VINTAGE

SONS AND LOVERS

D.H. LAWRENCE

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Copyright

About the Book

Paul Morel is the focus of his disappointed and fiercely protective mother’s life. Their tender, devoted and intense bond comes under strain when Paul falls in love with Miriam Leivers, a local girl his mother disapproves of. The arrival of the provocatively modern Clara Dawes causes further tension and Paul is torn between his individual desires and family allegiances.

Set in a Nottinghamshire mining town at the turn of the twentieth century, this is a powerful portrayal of family and love in all its forms.

About the Author

David Herbert Lawrence was born on 11 September 1885 in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. His father was a miner and his mother was a schoolteacher. In 1906 Lawrence began studying to be a teacher at Nottingham University. His first novel, *The White Peacock*, was published in 1911 and was followed by *The Trespasser* in 1912 and *Sons and Lovers* in 1913. In 1912 Lawrence met and fell in love with a married woman, Frieda Weekley, and eloped to Germany with her. They were married in 1914 and spent the rest of their lives together travelling around the world. *The Rainbow* was published in 1915 and was banned in Great Britain for obscenity. *Women in Love* continues the story of the Brangwen family begun in *The Rainbow* and was finished by Lawrence in 1916 but not published until 1920. Another of Lawrence's most famous works, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was privately printed in Florence in 1928 but was not published in Britain until 1960, when it was the subject of an unsuccessful court case brought against it for obscenity. As well as novels, Lawrence also wrote in a variety of other genres and his poetry, criticism and travel books remain highly regarded. He was also a keen painter. D.H. Lawrence died in France on 2 March 1930.

ALSO BY D.H. LAWRENCE

The White Peacock
The Trespasser
The Rainbow
Women in Love
The Lost Girl
Aaron's Rod
Kangaroo
The Boy in the Bush
The Plumed Serpent
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The Escaped Cock
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D.H. LAWRENCE

Sons and Lovers

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
Richard Eyre

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

Introduction

It's not hard to imagine a teenager of today hesitating at the prospect of reading a novel by D.H. Lawrence. His stock is low. While his poetry is admired, his paintings are scorned, his plays largely unperformed and his novels neglected. What's more, he's reviled for his supposed fascism and sexism. I can't think of Lawrence as being bound by any 'ism', nor can I think of him as anything but a genius. His poetry has a wonderful specificity and he's one of the very best – and least celebrated – English playwrights. His novels have a voracious ambition to embrace passion and ideas, aspiration and desperation. 'There is no such thing as sin,' he said, 'There is only life and anti-life.' The novels have a curiosity about the place of sex in our lives and an undaunted determination to examine it. And they give a rare picture – clear and unsentimental – of working class life. Perhaps his stock is rising: an American friend told me recently that her seventeen-year-old nephew was reading *Sons and Lovers* and had pronounced it 'pretty cool'.

When I was seventeen, in 1960, the Lawrence novel that I was eager to read was *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, largely on account of the fact that I'd heard it had explicit descriptions of sex which included the naming of parts. That I knew this was due to the fact that Penguin Books had published the first unexpurgated edition and had been

prosecuted for it under the Obscene Publications Act, which aimed to punish books which had a 'tendency to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences'. A recent change in the Act, however, had made it possible for publishers to escape conviction if they could show that a work was of literary merit. An array of expert literary witnesses testified to its merits and, with his memorably absurd line that the book was not the sort 'you would wish your wife or servants to read', the prosecuting counsel failed to convince the jury and the publishers were acquitted.

When I eventually got hold of a copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* I was surprised. Far from finding it lubricious, I found it a sometimes grave, sometimes droll, often earnest novel which was partly about sex – or at least the differing attitudes to sex of men and women – but as much about class and culture and politics. Moreover the descriptions of sex were neither simple nor mechanical. Far from it, Lawrence was representing the *complexity* of sex – the power and fascination of it as well as the 'ridiculous bouncing of the buttocks, and the wilting of the poor insignificant, moist little penis'. I discovered that it was a novel about people who are living in a world bruised by war and by 'mechanized greed', in which regeneration would only be possible through honest sexual relationships where the body and mind became inseparable. It's an argument he had set out fifteen years earlier in *Sons and Lovers*.

Sons and Lovers is autobiographical but it's not Lawrence's autobiography, though it's easy enough to conflate the two. The setting – 'Bestwood' – is unmistakably Eastwood, where he was born and grew up and his father was a miner. His mother, like Gertrude Morel in the novel, married beneath her class and the marriage had the characteristics of the Morels' marriage: an early passion declining into mutual resentment ('in her heart of hearts, where the love

should have burned, there was a blank'). Lawrence's first job, as in the novel, was as a clerk in a factory which made surgical appliances. And in Miriam and her family, it is not hard to recognise the Chambers family at Hagg's Farm and the real life Jessie, who had the same role in Lawrence's life as Miriam did in Paul's: 'Miriam was the threshing floor on which he threshed out all his beliefs.' Jessie Chambers fiercely contested the characterisation of Miriam and the complexion that Lawrence had put on their relationship. The further he became removed from the real events both in time and in the several drafts of the novel, the more he became more concerned with a fictional rather than historical truth. The novel was drawn, rather than based, on his life.

Here's his description to his publisher of his scheme for the book:

> … as her sons grow up she selects them as lovers – first the eldest, then the second. These sons are *urged* into life by their reciprocal love of their mother – urged on and on. But when they come to manhood, they can't love, because their mother is the strongest power in their lives, and holds them. As soon as the young men come into contact with women, there's a split. William gives his sex to a fribble, and his mother holds his soul. But the split kills him, because he doesn't know where he is. The next son gets a woman who fights for his soul – fights his mother. The son loves his mother – all the sons hate and are jealous of the father.

It's possible that this was a *post hoc* rationalisation – after all, the first title for the novel was *Paul Morel* – but as a description of the novel's emotional landscape it can't be bettered. Some people infer from the novel – 'wherever he went her soul went with him' – and from Lawrence's stated

intentions that Paul Morel (and Lawrence himself) was in the grip of an Oedipus complex. That dubious and reductive label reduces a character to a condition. It also fails to embrace the subtlety with which Lawrence creates the context of Mrs Morel's love for her son: 'She went into the front garden, feeling too heavy to take herself out, yet unable to stay indoors. The heat suffocated her. And looking ahead, the prospect of her life made her feel as if she was buried alive.' Entombed in her loveless marriage she lives vicariously through her sons, first William, then Arthur, then Paul. When William dies – '"Oh, my son, my son!" Mrs Morel sang softly, and each time the coffin swung to the unequal climbing of the men: "Oh my son, my son, my son"' – she grows into herself, becomes mute, until Paul draws her back: 'His life story, like an Arabian nights, was told night after night to his mother. It was almost as if it were her own life.'

The battleground where Gertrude contends with her sons is sex. She is jealous for their attention and bitingly chides them when they take interest in women, or at least in strong women, the women who want to take control of her sons, the women who 'leave me no room, not a bit of room'. Miriam is the principal object of her resentment and Paul is torn between love for his mother and desire for Miriam, which is finally unsatisfactorily consummated: 'She had the most beautiful body he had ever imagined … and then he wanted her, but as he went forward to her, her hands lifted in a little pleading movement, and he looked at her face and stopped … She lay as if she had given herself up for sacrifice.'

It will come as a surprise to readers new to *Sons and Lovers*, schooled to think of Lawrence as a priapic antifeminist, that the novel presents an almost reverent attitude to women and, far from being concerned with sexual indulgence, is concerned with sexual shyness and virginity, 'the misery of celibacy'. Lawrence writes about

the confusion in men and women about sex, the frequently childlike behaviour of men in the face of sexual desire, the ignorance and fear: ‘He was like so many young men of his own age. Sex had become so complicated in him that he would have denied that he could ever want Clara or Miriam or any woman that he *knew*: sex desire was a sort of detached thing, that did not belong to a woman.’

It’s common to mock Lawrence as the progenitor of the Bad Sex Award for his writing about sex but are his descriptions of sexual passion – largely devoid of the geography of limbs and the exchange of bodily fluids – really less vivid than ones which are anatomically and mechanically detailed? ‘He sunk his mouth on her throat, where he felt her heavy pulse beat under his lips. Everything was perfectly still. There was nothing in the afternoon but themselves.’ Isn’t that beautiful? In his writing about sex, Lawrence is the opposite of pornographic; he tries to anatomise feelings that are outside the realm of objectivity; he’s always concerned with trying to parse the mystery of the relationship of the physical to the spiritual, instinct to reason, passion to love.

When Paul makes love to Clara Dawes there’s a release – ‘the baptism of life, each through the other’ – but there is still an unresolved inequality that troubled Lawrence throughout his fiction and his life:

> “Do you think it’s worth it – the – sex part?”
>
> “The act of loving, itself?”
>
> “Yes, is it worth anything to you?”
>
> “But how can you separate it,” he said, “It’s the culmination of everything. All our intimacy culminates then.”
>
> “Not for me,” she said.
>
> He was silent. A flash of hate for her came up. After all, she was dissatisfied with him, even there, where

he thought they fulfilled each other. But he believed her too implicitly.

"I feel," she continued slowly, "as if I hadn't got you, as if all of you weren't there, as if it weren't *me* you were taking –"

"Who then?"

"Something just for yourself. It has been fine, so that I daren't think of it. But is it *me* you want, or is it *It?*"

The need to resolve this inequity became a credo in Lawrence's writing: 'I believe if men could fuck with warm hearts, and the women take it warm-heartedly, everything would come all right.'

Like the passage above, much if not most of the debate in the novel is portrayed in dialogue rather than prose. In fact the spine of *Sons and Lovers* is the dialogue, the arteries too, for the blood of real life pulses through every spoken word. The dialogue is often italicised and capitalised for emphasis like a playwright determined that his lines are correctly heard; but then Lawrence was a very good playwright. Of his eight plays his masterpiece was *The Daughter-in-Law*. As in his novels, its themes – if you can describe anything as subtle and organic as 'themes' – are sex, class, dependence and freedom, all couched in the language of a mining community, whose speech is both authentic and poetic. 'I wish I could write such dialogue,' said Bernard Shaw. 'With mine I always hear the sound of the typewriter.'

Listen to this – it's just after the birth of Paul when his father, back from the mine with his face black and smeared with sweat, stands at the foot of the bed:

"Well, how are ter, then?"

"Is'll be all right," she answered.

"H'm!"

He stood at a loss what to say next. He was tired, and this bother was nuisance to him, and he didn't quite know where he was.

"A lad, tha says," he stammered.

Throughout *Sons and Lovers* (and all his plays) Lawrence shows a love of the physical, the way that men and women use their bodies to work, or wash, or eat, or touch or avoid each other. He physicalises the dialogue too, invariably using dialect to achieve authenticity and delineate class distinctions. It irritated many of his middle class readers and is a further reminder of how few English writers write with authority about the working class. 'Why don't you speak ordinary English?' says Lady Chatterley to Mellors. 'AH thowt it WOR ordinary,' he replies.

He's good on the natural world too, the sounds of birds and animals, the 'chock-chock' of a gate closing, the smells of the railway and of flowers – 'the scent made him drunk ... the beauty of the night made him want to shout'. He's not without wit too. The description of the visit of William's fiancée, Lily (a bit of a 'bobby-dazzler'), to the Morels' house is a wonderful set-piece about the awkwardness of introducing a girlfriend to the family, observed from every point of view. The whole book is threaded through the silvery glint of distinctive observations – 'they had the peculiar shut off look of the poor who have to depend on the favours of others' and 'it is curious that children suffer so much from having to pronounce their own names' – which have a vigour and accessibility that makes the novel feel, nearly a hundred years after its publication, still contemporary.

Lawrence's writing is always concerned with what it means to be modern, what it means to live in an industrial age, to hold on to your own self when everything conspires

to obliterate it. He writes about all kinds of love – physical and spiritual – but shows how love is bound up inextricably with class and with society. There's a kind of doggedness about the conclusion to *Sons and Lovers* with Paul sacrificing his relationship with Clara in order to be alone 'himself, infinitesimal, at the core of nothingness, and yet not nothing'. He calls out to his mother in suicidal despair 'But no, he would not give in.' He endures, as Lawrence endured in the face of extraordinary difficulties in his life and work – poverty, controversy, condemnation and illness. 'We've got to live,' he said, 'No matter how many skies have fallen.'

Richard Eyre, 2010

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY MARRIED LIFE OF THE MORELS

‘THE BOTTOMS’ succeeded to ‘Hell Row’. Hell Row was a block of thatched, bulging cottages that stood by the brookside on Greenhill Lane. There lived the colliers who worked in the little gin-pits two fields away. The brook ran under the alder trees, scarcely soiled by these small mines, whose coal was drawn to the surface by donkeys that plodded wearily in a circle round a gin. And all over the countryside were these same pits, some of which had been worked in the time of Charles II, the few colliers and the donkeys burrowing down like ants into the earth, making queer mounds and little black places among the corn-fields and the meadows. And the cottages of these coal-miners, in blocks and pairs here and there, together with odd farms and homes of the stockingers, straying over the parish, formed the village of Bestwood.

Then, some sixty years ago, a sudden change took place. The gin-pits were elbowed aside by the large mines of the financiers. The coal and iron field of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire was discovered. Carston, Waite and Co. appeared. Amid tremendous excitement, Lord Palmerston formally opened the company’s first mine at Spinney Park, on the edge of Sherwood Forest.

About this time the notorious Hell Row, which through growing old had acquired an evil reputation, was burned down, and much dirt was cleansed away.

Carston, Waite and Co. found they had struck on a good thing, so, down the valleys of the brooks from Selby and Nuttall, new mines were sunk, until soon there were six pits working. From Nuttall, high up on the sandstone among the woods, the railway ran, past the ruined priory of

the Carthusians and past Robin Hood's Well, down to Spinney Park, then on to Minton, a large mine among corn-fields; from Minton across the farmlands of the valleyside to Bunker's Hill, branching off there, and running north to Beggarlee and Selby, that looks over at Crich and the hills of Derbyshire; six mines like black studs on the countryside, linked by a loop of fine chain, the railway.

To accommodate the regiments of miners, Carston, Waite and Co. built the Squares, great quadrangles of dwellings on the hillside of Bestwood, and then, in the brook valley, on the site of Hell Row, they erected the Bottoms.

The Bottoms consisted of six blocks of miners' dwellings, two rows of three, like the dots on a blank-six domino, and twelve houses in a block. This double row of dwellings sat at the foot of the rather sharp slope from Bestwood, and looked out, from the attic windows at least, on the slow climb of the valley towards Selby.

The houses themselves were substantial and very decent. One could walk all round, seeing little front gardens with auriculas and saxifrage in the shadow of the bottom block, sweet-williams and pinks in the sunny top block; seeing neat front windows, little porches, little privet hedges, and dormer windows for the attics. But that was outside; that was the view on to the uninhabited parlours of all the colliers' wives. The dwelling-room, the kitchen, was at the back of the house, facing inward between the blocks, looking at a scrubby back garden, and then at the ash-pits. And between the rows, between the long lines of ash-pits, went the alley, where the children played and the women gossiped and the men smoked. So, the actual conditions of living in the Bottoms, that was so well built and that looked so nice, were quite unsavoury because people must live in the kitchen, and the kitchens opened on to that nasty alley of ash-pits.

Mrs Morel was not anxious to move into the Bottoms, which was already twelve years old and on the downward path, when she descended to it from Bestwood. But it was the best she could do. Moreover, she had an end house in one of the top blocks, and thus had only one neighbour; on the other side an extra strip of garden. And, having an end house, she enjoyed a kind of aristocracy among the other women of the 'between' houses, because her rent was five shillings and sixpence instead of five shillings a week. But this superiority in station was not much consolation to Mrs Morel.

She was thirty-one years old, and had been married eight years. A rather small woman, of delicate mould but resolute bearing, she shrank a little from the first contact with the Bottoms women. She came down in the July, and in the September expected her third baby.

Her husband was a miner. They had only been in their new home three weeks when the wakes, or fair, began. Morel, she knew, was sure to make a holiday of it. He went off early on the Monday morning, the day of the fair. The two children were highly excited. William, a boy of seven, fled off immediately after breakfast, to prowl round the wakes ground, leaving Annie, who was only five, to whine all morning to go also. Mrs Morel did her work. She scarcely knew her neighbours yet, and knew no one with whom to trust the little girl. So she promised to take her to the wakes after dinner.

William appeared at half-past twelve. He was a very active lad, fair-haired, freckled, with a touch of the Dane or Norwegian about him.

'Can I have my dinner, mother?' he cried, rushing in with his cap on. ''Cause it begins at half-past one, the man says so.'

'You can have your dinner as soon as it's done,' replied the mother.

‘Isn’t it done?’ he cried, his blue eyes staring at her in indignation. ‘Then I’m goin’ be-out it.’

‘You’ll do nothing of the sort. It will be done in five minutes. It is only half-past twelve.’

‘They’ll be beginnin’,’ the boy half cried, half shouted.

‘You won’t die if they do,’ said the mother. ‘Besides, it’s only half-past twelve, so you’ve a full hour.’

The lad began hastily to lay the table, and directly the three sat down. They were eating batter-pudding and jam, when the boy jumped off his chair and stood perfectly still. Some distance away could be heard the first small braying of a merry-go-round, and the tooting of a horn. His face quivered as he looked at his mother.

‘I told you!’ he said, running to the dresser for his cap.

‘Take your pudding in your hand – and it’s only five past one, so you were wrong – you haven’t got your twopence,’ cried the mother in a breath.

The boy came back, bitterly disappointed, for his twopence; then went off without a word.

‘I want to go, I want to go,’ said Annie, beginning to cry.

‘Well, and you shall go, whining, wizzening little stick!’ said the mother. And later in the afternoon she trudged up the hill under the tall hedge with her child. The hay was gathered from the fields, and cattle were turned on to the eddish. It was warm, peaceful.

Mrs Morel did not like the wakes. There were two sets of horses, one going by steam, one pulled round by a pony; three organs were grinding, and there came odd cracks of pistol-shots, fearful screeching of the cocoanut man’s rattle, shouts of the Aunt Sally man, screeches from the peep-show lady. The mother perceived her son gazing enraptured outside the Lion Wallace booth, at the pictures of this famous lion that had killed a negro and maimed for life two white men. She left him alone, and went to get Annie a spin of toffee. Presently the lad stood in front of her, wildly excited.

‘You never said you was coming – isn’t the’ a lot of things? – that lion’s killed three men – I’ve spent my tuppence – an’ look here.’

He pulled from his pocket two egg-cups, with pink moss-roses on them.

‘I got these from that stall where y’ave ter get them marbles in them holes. An’ I got these two in two goes – ’aepenny a go – they’ve got moss-roses on, look here. I wanted these.’

She knew he wanted them for her.

‘H’m!’ she said, pleased. ‘They *are* pretty!’

‘Shall you carry ’em, ’cause I’m frightened o’ breakin’ ’em?’

He was tipful of excitement now she had come, led her about the ground, showed her everything. Then, at the peep-show, she explained the pictures, in a sort of story, to which he listened as if spellbound. He would not leave her. All the time he stuck close to her, bristling with a small boy’s pride of her. For no other woman looked such a lady as she did, in her little black bonnet and her cloak. She smiled when she saw women she knew. When she was tired she said to her son:

‘Well, are you coming now, or later?’

‘Are you goin’ a’ready?’ he cried, his face full of reproach.

‘Already? It is past four, *I* know.’

‘What are you goin’ a’ready for?’ he lamented.

‘You needn’t come if you don’t want,’ she said.

And she went slowly away with her little girl, whilst her son stood watching her, cut to the heart to let her go, and yet unable to leave the wakes. As she crossed the open ground in front of the Moon and Stars she heard men shouting, and smelled the beer, and hurried a little, thinking her husband was probably in the bar.

At about half-past six her son came home, tired now, rather pale, and somewhat wretched. He was miserable,

though he did not know it, because he had let her go alone. Since she had gone, he had not enjoyed his wakes.

‘Has my dad been?’ he asked.

‘No,’ said the mother.

‘He’s helping to wait at the Moon and Stars. I seed him through that black tin stuff wi’ holes in, on the window, wi’ his sleeves rolled up.’

‘Ha!’ exclaimed the mother shortly. ‘He’s got no money. An’ he’ll be satisfied if he gets his ’lowance, whether they give him more or not.’

When the light was fading, and Mrs Morel could see no more to sew, she rose and went to the door. Everywhere was the sound of excitement, the restlessness of the holiday, that at last infected her. She went out into the side garden. Women were coming home from the wakes, the children hugging a white lamb with green legs, or a wooden horse. Occasionally a man lurched past, almost as full as he could carry. Sometimes a good husband came along with his family, peacefully. But usually the women and children were alone. The stay-at-home mothers stood gossiping at the corners of the alley, as the twilight sank, folding their arms under their white aprons.

Mrs Morel was alone, but she was used to it. Her son and her little girl slept upstairs; so, it seemed, her home was there behind her, fixed and stable. But she felt wretched with the coming child. The world seemed a dreary place, where nothing else would happen for her – at least until William grew up. But for herself, nothing but this dreary endurance – till the children grew up. And the children! She could not afford to have this third. She did not want it. The father was serving beer in a public-house, swilling himself drunk. She despised him, and was tied to him. This coming child was too much for her. If it were not for William and Annie, she was sick of it, the struggle with poverty and ugliness and meanness.

She went into the front garden, feeling too heavy to take herself out, yet unable to stay indoors. The heat suffocated her. And looking ahead, the prospect of her life made her feel as if she were buried alive.

The front garden was a small square with a privet hedge. There she stood, trying to soothe herself with the scent of flowers and the fading, beautiful evening. Opposite her small gate was the stile that led uphill, under the tall hedge, between the burning glow of the cut pastures. The sky overhead throbbed and pulsed with light. The glow sank quickly off the field; the earth and the hedges smoked dusk. As it grew dark, a ruddy glare came out on the hilltop, and out of the glare the diminished commotion of the fair.

Sometimes, down the trough of darkness formed by the path under the hedges, men came lurching home. One young man lapsed into a run down the steep bit that ended the hill, and went with a crash into the stile. Mrs Morel shuddered. He picked himself up, swearing viciously, rather pathetically, as if he thought the stile had wanted to hurt him.

She went indoors, wondering if things were never going to alter. She was beginning by now to realize that they would not. She seemed so far away from her girlhood, she wondered if it were the same person walking heavily up the back garden at the Bottoms as had run so lightly on the breakwater at Sheerness ten years before.

'What have *I* to do with it?' she said to herself. 'What have I to do with all this? Even the child I am going to have! It doesn't seem as if *I* were taken into account.'

Sometimes life takes hold of one, carries the body along, accomplishes one's history, and yet is not real, but leaves oneself as it were slurred over.

'I wait,' Mrs Morel said to herself – 'I wait, and what I wait for can never come.'

Then she straightened the kitchen, lit the lamp, mended the fire, looked out the washing for the next day, and put it to soak. After which she sat down to her sewing. Through the long hours her needle flashed regularly through the stuff. Occasionally she sighed, moving to relieve herself. And all the time she was thinking how to make the most of what she had, for the children's sakes.

At half-past eleven her husband came. His cheeks were very red and very shiny above his black moustache. His head nodded slightly. He was pleased with himself.

'Oh! Oh! waitin' for me, lass? I've bin 'elpin' Anthony, an' what's think he's gen me? Nowt b'r a lousy hae'f-crown, an' that's ivry penny –'

'He thinks you've made the rest up in beer,' she said shortly.

'An' I 'aven't – that I 'aven't. You b'lieve me, I've 'ad very little this day, I have an' all.' His voice went tender. 'Here, an' I browt thee a bit o' brandysnap, an' a cocoanut for th' children.' He laid the gingerbread and the cocoanut, a hairy object, on the table. 'Nay, tha niver said thankyer for nowt i' thy life, did ter?'

As a compromise, she picked up the cocoanut and shook it, to see if it had any milk.

'It's a good 'un, you may back yer life o' that. I got it fra' Bill Hodgkisson. "Bill," I says, "tha non wants them three nuts, does ter? Arena ter for gi'ein' me one for my bit of a lad an' wench?" "I ham, Walter, my lad," 'e says; "ta'e which on 'em ter's a mind." An' so I took one, an' thanked 'im. I didn't like ter shake it afore 'is eyes, but 'e says, "Tha'd better ma'e sure it's a good un, Walt." An' so, yer see, I knowed it was. He's a nice chap, is Bill Hodgkisson, 'e's a nice chap!'

'A man will part with anything so long as he's drunk, and you're drunk along with him,' said Mrs Morel.

'Eh, tha mucky little 'ussy, who's drunk, I sh'd like ter know?' said Morel. He was extraordinarily pleased with

himself, because of his day's helping to wait in the Moon and Stars. He chattered on.

Mrs Morel, very tired, and sick of his babble, went to bed as quickly as possible, while he raked the fire.

Mrs Morel came of a good old burgher family, famous independents who had fought with Colonel Hutchinson, and who remained stout Congregationalists. Her grandfather had gone bankrupt in the lace-market at a time when so many lace-manufacturers were ruined in Nottingham. Her father, George Coppard, was an engineer – a large, handsome, haughty man, proud of his fair skin and blue eyes, but more proud still of his integrity. Gertrude resembled her mother in her small build. But her temper, proud and unyielding, she had from the Coppards.

George Coppard was bitterly galled by his own poverty. He became foreman of the engineers in the dockyard at Sheerness. Mrs Morel – Gertrude – was the second daughter. She favoured her mother, loved her mother best of all; but she had the Coppards' clear, defiant blue eyes and their broad brow. She remembered to have hated her father's overbearing manner towards her gentle, humorous, kindly-souled mother. She remembered running over the breakwater at Sheerness and finding the boat. She remembered to have been petted and flattered by all the men when she had gone to the dockyard, for she was a delicate, rather proud child. She remembered the funny old mistress, whose assistant she had become, whom she had loved to help in the private school. And she still had the Bible that John Field had given her. She used to walk home from chapel with John Field when she was nineteen. He was the son of a well-to-do tradesman, had been to college in London, and was to devote himself to business.

She could always recall in detail a September Sunday afternoon, when they had sat under the vine at the back of her father's house. The sun came through the chinks in the vine-leaves and made beautiful patterns, like a lace scarf,

falling on her and on him. Some of the leaves were clean yellow, like yellow flat flowers.

'Now sit still,' he had cried. 'Now your hair, I don't know what it *is* like! It's as bright as copper and gold, as red as burnt copper, and it has gold threads where the sun shines on it. Fancy their saying it's brown. Your mother calls it mouse-colour.'

She had met his brilliant eyes, but her clear face scarcely showed the elation which rose within her.

'But you say you don't like business,' she pursued.

'I don't. I hate it!' he cried hotly.

'And you would like to go into the ministry,' she half implored.

'I should. I should love it, if I thought I could make a first-rate preacher.'

'Then why don't you – why *don't* you?' Her voice rang with defiance. 'If *I* were a man, nothing would stop me.'

She held her head erect. He was rather timid before her.

'But my father's so stiff-necked. He means to put me into the business, and I know he'll do it.'

'But if you're a *man*?' she had cried.

'Being a man isn't everything,' he replied, frowning with puzzled helplessness.

Now, as she moved about her work at the Bottoms, with some experience of what being a man meant, she knew that it was *not* everything.

At twenty, owing to her health, she had left Sheerness. Her father had retired home to Nottingham. John Field's father had been ruined; the son had gone as a teacher in Norwood. She did not hear of him until, two years later, she made determined inquiry. He had married his landlady, a woman of forty, a widow with property.

And still Mrs Morel preserved John Field's Bible. She did not now believe him to be – Well, she understood pretty well what he might or might not have been. So she preserved his Bible and kept his memory intact in her

heart, for her own sake. To her dying day, for thirty-five years, she did not speak of him.

When she was twenty-three years old, she met, at a Christmas party, a young man from the Erewash Valley. Morel was then twenty-seven years old. He was well set-up, erect, and very smart. He had wavy black hair that shone again, and a vigorous black beard that had never been shaved. His cheeks were ruddy, and his red, moist mouth was noticeable because he laughed so often and so heartily. He had that rare thing, a rich, ringing laugh. Gertrude Coppard had watched him, fascinated. He was so full of colour and animation, his voice ran so easily into comic grotesque, he was so ready and so pleasant with everybody. Her own father had a rich fund of humour, but it was satiric. This man's was different: soft, non-intellectual, warm, a kind of gambolling.

She herself was opposite. She had a curious, receptive mind, which found much pleasure and amusement in listening to other folk. She was clever in leading folk on to talk. She loved ideas, and was considered very intellectual. What she liked most of all was an argument on religion or philosophy or politics with some educated man. This she did not often enjoy. So she always had people tell her about themselves, finding her pleasure so.

In her person she was rather small and delicate, with a large brow, and dropping bunches of brown silk curls. Her blue eyes were very straight, honest, and searching. She had the beautiful hands of the Coppards. Her dress was always subdued. She wore dark blue silk, with a peculiar silver chain of silver scallops. This, and a heavy brooch of twisted gold, was her only ornament. She was still perfectly intact, deeply religious, and full of beautiful candour.

Walter Morel seemed melted away before her. She was to the miner that thing of mystery and fascination, a lady. When she spoke to him, it was with a southern pronunciation and a purity of English which thrilled him to

hear. She watched him. He danced well, as if it were natural and joyous in him to dance. His grandfather was a French refugee who had married an English barmaid – if it had been a marriage. Gertrude Coppard watched the young miner as he danced, a certain subtle exultation like glamour in his movement, and his face the flower of his body, ruddy, with tumbled black hair, and laughing alike whatever partner he bowed above. She thought him rather wonderful, never having met anyone like him. Her father was to her the type of all men. And George Coppard, proud in his bearing, handsome, and rather bitter; who preferred theology in reading, and who drew near in sympathy only to one man, the Apostle Paul; who was harsh in government, and in familiarity ironic; who ignored all sensuous pleasure; – he was very different from the miner. Gertrude herself was rather contemptuous of dancing; she had not the slightest inclination towards that accomplishment, and had never learned even a Roger de Coverley. She was a puritan, like her father, high-minded, and really stern. Therefore the dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame from a candle, not baffled and gripped into incandescence by thought and spirit as her life was, seemed to her something wonderful, beyond her.

He came and bowed above her. A warmth radiated through her as if she had drunk wine.

'Now do come and have this one wi' me,' he said caressively. 'It's easy, you know. I'm pining to see you dance.'

She had told him before she could not dance. She glanced at his humility and smiled. Her smile was very beautiful. It moved the man so that he forgot everything.

'No, I won't dance,' she said softly. Her words came clean and ringing.

Not knowing what he was doing – he often did the right thing by instinct – he sat beside her, inclining reverentially.

‘But you mustn’t miss your dance,’ she reproved.

‘Nay, I don’t want to dance that – it’s not one as I care about.’

‘Yet you invited me to it.’

He laughed very heartily at this.

‘I never thought o’ that. Tha’rt not long in taking the curl out of me.’

It was her turn to laugh quickly.

‘You don’t look as if you’d come much uncurled,’ she said.

‘I’m like a pig’s tail, I curl because I canna help it,’ he laughed, rather boisterously.

‘And you are a miner!’ she exclaimed in surprise.

‘Yes. I went down when I was ten.’

She looked at him in wondering dismay.

‘When you were ten! And wasn’t it very hard?’ she asked.

‘You soon get used to it. You live like th’ mice, an’ you pop out at night to see what’s going on.’

‘It makes me feel blind,’ she frowned.

‘Like a moudiwarp!’ he laughed. ‘Yi, an’ there’s some chaps as does go round like moudiwarps.’ He thrust his face forward in the blind, snout-like way of a mole, seeming to sniff and peer for direction. ‘They dun though!’ he protested naïvely. ‘Tha niver seen such a way they get in. But tha mun let me ta’e thee down some time, an’ tha can see for thysen.’

She looked at him, startled. This was a new tract of life suddenly opened before her. She realized the life of the miners, hundreds of them toiling below earth and coming up at evening. He seemed to her noble. He risked his life daily, and with gaiety. She looked at him, with a touch of appeal in her pure humility.

‘Shouldn’t ter like it?’ he asked tenderly. ‘’Appen not, it ’ud dirty thee.’

She had never been ‘thee’d’ and ‘thou’d’ before.

The next Christmas they were married, and for three months she was perfectly happy: for six months she was very happy.

He had signed the pledge, and wore the blue ribbon of a teetotaller: he was nothing if not showy. They lived, she thought, in his own house. It was small, but convenient enough, and quite nicely furnished, with solid, worthy stuff that suited her honest soul. The women, her neighbours, were rather foreign to her, and Morel's mother and sisters were apt to sneer at her lady-like ways. But she could perfectly well live by herself, so long as she had her husband close.

Sometimes, when she herself wearied of love-talk, she tried to open her heart seriously to him. She saw him listen deferentially, but without understanding. This killed her efforts at a finer intimacy, and she had flashes of fear. Sometimes he was restless of an evening: it was not enough for him just to be near her, she realized. She was glad when he set himself to little jobs.

He was a remarkably handy man – could make or mend anything. So she would say:

'I do like that coal-rake of your mother's – it is small and natty.'

'Does ter, my wench? Well, I made that, so I can make thee one.'

'What! why it's a steel one!'

'An' what if it is! Tha s'lt ha'e one very similar, if not exactly same.'

She did not mind the mess, nor the hammering and noise. He was busy and happy.

But in the seventh month, when she was brushing his Sunday coat, she felt papers in the breast-pocket, and, seized with a sudden curiosity, took them out to read. He very rarely wore the frock-coat he was married in: and it had not occurred to her before to feel curious concerning