on these points were often so long that the continuance of the reading had to be postponed until the next visit. To Bill everything he heard was wonderful. Hitherto his world had ended at Marsden, and the accounts of voyages and travels in strange lands were full of surprise and interest to him. Especially he loved to talk to Ned of India, where the boy had lived up to the time when his father had received his wound, and Ned's account of the appearance and manners of the people there were even more interesting to him than books.

At the end of two months after Ned's first visit Bill was able to walk about with a stick, and Ned now discontinued his regular visits; but whenever he had a Saturday on which there was no particular engagement he would go for a chat with Bill, for a strong friendship had now sprung up between the lads.

On Ned's side the feeling consisted partly of regret for the pain and injury he had inflicted upon his companion, partly in real liking for the honesty and fearlessness which marked the boy's character. On Bill's side the feeling was one of intense gratitude for the kindness and attention which Ned had paid him, for his giving up his play hours to his amusement, and the pains which he had

taken to lighten the dreary time of his confinement. Added to this there was a deep admiration for the superior knowledge of his friend.

"There was nothing," he often said to himself, "as oi wouldn't do for that young un."

CHAPTER III: A CROPPER VILLAGE

Bad as were times in Varley, the two public houses, one of which stood at either end of the village, were for the most part well filled of an evening; but this, as the landlords knew to their cost, was the result rather of habit than of thirst. The orders given were few and far between, and the mugs stood empty on the table for a long time before being refilled. In point of numbers the patrons of the "Brown Cow" and the "Spotted Dog" were not unequal; but the "Dog" did a larger trade than its rival, for it was the resort of the younger men, while the "Cow" was the meeting place of the elders. A man who had neither wife nor child to support could manage even in these hard times to pay for his quart or two of liquor of an evening; but a pint mug was the utmost that those who had other mouths than their own to fill could afford.

Fortunately tobacco, although dear enough if purchased in the towns, cost comparatively little upon the moors, for scarce a week passed but some lugger ran in at night to some little bay among the cliffs on the eastern shore, and for the most part landed her bales and kegs in spite of the vigilance of the coast guard. So there were plenty of places scattered all over the moorland where tobacco could be bought cheap, and where when the right signal was given a noggin of spirits could be had from the keg which was lying concealed in the wood stack or rubbish heap. What drunkenness there was on the moors profited his majesty's excise but little.

The evenings at the "Cow" were not lively. The men smoked their long pipes and sipped their beer slowly, and sometimes for half an hour no one spoke; but it was as good as conversation, for every one knew what the rest were thinking of—the bad times, but no one had anything new to say about them. They were not brilliant, these sturdy Yorkshiremen. They suffered patiently and uncomplainingly, because they did not see that any effort of theirs could alter the state of things. They accepted the fact that the high prices were due to the war, but why the war was always going on was more than any of them knew. It gave them a vague satisfaction when they heard that a British victory had been won; and when money had been more plentiful, the occasion had been a good excuse for an extra bout of drinking, for most of them were croppers, and had in their time been as rough and as wild as the younger men were now; but they had learned a certain amount of wisdom, and shook their heads over the talk and doings of the younger men who met at the "Dog."

Here there was neither quiet nor resignation, but fiery talk and stern determination; it was a settled thing here that the machines were responsible for the bad times. The fact that such times prevailed over the whole country in no way affected their opinion. It was not for them to deny that there was a war, that food was dear, and taxation heavy. These things might be; but the effect of the machinery came straight home to them, and they were convinced that if they did but hold together and wreck the machines prosperity would return to Varley.

The organization for resistance was extensive. There were branches in every village in West Yorkshire, Lancashire, Nottingham, and Derby—all acting with a common purpose. The members were bound by terrible oaths upon joining the society to be true to its objects, to abstain on pain of death from any word which might betray its secrets, and to carry into execution its orders, even if these should involve the slaying of a near relation proved to have turned traitor to the society.

Hitherto no very marked success had attended its doings. There had been isolated riots in many places; mills had been burned, and machinery broken. But the members looked forward to better things. So far their only successes had been obtained by threats rather than deeds, for many manufacturers had been deterred from adopting the new machinery by the receipt of threatening letters signed "King Lud," saying that their factories would be burned and themselves shot should they venture upon altering their machinery.

The organ of communication between the members of the society at Varley and those in other villages was the blacksmith, or as he preferred to be called, the minister, John Stukeley, who on

weekdays worked at the forge next door to the "Spotted Dog," and on Sundays held services in "Little Bethel"—a tiny meeting house standing back from the road.

Had John Stukeley been busier during the week he would have had less time to devote to the cause of "King Lud;" but for many hours a day his fire was banked up, for except to make repairs in any of the frames which had got out of order, or to put on a shoe which a horse had cast on his way up the hill from Marsden, there was but little employment for him.

The man was not a Yorkshireman by birth, but came from Liverpool, and his small, spare figure contrasted strongly with those of the tall, square built Yorkshiremen, among whom he lived.

He was a good workman, but his nervous irritability, his self assertion, and impatience of orders had lost him so many places that he had finally determined to become his own master, and, coming into a few pounds at the death of his father, had wandered away from the great towns, until finding in Varley a village without a smith, he had established himself there, and having adopted the grievances of the men as his own, had speedily become a leading figure among them.

A short time after his arrival the old man who had officiated at Little Bethel had died, and Stukeley, who had from the first taken a prominent part in the service, and who possessed the faculty of fluent speech to a degree rare among the Yorkshiremen, was installed as his successor, and soon filled Little Bethel as it had never been filled before. In his predecessor's time, small as the meeting house was, it had been comparatively empty; two or three men, half a dozen women, and their children being the only attendants, but it was now filled to crowding.

Stukeley's religion was political; his prayers and discourses related to the position of affairs in Varley rather than to Christianity. They were a downtrodden people whom he implored to burst the bonds of their Egyptian taskmasters. The strength he prayed for was the strength to struggle and to fight. The enemy he denounced was the capitalist rather than the devil.

Up to that time "King Lud" had but few followers in Varley; but the fiery discourses in Little Bethel roused among the younger men a passionate desire to right their alleged wrongs, and to take vengeance upon those denounced as their oppressors, so the society recruited its numbers fast. Stukeley was appointed the local secretary, partly because he was the leading spirit, partly because he alone among its members was able to write, and under his vigorous impulsion Varley became one of the leading centers of the organization in West Yorkshire.

It was on a Saturday evening soon after Bill Swinton had become convalescent. The parlor of the "Brown Cow" was filled with its usual gathering; a peat fire glowed upon the hearth, and two tallow candles burned somewhat faintly in the dense smoke. Mugs of beer stood on the tables, but they were seldom applied to the lips of the smokers, for they had to do service without being refilled through the long evening. The silence was broken only by the short puffs at the pipes. All were thinking over the usual topic, when old Gideon Jones unexpectedly led their ideas into another channel.

"Oive heern," he said slowly, taking his pipe from his mouth, "as how Nance Wilson's little gal is wuss."

"Ay, indeed!"

"So oi've heern;"

"Be she now?" and various other exclamations arose from the smokers.

Gideon was pleased with the effect he had produced, and a few minutes later continued the subject.

"It be the empty coopbud more nor illness, I expect."

There was another chorus of assent, and a still heartier one when he wound up the subject: "These be hard toimes surely."

Thinking that he had now done sufficient to vindicate his standing as one of the original thinkers of the village, Gideon relapsed into silence and smoked away gravely, with his eyes fixed on the fire, in the post of honor on one side of which was his regular seat. The subject, however, was too valuable to be allowed to drop altogether, and Luke Marner brought it into prominence again by remarking:

"They tell oi as how Nance has asked Bet Collins to watch by the rood soide to catch doctor as he droives whoam. He went out this arternoon to Retlow."

"Oi doubt he woant do she much good; it be food, and not doctor's stuff as the child needs," another remarked.

"That be so, surely," went up in a general chorus, and then a newcomer who had just entered the room said:

"Oi ha' joost coom vrom Nance's and Bill Swinton ha' sent in a basin o' soup as he got vrom the feyther o' that boy as broke his leg. Nance war a feeding the child wi' it, and maybe it will do her good. He ha' been moighty koind to Bill, that chap hav."

"He ha' been that," Gideon said, after the chorus of approval had died away.

"Oi seed t' young un today a-sitting in front o' th' cottage, a-talking and laughing wi' Bill."

"They be good uns, feyther and son, though they tells oi as neither on them bain't Yaarkshire."

The general feeling among the company was evidently one of surprise that any good thing should be found outside Yorkshire. But further talk on the subject was interrupted by a slight exclamation at the door.

"O what a smoke, feyther! I can't see you, but I suppose you're somewhere here. You're wanted at home."

Although the speaker was visible to but few in the room there was no doubt as to her identity, or as to the person addressed as feyther. Mary Powlett was indeed the niece and not the daughter of Luke Marner, but as he had brought her up from childhood she looked upon him as her father. It was her accent and the tone of her voice which rendered it unnecessary for any of those present to see her face.

Luke was a bachelor when the child had arrived fifteen years before in the carrier's cart from Marsden, having made the journey in a similar conveyance to that town from Sheffield, where her father and mother had died within a week of each other, the last request of her mother being that little Polly should be sent off to the care of Luke Marner at Varley.

Luke had not then settled down into the position of one of the elders of the village, and he had been somewhat embarrassed by the arrival of the three year old girl. He decided promptly, however, upon quitting the lodgings which he had as a single man occupied and taking a cottage by himself. His neighbors urged upon him that so small a child could not remain alone all day while he was away at Marsden at work—a proposition to which he assented; but to the surprise of every one, instead of placing her during the day under the care of one of the women of the place, he took her down with him to Marsden and placed her under the care of a respectable woman there who had children of her own.

Starting at five every morning from his cottage with Polly perched on his shoulder he tramped down to the town, leaving her there before going to work, and calling for her in the evening. A year later he married, and the village supposed that Polly would now be left behind. But they were mistaken. When he became engaged he had said:

"Now, Loiza, there's one point as oi wish settled. As oi have told ye, oi ha' partly chosen ye becos oi knowed as how ye would maake a good mother to my little Polly; but oi doan't mean to give up taking her down with me o' days to the town. Oi likes to ha' her wi' me on the roade—it makes it shorter like. As thou knowest thyself, oi ha' bin a chaanged man sin she coom. There warn't a cropper in the village drank harder nor oi, but oi maad oop moi moind when she came to gi' it up, and oi have gi'd it up."

"I know, Luke," the girl said, "I wouldna have had ye, hadn't ye doon so, as I told ye two years agone. I know the child ha' done it, and I loves her for it, and will be a good mother to her."

"Oi knows you will, Loiza, and oi bain't feared as ye'll be jealous if so be as ye've children o' your own. Oi shan't love 'em a bit the less coss oi loves little Polly. She be just the image o' what moi sister Jane was when she war a little thing and oi used to take care o' her. Mother she didn't belong to this village, and the rough ways of the men and the drink frightened her. She war quiet and tidy

and neat in her ways, and Jane took arter her, and glad she was when the time came to marry and get away from Varley. Oi be roight sure if she knows owt what's going on down here, she would be glad to know as her child ain't bein' brought oop in Varley ways. I ha' arranged wi' the woman where she gets her meals for her to go to school wi' her own children. Dost thee object to that, lass?—if so, say so noo afore it's too late, but doon't thraw it in moi face arterwards. Ef thou'st children they shalt go to school too. Oi don't want to do more for Polly nor oi'd do for moi own."

"I ha' no objection, Luke. I remembers your sister, how pretty and quiet she wor; and thou shalt do what you likest wi' Polly, wi'out no grumble from me."

Eliza Marner kept the promise she had made before marriage faithfully. If she ever felt in her heart any jealousy as she saw Polly growing up a pretty bright little maiden, as different to the usual child product of Varley as could well be, she was wise enough never to express her thoughts, and behaved with motherly kindness to her in the evening hours spent at home. She would perhaps have felt the task a harder one had her own elder children been girls; but three boys came first, and a girl was not born until she had been married eleven years. Polly, who was now fourteen, had just come home from her schooling at Marsden for good, and was about to go out into service there. But after the birth of her little girl Mrs. Marner, who had never for a Varley girl been strong, faded rapidly away; and Polly's stay at home, intended at first to last but a few weeks, until its mother was about again, extended into months.

The failing woman reaped now the benefit of Polly's training. Her gentle, quiet way, her soft voice, her neatness and tidiness, made her an excellent nurse, and she devoted herself to cheer and brighten the sickroom of the woman who had made so kind an adopted mother to her. Her influence kept even the rough boys quiet; and all Varley, which had at first been unanimous in its condemnation of the manner in which Luke Marner was bringing up that "gal" of his, just as if the place was not good enough for her, were now forced to confess that the experiment had turned out well.

"Polly, my dear," the sick woman said to her one afternoon when the girl had been reading to her for some time, and was now busy mending some of the boys' clothes, while baby, nearly a year old, was gravely amusing herself with a battered doll upon the floor, "I used to think, though I never said so, as your feyther war making a mistake in bringing you up different to other gals here; but I see as he was right. There ain't one of them as would have been content to give up all their time and thoughts to a sick woman as thou hast done. There ain't a house in the village as tidy and comfortable as this, and the boys mind you as they never minded me. When I am gone Luke will miss me, but thar won't be no difference in his comfort, and I know thou'lt look arter baby and be a mother to her. I don't suppose as thou wilt stay here long; thou art over fifteen now, and the lads will not be long afore they begin to come a-coorting of thee. But doan't ee marry in Varley, Polly. My Luke's been a good husband to me. But thou know'st what the most of them be—they may do for Varley bred gals, but not for the like of thee. And when thou goest take baby wi' thee and bring her up like thysel till she be old enough to coom back and look arter Luke and the house."

Polly was crying quietly while the dying woman was speaking. The doctor, on leaving that morning, had told her that he could do no more and that Mrs. Marner was sinking rapidly. Kneeling now beside the bed she promised to do all that her adopted mother asked her, adding, "and I shall never, never leave feyther as long as he lives."

The woman smiled faintly.

"Many a girl ha' said that afore now, Polly, and ha' changed her moind when the roight man asked her. Don't ee make any promises that away, lass. 'Tis natural that, when a lassie's time comes, she should wed; and if Luke feels loanly here, why he's got it in his power to get another to keep house for him. He be but a little over forty now; and as he ha' lived steady and kept hisself away from drink, he be a yoonger man now nor many a one ten year yoonger. Don't ye think to go to sacrifice your loife to hissen. And now, child, read me that chapter over agin, and then I think I could sleep a bit."

Before morning Eliza Marner had passed away, and Polly became the head of her uncle's house. Two years had passed, and so far Mary Powlett showed no signs of leaving the house, which, even the many women in the village, who envied her for her prettiness and neatness and disliked her for what they called her airs, acknowledged that she managed well. But it was not from lack of suitors. There were at least half a dozen stalwart young croppers who would gladly have paid court to her had there been the smallest sign on her part of willingness to accept their attentions; but Polly, though bright and cheerful and pleasant to all, afforded to none of them an opportunity for anything approaching intimacy.

On Sundays, the times alone when their occupations enabled the youth of Varley to devote themselves to attentions to the maidens they favored, Mary Powlett was not to be found at home after breakfast, for, having set everything in readiness for dinner, she always started for Marsden, taking little Susan with her, and there spent the day with the woman who had even more than Eliza Marner been her mother. She had, a month after his wife's death, fought a battle with Luke and conquered. The latter had, in pursuance of the plans he had originally drawn up for her, proposed that she should go into service at Marsden.

"Oi shall miss thee sorely, Polly," he said; "and oi doan't disguise it from thee, vor the last year, lass, thou hast been the light o' this house, and oi couldna have spared ye. But oi ha' always fixed that thou shouldst go into service at Marsden—Varley is not fit vor the likes o' ye. We be a rough lot here, and a drunken; and though oi shall miss thee sorely for awhile, oi must larn to do wi'out thee."

Polly heard him in silence, and then positively refused to go.

"You have been all to me, feyther, since I was a child, and I am not going to leave you now. I don't say that Varley is altogether nice, but I shall be very happy here with you and the boys and dear little Susan, and I am not going to leave, and so—there!"

Luke knew well how great would be the void which her absence would make, but he still struggled to carry out his plans.

"But, Polly, oi should na loike to see thee marry here, and thy mother would never ha' loiked it, and thou wilt no chance of seeing other men here."

"Why, I am only sixteen, feyther, and we need not talk of my marriage for years and years yet, and I promise you I shan't think of marrying in Varley when the time comes; but there is one thing I should like, and that is to spend Sundays, say once a fortnight, down with Mrs. Mason; they were so quiet and still there, and I did like so much going to the church; and I hate that Little Bethel, especially since that horrible man came there; he is a disgrace, feyther, and you will see that mischief will come out of his talk."

"Oi don't like him myself, Polly, and maybe me and the boys will sometoimes come down to the church thou art so fond of. However, if thou wilt agree to go down every Sunday to Mrs. Mason, thou shalt stay here for a bit till oi see what can best be done."

And so it was settled, and Polly went off every Sunday morning, and Luke went down of an evening to fetch her back.

"Well, what is't, lass?" he asked as he joined her outside the "Brown Cow."

"George has scalded his leg badly, feyther. I was just putting Susan to bed, and he took the kettle off the fire to pour some water in the teapot, when Dick pushed him, or something, and the boiling water went over his leg."

"Oi'll give that Dick a hiding," Luke said wrathfully as he hastened along by her side. "Why didn't ye send him here to tell me instead of cooming thyself?"

"It was only an accident, feyther, and Dick was so frightened when he saw what had happened and heard George cry out that he ran out at once. I have put some flour on George's leg; but I think the doctor ought to see him, that's why I came for you."

"It's no use moi goaing voor him now, lass, he be expected along here every minute. Jack Wilson, he be on the lookout by the roadside vor to stop him to ask him to see Nance, who be taken

main bad. I will see him and ask him to send doctor to oor house when he comes, and tell Jarge I will be oop in a minute."

Upon the doctor's arrival he pronounced the scald to be a serious one, and Dick, who had been found sobbing outside the cottage, and had been cuffed by his father, was sent down with the doctor into the town to bring up some lint to envelop the leg. The doctor had already paid his visit to Nance Wilson, and had rated her father soundly for not procuring better food for her.

"It's all nonsense your saying the times are bad," he said in reply to the man's excuses. "I know the times are bad; but you know as well as I do that half your wages go to the public house; your family are starving while you are squandering money in drink. That child is sinking from pure want of food, and I doubt if she would not be gone now if it hadn't have been for that soup your wife tells me Bill Swinton sent in to her. I tell you, if she dies you will be as much her murderer as if you had chopped her down with a hatchet."

The plain speaking of the doctor was the terror of his parish patients, who nevertheless respected him for the honest truths he told them. He himself used to say that his plain speaking saved him a world of trouble, for that his patients took good care never to send for him except when he was really wanted.

The next day Mary Powlett was unable to go off as usual to Marsden as George was in great pain from his scald. She went down to church, however, in the evening with her father, Bill Swinton taking her place by the bedside of the boy.

"Thou hast been a-sitting by moi bedside hours every day, Polly," he said, "and it's moi turn now to take thy place here. Jack ha' brought over all moi books, for oi couldn't make shift to carry them and use moi crutches, and oi'll explain all the pictures to Jarge jest as Maister Ned explained 'em to oi."

The sight of the pictures reconciled George to Polly's departure, and seeing the lad was amused and comfortable, she started with Luke, Dick taking his place near the bed, where he could also enjoy a look at the pictures.

"Did you notice that pretty girl with the sweet voice in the aisle in a line with us, father," Ned asked that evening, "with a great, strong, quiet looking man by the side of her?"

"Yes, lad, the sweetness of her singing attracted my attention, and I thought what a bright, pretty face it was!"

"That's Mary Powlett and her uncle. You have heard me speak of her as the girl who was so kind in nursing Bill."

"Indeed, Ned! I should scarcely have expected to find so quiet and tidy looking a girl at Varley, still less to meet her with a male relation in church."

"She lives at Varley, but she can hardly be called a Varley girl," Ned said. "Bill was telling me about her. Her uncle had her brought up down here. She used to go back to sleep at night, but otherwise all her time was spent here. It seems her mother never liked the place, and married away from it, and when she and her husband died and the child came back to live with her uncle he seemed to think he would be best carrying out his dead sister's wishes by having her brought up in a different way to the girls at Varley. He has lost his wife now, and she keeps house for him, and Bill says all the young men in Varley are mad about her, but she won't have anything to say to them."

"She is right enough there," Captain Sankey said smilingly. "They are mostly croppers, and rightly or wrongly—rightly, I am afraid—they have the reputation of being the most drunken and quarrelsome lot in Yorkshire. Do you know the story that is current among the country people here about them?"

"No, father, what is it?"

"Well, they say that no cropper is in the place of punishment. It was crowded with them at one time, but they were so noisy and troublesome that his infernal majesty was driven to his wits' end by their disputes. He offered to let them all go. They refused. So one day he struck upon a plan to get

rid of them. Going outside the gates he shouted at the top of his voice, 'Beer, beer, who wants beer?' every cropper in the place rushed out, and he then slipped in again and shut the gates, and has taken good care ever since never to admit a cropper into his territory."

Ned laughed at the story.

"It shows at any rate, father, what people think of them here; but I don't think they are as bad as that, though Bill did say that there are awful fights and rows going on there of an evening, and even down here if there is a row there is sure to be a cropper in it. Still you see there are some good ones; look at Luke Marner, that's the man we saw in church, see how kind he has been to his niece."

"There are good men of all sorts, and though the croppers may be rough and given to drink, we must not blame them too severely; they are wholly uneducated men, they work hard, and their sole pleasure is in the beer shop. At bottom they are no doubt the same as the rest of their countrymen, and the Yorkshire men, though a hard headed, are a soft hearted race; the doctor tells me that except that their constitutions are ruined by habitual drinking he has no better patients; they bear pain unflinchingly, and are patient and even tempered. I know he loves them with all their faults, and I consider him to be a good judge of character."

CHAPTER IV: THE WORMS TURN

"I say, it's a shame, a beastly shame!" Ned Sankey exclaimed passionately as the boys came out from school one day.

Generally they poured out in a confused mass, eager for the fresh air and anxious to forget in play the remembrance of the painful hours in school; but today they came out slowly and quietly, each with a book in his hand, for they had tasks set them which would occupy every moment till the bell sounded again.

"Every one says they know nothing about the cat. I don't know whether it's true or not, for I am sorry to say some of the fellows will tell lies to escape the cane, but whether it is so or not he's no right to punish us all for what can only be the fault of one or two."

That morning the cat, which was the pet of Mr. Hathorn and his wife, had been found dead near the door of the schoolhouse. It had been most brutally knocked about. One of its eyes had been destroyed, its soft fur was matted with blood, and it had evidently been beaten to death. That the cat was no favorite with the boys was certain. The door between the schoolroom and the house was unfastened at night, and the cat in her pursuit of mice not unfrequently knocked over inkstands, and the ink, penetrating into the desks, stained books and papers, and more than one boy had been caned severely for damage due to the night prowlings of the cat.

Threats of vengeance against her had often been uttered, and when the cat was found dead it was the general opinion in the school that one or other of their comrades had carried out his threats, but no suspicion fell upon any one in particular. The boys who were most likely to have done such a thing declared their innocence stoutly.

Mr. Hathorn had no doubt on the subject. The cane had been going all the morning, and he had told them that extra tasks would be given which would occupy all their playtime until the offender was given up to judgment.

In point of fact the boys were altogether innocent of the deed. Pussy was a noted marauder, and having been caught the evening before in a larder, from which she had more than once stolen titbits, she had been attacked by an enraged cook with a broomstick, and blows had been showered upon her until the woman, believing that life was extinct, had thrown her outside into the road; but the cat was not quite dead, and had, after a time, revived sufficiently to drag her way home, only, however, to die.

"I call it a shame!" Ned repeated. "Mind, I say it's a brutal thing to ill treat a cat like that. If she did knock down inkstands and get fellows into rows it was not her fault. It's natural cats should run after mice, and the wainscoting of the schoolroom swarmed with them. One can hear them chasing each other about and squeaking all day. If I knew any of the fellows had killed the cat I should go straight to Hathorn and tell him.

"You might call it sneaking if you like, but I would do it, for I hate such brutal cruelty. I don't see how it could have been any of the fellows, for they would have had to get out of the bedroom and into it again; besides, I don't see how they could have caught the cat if they did get out; but whether it was one of the fellows or not makes no difference. I say it's injustice to punish every one for the fault of one or two fellows.

"I suppose he thinks that in time we shall give up the names of the fellows who did it. As far as I am concerned, it will be just the other way. If I had known who had done it this morning, when he accused us, I should have got up and said so, because I think fellows who treat dumb animals like that are brutes that ought to be punished, but I certainly would not sneak because Hathorn punished me unjustly. I vote we all refuse to do the work he has set us."

This bold proposition was received with blank astonishment.

"But he would thrash us all fearfully," Tompkins said.

"He daren't if we only stuck together. Why, he wouldn't have a chance with us if we showed fight. If we were to say to him, 'We won't do these extra tasks; and if you touch one of us the whole lot will pitch into you,' what could he do then?"

"I will tell you what he could do, Sankey," Tom Room, a quiet, sensible boy, replied. "If we were in a desert island it would be all well enough, he could not tyrannize over us then: but here it is different. He would just put on his hat and go into the town, and in ten minutes he would be back again with the six constables, and if that wasn't enough he could get plenty of other men, and where would our fighting be then? We should all get the most tremendous licking we have ever had, and get laughed at besides through the town for a pack of young fools."

Ned broke into a good tempered laugh.

"Of course you are right, Room. I only thought about Hathorn himself. Still, it is horribly unfair. I will do it today. But if he goes on with it, as he threatens, I won't do it, let him do what he likes."

For some days this state of things continued. There was no longer any sound of shouting and laughter in the playground. The boys walked about moody and sullen, working at their lessons. They were fast becoming desperate. No clue had been obtained as to the destroyer of the cat, and the schoolmaster declared that if it took him months to break their spirits he would do it.

Ned Sankey had said nothing at home as to his troubles. His father noticed that he ran off again as soon as his dinner was over, and that he no longer said anything as to the sports in which he was engaged in playtime; also, that his lessons occupied him from tea time until he went up to bed.

"Anything is better than this," Ned said one day to some of the boys of his own age. "In my opinion it's better to have a regular row. What Room said was quite true; we shall get the worst of it; but the story will then come out, and it will be seen what a beastly tyranny we have been undergoing. I tell you, I for one will not stand it any longer, so here goes," and he threw his book up into a tree, in whose branches it securely lodged.

His comrades followed his example, and the news that Sankey and some of the other fellows were determined to put up with it no longer soon spread, and in five minutes not a book was to be seen in the playground. The spirit of resistance became strong and general, and when the bell rang the boys walked into the schoolroom silent and determined, but looking far less moody and downcast than usual. Mr. Hathorn took his seat at his desk.

"The first class will come up and say their tasks."

Not a boy moved in his seat.

"The first class will come up and say their tasks," the master repeated, bringing his cane down with angry emphasis on the desk.

Still no one moved.

"What does this mean?" he shouted, rising from his seat.

"It means, sir," Ned Sankey said, rising also, "that we are determined, all of us, that we will learn no more extra tasks. None of us, so far as we know, ever touched your cat, and we are not going to submit to be punished any longer for a fault which none of us have committed."

"No, no," rose in a general chorus through the schoolroom, "we will do no more tasks."

Mr. Hathorn stood petrified with astonishment and white with anger.

"So you are at the bottom of this, Sankey. I will make an example of you."

So saying, he took a stride forward toward Ned. In an instant a shower of books flew at him from all parts of the room. Infuriated by the attack, he rushed forward with his cane raised. Ned caught up a heavy inkstand.

"If you touch me," he shouted, "I will fling this at your head."

Mr. Hathorn hesitated. The shower of books had not affected him, but the heavy missile in Ned's hand was a serious weapon. In another moment he sprang forward and brought his cane down with all his force upon Ned's back.

Ned at once hurled the heavy inkstand at him. The schoolmaster sprang on one side, but it struck him on the shoulder, and he staggered back.

"You have broken my shoulder, you young scoundrel!" he exclaimed.

"I shouldn't care if I had broken your head," Ned retorted, white with passion; "it would have served you right if I had killed you, you tyrant."

"One of you go and fetch a constable," Mr. Hathorn said to the boys.

"Let him send his servant. He will find me at home. Mr. Hathorn, I am not going to run away, you need not think it. Give me in charge if you dare; I don't care what they do to me, but the whole country shall know what a tyrant you are."

So saying, he collected his books, put his cap on his head, and walked from the schoolroom, the boys cheering him loudly as he went. On reaching home he went at once to his father's study.

"I am sorry to say, sir, that there has been a row in the school, and Hathorn has threatened to send a constable here after me for throwing an inkstand at him."

"Throwing an inkstand!" Captain Sankey exclaimed. "Is it possible?"

"It is quite possible and quite true; he has been treating us shamefully for the last ten days; he has been always a cruel brute all along, though I never wanted to make a fuss about it, but it has been getting worse and worse. Ten days ago some one killed his cat, and I am almost sure it was none of the boys, but he chose to believe it was, and because he couldn't find out who, he has punished the whole school, and all our play hours have been taken up with lessons ever since, and he said he would keep on so till he found out who did it, if it was months.

"So at last we could not stand it any longer, and we all agreed that we wouldn't do the extra tasks, and that we would stick together when we told him so. He rushed at me with his cane, and gave me one with all his might, and I threw an inkstand at him, and it caught him on the shoulder, and he says it has broken it, and that he would send for a constable. So I told him to do so if he dared, and here I am."

"This is a very serious business, Ned," his father said gravely. "In the first place, there is something like a rebellion in the school, of which, I suppose, you were one of the leaders or he would not have singled you out. In the second place, you threw a missile at him, which has broken his shoulder, and might have killed him had it struck him on the head. I have warned you, my boy, over and over again against giving way to that passionate temper of yours, and have told you that it would lead you into serious trouble."

"I can't help it, sir," Ned said doggedly. "I've put up with a tremendous lot there, and have said nothing about it, because I did not wish to give you trouble; but when it came to downright tyranny like this I would rather be killed than put up with it. I warned him fairly that if he struck me I would throw the inkstand at him, and he brought it on himself."

Captain Sankey seeing that in his son's present state of mind talking would be useless to him, ordered him to remain in his study till his return, and putting on his hat went toward the school. Ned's temper had always been a source of anxiety to him. The boy was, no doubt, of a passionate nature, but had he had the advantage of a proper supervision and care when he was a child the tendency might have been overcome. Unfortunately this had not been the case. His mother had left the children entirely to the care of ayahs, he himself had been far too occupied with his regimental duties to be able to superintend their training, while Abijah's hands had been too full with the management of the house, which entirely devolved upon her, and with the constant attention demanded by Mrs. Sankey, to give them any close superintendence. Thus like most children born in India and left entirely in the charge of colored nurses, Ned had acquired the habit of giving way to bursts of ungovernable passion; for the black nurses have no authority over their young charges, unless seconded and supported by the firmness of their mothers. In this case no such support had been forthcoming.

Mrs. Sankey hated being troubled, and the ayahs always found that any complaints to her recoiled upon themselves, for she always took the part of her children, and insisted that the fault lay

on the side of the nurses and not on them. The natural result was, that the ayahs ceased to trouble her, and found it easier to allow the children to do as they chose, and to give way quietly to Ned's outbursts of passion.

Captain Sankey knew nothing of all this. Ned was very fond of him, and was always bright and good tempered when with his father, and it was not until he left India and was thrown more with him that Captain Sankey discovered how grievously Ned's disposition, which was in other respects a fine one, was marred by the habit which had been encouraged by indulgence and want of control. Then he set to work earnestly to remedy the mischief, but the growth of years is hard to eradicate, and although under the influence of the affection for his father and his own good sense Ned had so far conquered himself that his fits of passion were few and far between, the evil still existed, and might yet, as his father felt, lead to consequences which would mar his whole life.

Thinking the matter sadly over, Captain Sankey was proceeding toward the school when he met one of the constables. The man touched his hat and stopped.

"This be a moighty oonpleasant business, captain," he said; "your boy, he ha' been and battered schoolmaister; and t' doctor says he ha' broke his collarbone. Oi ha' got to take him afore t' magistrate."

"Very well, Harper," Captain Sankey said quietly; "of course you must do your duty. It is a sad business, and I was on my way to the school to see if the matter could not be arranged; however, as it has been put in your hands it is now too late, and things must take their course; the magistrates are not sitting today. I will guarantee that my son shall be present at the sitting on Thursday, I suppose that will be sufficient?"

"Yes, oi supposes if you promises to produce him, that will do," the constable said. "Oi doan't suppose as nought will come o't; these schoolmaister chaps does thrash t' boys cruel, and oi ain't surprised as t' little chaps roises ag'in it soometoimes. T'others all seem moighty glad o' it: oi heard 'em shouting and, cheering in t' yard as if they was all mad."

Captain Sankey shook his head. "I'm afraid the magistrates won't see it in that light, Harper; discipline is discipline. However, we must hope for the best."

The story that there had been a rebellion among the boys at Hathorn's, that the schoolmaster had his shoulder broken, and that Captain Sankey's son was to go before the magistrates, spread rapidly through Marsden, and the courthouse was crowded at the sitting of the magistrates on Thursday.

There were two magistrates on the bench. Mr. Thompson the local banker, and Squire Simmonds of Lathorpe Hall, three miles from the town. Several minor cases were first disposed of, and then Ned's name was called. Captain Sankey had been accommodated with a seat near the magistrates, with both of whom he had some personal acquaintance. Ned was sitting by the side of the lawyer whom his father had retained to defend him; he now moved quietly into the dock, while Mr. Hathorn, with his arm in a sling, took his place in the witness box.

Ned had recovered now from his fit of passion, and looked amused rather than concerned as the schoolmaster gave his evidence as to the fray in the schoolroom.

"I have a few questions to ask you, Mr. Hathorn," Mr. Wakefield, Ned's lawyer, said. "Had you any reason for expecting any outbreak of this kind among your boys?"

"None whatever," Mr. Hathorn said.

"You use the cane pretty freely, I believe, sir."

"I use it when it is necessary," Mr. Hathorn replied.

"Ah, and how often do you consider it necessary?"

"That must depend upon circumstances."

"You have about thirty boys, I think?"

"About thirty."

"And you consider it necessary that at least fifteen out of that thirty should be caned every day. You must have got a very bad lot of boys, Mr. Hathorn?"

"Not so many as that," the schoolmaster said, flushing.

"I shall be prepared to prove to your worships," the lawyer said, "that for the last six months the average of boys severely caned by this man has exceeded sixteen a day, putting aside such minor matters as one, two, or three vicious cuts with the cane given at random. It fortunately happened, as I find from my young friend in the dock, that one of the boys has, from motives of curiosity, kept an account for the last six months of the number of boys thrashed every day. I have sent round for him, and he is at present in court."

Mr. Hathorn turned pale, and he began to think that it would have been wiser for him to have followed Ned's advice, and not to have brought the matter into court.

"Your worships," the lawyer said, "you have been boys, as I have, and you can form your own ideas as to the wretchedness that must prevail among a body of lads of whom more than half are caned daily. This, your worships, is a state of tyranny which might well drive any boys to desperation. But I have not done with Mr. Hathorn yet.

"During the ten days previous to this affair things wore even more unpleasant than usual in your establishment, were they not, sir? I understand that the whole of the boys were deprived of all play whatever, and that every minute was occupied by extra tasks, and moreover the prospect was held out to them that this sort of thing would continue for months."

There had already been several demonstrations of feeling in court, but at this statement by the lawyer there was a general hiss. The schoolmaster hesitated before replying.

"Now, Mr. Hathorn," the lawyer said briskly, "we want neither hesitation nor equivocation. We may as well have it from you, because if you don't like telling the truth I can put the thirty miserable lads under your charge into the box one after the other."

"They have had extra tasks to do during their play time," Mr. Hathorn said, "because they refused to reveal which among them brutally murdered my cat."

"And how do you know they murdered your cat?"

"I am sure they did," the schoolmaster said shortly.

"Oh! you are sure they did! And why are you so sure? Had they any grudge against your cat?"

"They pretended they had a grudge."

"What for, Mr. Hathorn?"

"They used to accuse her of upsetting the ink bottles when they did it themselves."

"You did not believe their statements, I suppose?"

"Not at all."

"You caned them just the same as if they had done it themselves. At least I am told so."

"Of course I caned them, especially as I knew that they were telling a lie."

"But if it was a lie, Mr. Hathorn, if this cat did not upset their ink, why on earth should these boys have a grudge against her and murder her?"

The schoolmaster was silent.

"Now I want an answer, sir. You are punishing thirty boys in addition to the sixteen daily canings divided among them; you have cut off all their play time, and kept them at work from the time they rise to the time they go to bed. As you see, according to your own statement, they could have had no grudge against the cat, how are you sure they murdered her?"

"I am quite sure." Mr. Hathorn said doggedly. "Boys have always a spite against cats."

"Now, your honors, you hear this," Mr. Wakefield said. "Now I am about to place in the witness box a very respectable woman, one Jane Tytler, who is cook to our esteemed fellow townsman, Mr. Samuel Hawkins, whose residence is, as you know, not far from this school. She will tell you that, having for some time been plagued by a thieving cat which was in the habit of getting into her larder and carrying off portions of food, she, finding it one day there in the act of stealing a half chicken, fell upon it with a broomstick and killed it, or as she thought killed it, and I imagine most cooks would have acted the same under the circumstances.

"She thought no more about it until she heard the reports in the town about this business at the school, and then she told her master. The dates have been compared, and it is found that she battered this cat on the evening before the Hathorn cat was found dead in the yard. Furthermore, the cat she battered was a white cat with a black spot on one side, and this is the exact description of the Hathorn cat; therefore, your honors, you will see that the assumption, or pretense, or excuse, call it what you will, by which this man justifies his tyrannical treatment of these unfortunate boys has no base or foundation whatever. You can go now, Mr. Hathorn; I have nothing further to say to you."

A loud hiss rose again from the crowded court as the schoolmaster stepped down from the witness box, and Jane Tytler took his place. After giving her evidence she was succeeded by Dick Tompkins in much trepidation. Dick was a most unwilling witness, but he produced the notebook in which he had daily jotted down the number of boys caned, and swore to the general accuracy of the figures.

Mr. Wakefield then asked the magistrates if they would like to hear any further witnesses as to the state of things in the schoolroom. They said that what they had heard was quite sufficient. He then addressed them on the merits of the case, pointing out that although in this case one of the parties was a master and the other a pupil this in no way removed it in the eye of the law from the category of other assaults.

"In this case," he said, "your worships, the affair has arisen out of a long course of tyranny and provocation on the part of one of the parties, and you will observe that this is the party who first commits the assault, while my client was acting solely in self defense.

"It is he who ought to stand in the witness box; and the complainant in the dock, for he is at once the aggressor and the assailant. The law admits any man who is assaulted to defend himself, and there is, so far as I am aware, no enactment whatever to be found in the statute book placing boys in a different category to grownup persons. When your worships have discharged my client, as I have no doubt you will do at once, I shall advise him to apply for a summons for assault against this man Hathorn."

The magistrates consulted together for some time, then the squire, who was the senior, said:

"We are of opinion that Master Sankey, by aiding this rebellion against his master, has done wrongly, and that he erred grievously in discharging a heavy missile at his master; at the same time we think that the provocation that he received by the tyranny which has been proved to have been exercised by Mr. Hathorn toward the boys under his charge, and especially by their unjust punishment for an offense which the complainant conceived without sufficient warrant, or indeed without any warrant at all, that they had committed, to a great extent justifies and excuses the conduct of Master Sankey. Therefore, with a reprimand as to his behavior, and a caution as to the consequences which might have arisen from his allowing his temper to go beyond bounds, we discharge him.

"As to you, sir," he said to the schoolmaster, "we wish to express our opinion that your conduct has been cruel and tyrannical in the extreme, and we pity the unfortunate boys who are under the care of a man who treats them with such cruel harshness as you are proved to have done."

The magistrates now rose, and the court broke up. Many of those present crowded round Ned and shook his hand, congratulating him on the issue; but at a sign from his father the boy drew himself away from them, and joining Captain Sankey, walked home with him.

"The matter has ended better than I expected, Ned," he said gravely; "but pray, my boy, do not let yourself think that there is any reason for triumph. You have been gravely reprimanded, and had the missile you used struck the schoolmaster on the head, you would now be in prison awaiting your trial for a far graver offense, and that before judges who would not make the allowances for you that the magistrates here have done.

"Beware of your temper, Ned, for unless you overcome it, be assured that sooner or later it may lead to terrible consequences."

Ned, who had in fact been inclined to feel triumphant over his success, was sobered by his father's grave words and manner; and resolved that he would try hard to conquer his fault; but evil habits are hard to overcome, and the full force of his father's words was still to come home to him.

He did not, of course, return to Mr. Hathorn's, and indeed the disclosures of the master's severity made at the examination before the magistrates obtained such publicity that several of his pupils were removed at once, and notices were given that so many more would not return after the next holidays that no one was surprised to hear that the schoolmaster had arranged with a successor in the school, and that he himself was about to go to America.

The result was that after the holidays his successor took his place, and many of the fathers who had intended to remove their sons decided to give the newcomer a trial. The school opened with nearly the usual number of pupils. Ned was one of those who went back. Captain Sankey had called on the new master, and had told him frankly the circumstances of the fracas between Ned and Mr. Hathorn.

"I will try your son at any rate, Mr. Sankey," the master said. "I have a strong opinion that boys can be managed without such use of the cane as is generally adopted; that, in my opinion, should be the last resort. Boys are like other people, and will do more for kindness than for blows. By what you tell me, the circumstances of your son's bringing up in India among native servants have encouraged the growth of a passionate temper, but I trust that we may be able to overcome that; at any rate I will give him a trial."

And so it was settled that Ned should return to Porson's, for so the establishment was henceforth to be known.

CHAPTER V: THE NEW MASTER

It was with much excitement and interest that the boys gathered in their places for the first time under the new master. The boarders had not seen him upon their arrival on the previous evening, but had been received by an old housekeeper, who told them Mr. Porson would not return until the coach came in from York that night.

All eyes were turned to the door as the master entered. The first impression was that he was a younger man than they had expected. Mr. Hathorn had been some forty-five years old; the newcomer was not over thirty. He was a tall, loosely made man, with somewhat stooping shoulders; he had heavy eyebrows, gray eyes, and a firm mouth. He did not look round as he walked straight to his desk; then he turned, and his eyes traveled quietly and steadily round the room as if scanning each of the faces directed toward him.

"Now, boys," he said in a quiet voice, "a few words before we begin. I am here to teach, and you are here to learn. As your master I expect prompt obedience. I shall look to see each of you do your best to acquire the knowledge which your parents have sent you here to obtain. Above all, I shall expect that every boy here will be straightforward, honorable, and truthful. I shall not expect to find that all are capable of making equal progress; there are clever boys and stupid boys, just as there are clever men and stupid men, and it would be unjust to expect that one can keep up to the other; but I do look to each doing his best according to his ability. On my part I shall do my best to advance you in your studies, to correct your faults, and to make useful men of you.

"One word as to punishments. I do not believe that knowledge is to be thrashed into boys, or that fear is the best teacher. I shall expect you to learn, partly because you feel that as your parents have paid for you to learn it is your duty to learn, partly because you wish to please me. I hope that the cane will seldom be used in this school. It will be used if any boy tells me a lie, if any boy does anything which is mean and dishonorable, if any boy is obstinately idle, and when it is used it will be used to a purpose, but I trust that the occasion for it will be rare.

"I shall treat you as friends whom it is my duty to instruct. You will treat me, I hope, as a friend whose duty it is to instruct you, and who has a warm interest in your welfare; if we really bear these relations to each other there should be seldom any occasion for punishment. And now as a beginning today, boys, let each come up to my desk, one at a time, with his books. I shall examine you separately, and see what each knows and is capable of doing. I see by the report here that there are six boys in the first class. As these will occupy me all the morning the rest can go into the playground. The second class will be taken this afternoon."

The boys had listened with astonished silence to this address, and so completely taken aback were they that all save those ordered to remain rose from their seats and went out in a quiet and orderly way, very different from the wild rush which generally terminated school time.

Ned being in the second class was one of those who went out. Instead of scattering into groups, the boys gathered in a body outside.

"What do you think of that, Sankey?" Tompkins said. "It seems almost too good to be true. Only fancy, no more thrashing except for lying and things of that sort, and treating us like friends! and he talked as if he meant it too."

"That he did," Ned said gravely; "and I tell you, fellows, we shall have to work now, and no mistake. A fellow who will not work for such a man as that deserves to be skinned."

"I expect," said James Mather, who was one of the biggest boys in the school though still in the third class, "that it's all gammon, just to give himself a good name, and to do away with the bad repute the school has got into for Hathorn's flogging. You will see how long it will last! I ain't going to swallow all that soft soap."

Ned, who had been much touched at the master's address, at once fired up:

"Oh! we all know how clever you are, Mather—quite a shining genius, one of the sort who can see through a stone wall. If you say it's gammon, of course it must be so."

There was a laugh among the boys.

"I will punch your head if you don't shut up, Sankey," Mather said angrily; "there's no ink bottle for you to shy here."

Ned turned very white, but he checked himself with an effort.

"I don't want to fight today—it's the first day of the half year, and after such a speech as we've heard I don't want to have a row on this first morning. But you had better look out; another time you won't find me so patient. Punch my head, indeed! Why, you daren't try it."

But Mather would have tried it, for he had for the last year been regarded as the cock of the school. However, several of the boys interfered.

"Sankey is right, Mather; it would be a beastly shame to be fighting this morning. After what Porson said there oughtn't to be any rows today. We shall soon see whether he means it."

Mather suffered himself to be dissuaded from carrying his threat into execution, the rather that in his heart of hearts he was not assured that the course would have been a wise one. Ned had never fought in the school, but Tompkins' account of his fight on the moor with Bill Swinton, and the courage he had shown in taking upon himself the office of spokesman in the rebellion against Hathorn, had given him a very high reputation among the boys; and in spite of Mather's greater age and weight there were many who thought that Ned Sankey would make a tough fight of it with the cock of the school.

So the gathering broke up and the boys set to at their games, which were played with a heartiness and zest all the greater that none of them were in pain from recent punishment, and that they could look forward to the afternoon without fear and trembling.

When at twelve o'clock the boys of the first class came out from school the others crowded round to hear the result of the morning's lessons. They looked bright and pleased.

"I think he is going to turn out a brick," Ripon, the head of the first class, said. "Of course one can't tell yet. He was very quiet with us and had a regular examination of each of us. I don't think he was at all satisfied, though we all did our best, but there was no shouting or scolding. We are to go in again this afternoon with the rest. He says there's something which he forgot to mention to us this morning."

"More speeches!" Mather grumbled. "I hate all this jaw."

"Yes," Ripon said sharply; "a cane is the thing which suits your understanding best. Well, perhaps he will indulge you; obstinate idleness is one of the things he mentioned in the address."

When afternoon school began Mr. Porson again rose.

"There is one thing I forgot to mention this morning. I understand that you have hitherto passed your play time entirely in the playground, except on Saturday afternoons, when you have been allowed to go where you like between dinner and tea time. With the latter regulation I do not intend to interfere, or at any rate I shall not do so so long as I see that no bad effects come of it; but I shall do so only with this proviso: I do not think it good for you to be going about the town. I shall therefore put Marsden out of bounds. You will be free to ramble where you like in the country, but any boy who enters the town will be severely punished. I am not yet sufficiently acquainted with the neighborhood to draw the exact line beyond which you are not to go, but I shall do so as soon as I have ascertained the boundaries of the town.

"I understand that you look forward to Saturday for making such purchases as you require. Therefore each Saturday four boys, selected by yourselves, one from each class, will be allowed to go into the town to make purchases for the rest, but they are not to be absent more than an hour.

"In the second place, I do not think that the playground affords a sufficient space for exercise, and being graveled, it is unsuitable for many games. Therefore I have hired a field, which I dare say you all know; it is called 'The Four Acre Field,' about a hundred yards down the road on the left hand

side. This you will use as your playground during the six summer months. I have brought with me from York a box which I shall place under the charge of Ripon and the two next senior to him. It contains bats, wickets, and a ball for cricket; a set of quoits; trap bat and ball for the younger boys; leaping bars and some other things. These will give you a start. As they become used up or broken they must be replaced by yourselves; and I hope you will obtain plenty of enjoyment from them. I shall come and play a game of cricket with you myself sometimes.

"You will bear in mind that it is my wish that you should be happy. I expect you to work hard, but I wish you to play hard too. Unless the body works the brain will suffer, and a happy and contented boy will learn as easily again as a discontented, and miserable one. I will give you the box after tea, so that you can all examine them together. The second and third classes will now stay in; the fourth class can go out in the playground with the first. I shall have time to examine them while the others are doing their work tomorrow."

There was a suppressed cheer among the boys and Ripon, as the senior, said:

"I am sure, sir, we are all very much obliged to you for your kindness, and we will do our best to deserve it."

There was a chorus of assent, and then the elder and younger boys went out into the playground while the work of examination of the second and third classes began.

On the following day lessons began in earnest, and the boys found their first impressions of the new master more than justified. A new era had commenced. The sound of the cane was no longer heard, and yet the lessons were far better done than had been the case before. Then the whole work had fallen on the boys; the principal part of the day's lessens had been the repeating of tasks learned by heart, and the master simply heard them and punished the boys who were not perfect.

There was comparatively little of this mechanical work now; it was the sense and not the wording which had to be mastered. Thus geography was studied from an atlas and not by the mere parrot-like learning of the names of towns and rivers. In grammar the boys had to show that they understood a rule by citing examples other than those given in their books. History was rather a lecture from the master than a repetition of dry facts and dates by the boys. Latin and mathematics were made clear in a similar way.

"It was almost too good to last," the boys said after the first day's experience of this new method of teaching; but it did last. A considerable portion of the work out of school was devoted to the keeping up the facts they had learned, for Mr. Porson was constantly going back and seeing that their memories retained the facts they had acquired, and what they called examinations were a part of the daily routine.

In some points upon which Mr. Hathorn had laid the greatest stress Mr. Porson was indifferent —dates, which had been the bane of many a boy's life and an unceasing source of punishment, he regarded but little, insisting only that the general period should be known, and his questions generally took the form of, "In the beginning or at the end of such and such a century, what was the state of things in England or in Rome?" A few dates of special events, the landmarks of history, were required to be learned accurately, all others were passed over as unimportant.

It was not that the boys worked fewer hours than before, but that they worked more intelligently, and therefore more pleasantly to themselves. The boys—and there were some—who imagined that under this new method of teaching they could be idle, very soon found out their mistake, and discovered that in his way Mr. Porson was just as strict as his predecessor. He never lost his temper; but his cold displeasure was harder to bear than Mr. Hathorn's wrath; nor were punishments wanting. Although the cane was idle, those who would not work were kept in the schoolroom during play hours; and in cases where this was found to be ineffectual Mr. Porson coldly said:

"Your parents pay me to teach you, and if you do not choose to be taught I have only to write home to them and request them to take you away. If you are one of those boys who will only learn from fear of the cane you had better go to some school where the cane is used."

This threat, which would have been ineffective in Mr. Hathorn's time never failed to have an effect now; for even Mather, the idlest and worst boy there, was able to appreciate the difference between the present regime and the last. In a marvelously short time Mr. Porson seemed to have gauged the abilities of each of the boys, and while he expected much from those who were able' to master easily their tasks, he was content with less from the duller intellects, providing they had done their best.

After a week's experience of Mr. Porson, Ned gave so glowing an account to his father of the new master and his methods that Captain Sankey went down to the school and arranged that Charlie, now ten years old, should accompany his brother. There were several boys no older than he; but Charlie differed widely from his elder brother, being a timid and delicate child, and ill fitted to take care of himself. Captain Sankey felt, however, after what Ned had told him of Mr. Porson, that he could trust to him during the school hours, and Ned would be an active protector in the playground.

It was not until a fortnight after the school began that the Four Acre Field was ready. By that time a flock of sheep had been turned into it, and had eaten the grass smooth, and a heavy horse roller had been at work for a day making a level pitch in the center.

It was a Saturday afternoon when the boys took possession of it for the first time. As they were about to start in the highest glee, Mr. Porson joined them. Some of their faces fell a little; but he said cheerfully:

"Now, boys, I am going with you; but not, you know, to look after you or keep you in order. I want you all to enjoy yourselves just in your own way, and I mean to enjoy myself too. I have been a pretty good cricketer in my time, and played in the York Eleven against Leeds, so I may be able to coach you up a little, and I hope after a bit we may be able to challenge some of the village elevens round here. I am afraid Marsden will be too good for us for some time; still, we shall see."

On reaching the field Mr. Porson saw the ground measured and the wickets erected, and then said:

"Now I propose we begin with a match. There are enough of us to make more than two elevens; but there are the other games. Would any of the bigger boys like to play quoits better than cricket?"

Mather, who felt much aggrieved at the master's presence, said he should prefer quoits; and Williamson, who always followed his lead, agreed to play with him.

"Now," Mr. Porson said, "do you, Ripon, choose an eleven. I will take the ten next best. The little ones who are over can play at trap bat, or bowls, as they like."

There was a general approval of the plan. Ripon chose an eleven of the likeliest boys, selecting the biggest and most active; for as there had been no room for cricket in the yard their aptitude for the game was a matter of guesswork, though most of them had played during the holidays. Mr. Porson chose the next ten and after tossing for innings, which Ripon won, they set to work. Mr. Porson played for a time as long stop, putting on two of the strongest of his team as bowlers, and changing them from time to time to test their capacity. None of them turned out brilliant, and the runs came fast, and the wickets were taken were few and far between, until at last Mr. Porson himself took the ball.

"I am not going to bowl fast," he said, "just straight easy lobs;" but the boys found that the straight lobs were not so easy after all, and the wickets of the boys who had made a long score soon fell. Most of those who followed managed to make a few runs as well off Mr. Porson's bowling as from that at the other end; for the master did not wish to discourage them, and for a few overs after each batsman came to the wicket aimed well off it so as to give them a chance of scoring.

The last wicket fell for the respectable score of fifty-four. The junior eleven then went in, the master not going in until the last. Only twenty runs had been made when he took the bat. In the five balls of the over which were bowled to him he made three fours; but before it came to his turn again his partner at the other end was out, and his side were twenty-two behind on the first innings. The other side scored thirty-three for the first four wickets before he again took the ball, and the remaining six went down for twelve runs. His own party implored him to go in first, but he refused.

"No, no, boys," he said; "you must win the match, if you can, without much aid from me."

The juniors made a better defense this time and scored forty before the ninth wicket fell. Then Mr. Porson went in and ran the score up to sixty before his partner was out, the seniors winning the match by nine runs. Both sides were highly pleased with the result of the match. The seniors had won after a close game. The juniors were well pleased to have run their elders so hard.

They all gathered round their master and thanked him warmly.

"I am glad you are pleased, my boys," he said; "I will come down two or three times a week and bowl to you for an hour, and give you a few hints, and you will find that you get on fast. There is plenty of promise among you, and I prophesy that we shall turn out a fair eleven by the end of the season."

The younger boys had also enjoyed themselves greatly, and had been joined by many of the elders while waiting for their turn to go in. Altogether the opening day of the Four Acre Field had been a great success.

The old cake woman who had previously supplied the boys still came once a week, her usual time being Wednesday evening, when, after tea, the boys played for half an hour in the yard before going in to their usual lessons. Ned was not usually present, but he one evening went back to fetch a book which he needed. As he came in at the gate of the yard Mather was speaking to the woman.

"No, I won't let you have any more, Master Mather. You have broken your promises to me over and over again. That money you owed me last half ain't been paid yet. If it had only been the money for the cakes and sweets I shouldn't ha' minded so much, but it's that ten shillings you borrowed and promised me solemn you would pay at the end of the week and ain't never paid yet. I have got to make up my rent, and I tell ye if I don't get the money by Saturday I shall speak to t' maister about it and see what he says to such goings on."

"Don't talk so loud," Mather said hurriedly, "and I will get you the money as seen as I can."

"I don't care who hears me," the woman replied in a still louder voice, "and as soon as you can won't do for I. I have got to have it on Saturday, so that's flat. I will come up to the field, and you'll best have it ready for me."

Ned did not hear the last few words, but he had heard enough to know that Mather owed ten shillings which he had borrowed, besides a bill for cakes. Mather had not noticed him come into the yard, for his back was toward the gate, and the noise which the boys made running about and shouting prevented him hearing the gate open and close.

"It's a beastly shame," Ned muttered to himself as he went off to school, "to borrow money from an old woman like that. Mather must have known he couldn't pay it, for he has only a small allowance, and he is always short of money, and of course he could not expect a tip before the holidays. He might have paid her when he came back, but as he didn't I don't see how he is to do so now, and if the old woman tells Porson there will be a row. It's just the sort of thing would rile him most."

On the next Saturday he watched with some curiosity the entry of the old woman into the field. Several of the boys went up and bought sweets. When she was standing alone Mather strolled up to her. After a word or two he handed her something. She took it, and said a few words. Mather shook his head positively, and in a minute or two walked away, leaving her apparently satisfied.

"I suppose he has given her something on account," Ned said to himself. "I wonder where he got it. When Ripon asked him last Monday for a subscription to buy another set of bats and wickets, so that two lots could practise at once, he said he had only sixpence left, and Mather would not like to seem mean now, for he knows he doesn't stand well with any one except two or three of his own set, because he is always running out against everything that Porson does."

A week later Mr. Porson said, at the end of school:

"By the way, boys, have any of you seen that illustrated classical dictionary of mine? I had it in school about ten days ago when I was showing you the prints of the dress and armor of the Romans, and I have not seen it since. I fancy I must have left it on my table, but I cannot be sure. I looked

everywhere in my library for it last night and cannot find it. Perhaps if I left it on the desk one of you has taken it to look at the pictures."

There was a general silence.

"I think it must be so," Mr. Porson went on more gravely. "If the boy who has it will give it up I shall not be angry, as, if I left it on the desk, there would be no harm in taking it to look at the pictures."

Still there was silence.

"I value the book," Mr. Porson went on, "not only because it is an expensive work, but because it is a prize which I won at Durham."

He paused a moment, and then said in a stern voice: "Let every boy open his desk."

The desks were opened, and Mr. Porson walked round and glanced at each.

"This is a serious matter now," he said. "Ripon, will you come to the study with me and help me to search again. It is possible it may still be there and I may have overlooked it. The rest will remain in their places till I return."

There was a buzz of conversation while the master was absent. On his return he said:

"The book is certainly not there. The bookshelves are all so full that it could only have been put in its own place or laid upon the table. Ripon and I have searched the room thoroughly and it is certainly not there. Now, boys, this is a serious business. In the first place, I will give a last chance to whoever may have taken it to rise in his place and confess it."

He paused, and still all were silent.

"Now mind," he said, "I do not say that any of you have taken it—I have no grounds for such an accusation. It may have been taken by a servant. A tramp may have come in at the back gate when you were all away and have carried it off. These things are possible. And even were I sure that it had been done by one of you I should not dream of punishing all; therefore for the present we will say no more about it. But in order to assure myself and you I must ask you for the keys of your boxes. The servants' boxes will also be searched, as well as every nook and corner of the house; and then, when we have ascertained for a certainty that the book is not within these four walls, I shall go on with a lighter heart."

The boys all eagerly opened their trunks and play boxes, searched under the beds, in the cupboards, and in every nook and corner of their part of the house, and an equally minute search was afterward made in the other apartments; but no trace of the book was discovered. For days the matter was a subject of conversation among the boys, and endless were the conjectures as to what could have become of the dictionary. Their respect and affection for their master were greatly heightened by the fact that his behavior toward them was in no way altered by the circumstances. His temper was as patient and equable as before in the schoolroom; he was as cheerful and friendly in the cricket field, They could see, however, that he was worried and depressed, though he strove to appear the same as usual. Often did they discuss among themselves how different the state of things would have been had the loss happened to Mr. Hathorn, and what a life they would have led under those circumstances.

At the end of a week the happy thought struck Ripon that a subscription should be made to buy a new dictionary. The amount was a serious one, as they found that the book could not be purchased under two guineas; but every boy subscribed to his last farthing. Some promised their pocket money for weeks in advance; others wrote home to their parents to ask for money, and in ten days the boys had the satisfaction of seeing Ripon at the commencement of school walk up to Mr. Porson's desk and present him with the handsome volume in the name of all the boys. Ripon had taken some pains in getting up an appropriate speech, and it was voted a great success.

"Mr. Porson," he said, "in the name of all the boys in the school I beg to ask your acceptance of this volume. It cannot have the value to you of that which you have lost, as that was a prize; but we hope, that as a proof of the respect and affection which we all have for you, and as a token of our appreciation of your very great kindness toward us, you will accept it in place of the other."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.