

GEORGE ELIOT

ADAM BEDE

George Eliot

Adam Bede

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Table of Contents

Book One.

- I. The Workshop.
- II. The Preaching.
- III. After the Preaching.
- IV. Home and Its Sorrows.
- V. The Rector.
- VI. The Hall Farm.
- VII. The Dairy.
- VIII. A Vocation.
- IX. Hetty's World.
- X. Dinah Visits Lisbeth.
- XI. In the Cottage.
- XII. In the Wood.
- XIII. Evening in the Wood.
- XIV. The Return Home.
- XV. The Two Bed-Chambers.
- XVI. Links.

Book Two.

- I. In Which the Story Pauses a Little.
- II. Church.
- III. Adam on a Working Day.
- IV. Adam Visits the Hall Farm.
- V. The Night-School and the Schoolmaster.

Book Three.

- I. Going to the Birthday Feast.
- II. Dinner-Time.
- III. The Health-Drinking.
- IV. The Games.
- V. The Dance.

Book Four.

- I. A crisis.
- II. A Dilemma.
- III. The Next Morning.
- IV. The Delivery of the Letter.
- V. In Hetty's Bed-Chamber.
- VI. Mrs. Poyser "Has Her Say Out".
- VII. More Links.
- VIII. The Betrothal.
- IX. The Hidden Dread.

Book Five.

- I. The Journey of Hope.
- II. The Journey in Despair.
- III. The Quest.
- IV. The Tidings.
- V. The Bitter Waters Spread.
- VI. The Eve of the Trial.
- VII. The Morning of the Trial.
- VIII. The Verdict.
- IX. Arthur's Return.
- X. In the Prison.
- XI. The Hours of Suspense.

XII. The Last Moment.

XIII. Another Meeting in the Wood.

Book Six.

I. At the Hall Farm.

II. In the Cottage.

III. Sunday Morning.

IV. Adam and Dinah.

V. The Harvest Supper.

VI. The Meeting on the Hill.

VII. Marriage Bells.

Epilogue.

Book One.

Chapter I. The Workshop.

[Table of Contents](#)

With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen, I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr. Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder, in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799.

The afternoon sun was warm on the five workmen there, busy upon doors and window-frames and wainscoting. A scent of pine-wood from a tentlike pile of planks outside the open door mingled itself with the scent of the elder-bushes which were spreading their summer snow close to the open window opposite; the slanting sunbeams shone through the transparent shavings that flew before the steady plane, and lit up the fine grain of the oak panelling which stood propped against the wall. On a heap of those soft shavings a rough, grey shepherd dog had made himself a pleasant bed, and was lying with his nose between his fore-paws, occasionally wrinkling his brows to cast a glance at the tallest of the five workmen, who was carving a shield in the centre of a wooden mantelpiece. It was to this workman that the strong barytone belonged which was heard above the sound of plane and hammer singing—

Awake, my soul, and with the sun

Thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth...

Here some measurement was to be taken which required more concentrated attention, and the sonorous voice subsided into a low whistle; but it presently broke out again with renewed vigour—

Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noonday clear.

Such a voice could only come from a broad chest, and the broad chest belonged to a large-boned, muscular man nearly six feet high, with a back so flat and a head so well poised that when he drew himself up to take a more distant survey of his work, he had the air of a soldier standing at ease. The sleeve rolled up above the elbow showed an arm that was likely to win the prize for feats of strength; yet the long supple hand, with its broad finger-tips, looked ready for works of skill. In his tall stalwartness Adam Bede was a Saxon, and justified his name; but the jet-black hair, made the more noticeable by its contrast with the light paper cap, and the keen glance of the dark eyes that shone from under strongly marked, prominent and mobile eyebrows, indicated a mixture of Celtic blood. The face was large and roughly hewn, and when in repose had no other beauty than such as belongs to an expression of good-humoured honest intelligence.

It is clear at a glance that the next workman is Adam's brother. He is nearly as tall; he has the same type of features, the same hue of hair and complexion; but the strength of the family likeness seems only to render more conspicuous the remarkable difference of expression both in form and face. Seth's broad shoulders have a slight stoop; his eyes are grey; his eyebrows have less prominence and more repose than his brother's; and his glance, instead of

being keen, is confiding and benign. He has thrown off his paper cap, and you see that his hair is not thick and straight, like Adam's, but thin and wavy, allowing you to discern the exact contour of a coronal arch that predominates very decidedly over the brow.

The idle tramps always felt sure they could get a copper from Seth; they scarcely ever spoke to Adam.

The concert of the tools and Adam's voice was at last broken by Seth, who, lifting the door at which he had been working intently, placed it against the wall, and said, "There! I've finished my door to-day, anyhow."

The workmen all looked up; Jim Salt, a burly, red-haired man known as Sandy Jim, paused from his planing, and Adam said to Seth, with a sharp glance of surprise, "What! Dost think thee'st finished the door?"

"Aye, sure," said Seth, with answering surprise; "what's awanting to't?"

A loud roar of laughter from the other three workmen made Seth look round confusedly. Adam did not join in the laughter, but there was a slight smile on his face as he said, in a gentler tone than before, "Why, thee'st forgot the panels."

The laughter burst out afresh as Seth clapped his hands to his head, and coloured over brow and crown.

"Hoorray!" shouted a small lithe fellow called Wiry Ben, running forward and seizing the door. "We'll hang up th' door at fur end o' th' shop an' write on't 'Seth Bede, the Methody, his work.' Here, Jim, lend's hould o' th' red pot."

"Nonsense!" said Adam. "Let it alone, Ben Cranage. You'll mayhap be making such a slip yourself some day; you'll laugh o' th' other side o' your mouth then."

"Catch me at it, Adam. It'll be a good while afore my head's full o' th' Methodies," said Ben.

"Nay, but it's often full o' drink, and that's worse."

Ben, however, had now got the "red pot" in his hand, and was about to begin writing his inscription, making, by way of

preliminary, an imaginary S in the air.

"Let it alone, will you?" Adam called out, laying down his tools, striding up to Ben, and seizing his right shoulder. "Let it alone, or I'll shake the soul out o' your body."

Ben shook in Adam's iron grasp, but, like a plucky small man as he was, he didn't mean to give in. With his left hand he snatched the brush from his powerless right, and made a movement as if he would perform the feat of writing with his left. In a moment Adam turned him round, seized his other shoulder, and, pushing him along, pinned him against the wall. But now Seth spoke.

"Let be, Addy, let be. Ben will be joking. Why, he's i' the right to laugh at me—I canna help laughing at myself."

"I shan't loose him till he promises to let the door alone," said Adam.

"Come, Ben, lad," said Seth, in a persuasive tone, "don't let's have a quarrel about it. You know Adam will have his way. You may's well try to turn a waggon in a narrow lane. Say you'll leave the door alone, and make an end on't."

"I binna frightened at Adam," said Ben, "but I donna mind sayin' as I'll let 't alone at your askin', Seth."

"Come, that's wise of you, Ben," said Adam, laughing and relaxing his grasp.

They all returned to their work now; but Wiry Ben, having had the worst in the bodily contest, was bent on retrieving that humiliation by a success in sarcasm.

"Which was ye thinkin' on, Seth," he began—"the pretty parson's face or her sarmunt, when ye forgot the panels?"

"Come and hear her, Ben," said Seth, good-humouredly; "she's going to preach on the Green to-night; happen ye'd get something to think on yourself then, instead o' those wicked songs you're so fond on. Ye might get religion, and that 'ud be the best day's earnings y' ever made."

"All i' good time for that, Seth; I'll think about that when I'm a-goin' to settle i' life; bachelors doesn't want such heavy earnin's. Happen I shall do the coortin' an' the

religion both together, as ye do, Seth; but ye wouldna ha' me get converted an' chop in atween ye an' the pretty preacher, an' carry her aff?"

"No fear o' that, Ben; she's neither for you nor for me to win, I doubt. Only you come and hear her, and you won't speak lightly on her again."

"Well, I'm half a mind t' ha' a look at her to-night, if there isn't good company at th' Holly Bush. What'll she take for her text? Happen ye can tell me, Seth, if so be as I shouldna come up i' time for't. Will't be—what come ye out for to see? A prophetess? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophetess—a uncommon pretty young woman."

"Come, Ben," said Adam, rather sternly, "you let the words o' the Bible alone; you're going too far now."

"What! Are ye a-turnin' roun', Adam? I thought ye war dead again th' women preachin', a while ago?"

"Nay, I'm not turnin' noway. I said nought about the women preachin'. I said, You let the Bible alone: you've got a jest-book, han't you, as you're rare and proud on? Keep your dirty fingers to that."

"Why, y' are gettin' as big a saint as Seth. Y' are goin' to th' preachin' to-night, I should think. Ye'll do finely t' lead the singin'. But I don' know what Parson Irwine 'ull say at his gran' favright Adam Bede a-turnin' Methody."

"Never do you bother yourself about me, Ben. I'm not a-going to turn Methodist any more nor you are—though it's like enough you'll turn to something worse. Mester Irwine's got more sense nor to meddle wi' people's doing as they like in religion. That's between themselves and God, as he's said to me many a time."

"Aye, aye; but he's none so fond o' your dissenters, for all that."

"Maybe; I'm none so fond o' Josh Tod's thick ale, but I don't hinder you from making a fool o' yourself wi't."

There was a laugh at this thrust of Adam's, but Seth said, very seriously. "Nay, nay, Addy, thee mustna say as

anybody's religion's like thick ale. Thee dostna believe but what the dissenters and the Methodists have got the root o' the matter as well as the church folks."

"Nay, Seth, lad; I'm not for laughing at no man's religion. Let 'em follow their consciences, that's all. Only I think it 'ud be better if their consciences 'ud let 'em stay quiet i' the church—there's a deal to be learnt there. And there's such a thing as being oversperit; we must have something beside Gospel i' this world. Look at the canals, an' th' aqueduc's, an' th' coal-pit engines, and Arkwright's mills there at Cromford; a man must learn summat beside Gospel to make them things, I reckon. But t' hear some o' them preachers, you'd think as a man must be doing nothing all's life but shutting's eyes and looking what's agoing on inside him. I know a man must have the love o' God in his soul, and the Bible's God's word. But what does the Bible say? Why, it says as God put his sperrit into the workman as built the tabernacle, to make him do all the carved work and things as wanted a nice hand. And this is my way o' looking at it: there's the sperrit o' God in all things and all times—weekday as well as Sunday—and i' the great works and inventions, and i' the figuring and the mechanics. And God helps us with our headpieces and our hands as well as with our souls; and if a man does bits o' jobs out o' working hours—builds a oven for 's wife to save her from going to the bakehouse, or scrats at his bit o' garden and makes two potatoes grow instead o' one, he's doin' more good, and he's just as near to God, as if he was running after some preacher and a-praying and a-groaning."

"Well done, Adam!" said Sandy Jim, who had paused from his planing to shift his planks while Adam was speaking; "that's the best sarmunt I've heard this long while. By th' same token, my wife's been a-plaguin' on me to build her a oven this twelvemont."

"There's reason in what thee say'st, Adam," observed Seth, gravely. "But thee know'st thyself as it's hearing the

preachers thee find'st so much fault with has turned many an idle fellow into an industrious un. It's the preacher as empties th' alehouse; and if a man gets religion, he'll do his work none the worse for that."

"On'y he'll lave the panels out o' th' doors sometimes, eh, Seth?" said Wiry Ben.

"Ah, Ben, you've got a joke again' me as 'll last you your life. But it isna religion as was i' fault there; it was Seth Bede, as was allays a wool-gathering chap, and religion hasna cured him, the more's the pity."

"Ne'er heed me, Seth," said Wiry Ben, "y' are a downright good-hearted chap, panels or no panels; an' ye donna set up your bristles at every bit o' fun, like some o' your kin, as is mayhap cliverer."

"Seth, lad," said Adam, taking no notice of the sarcasm against himself, "thee mustna take me unkind. I wasna driving at thee in what I said just now. Some 's got one way o' looking at things and some 's got another."

"Nay, nay, Addy, thee mean'st me no unkindness," said Seth, "I know that well enough. Thee't like thy dog Gyp—thee bark'st at me sometimes, but thee allays lick'st my hand after."

All hands worked on in silence for some minutes, until the church clock began to strike six. Before the first stroke had died away, Sandy Jim had loosed his plane and was reaching his jacket; Wiry Ben had left a screw half driven in, and thrown his screwdriver into his tool-basket; Mum Taft, who, true to his name, had kept silence throughout the previous conversation, had flung down his hammer as he was in the act of lifting it; and Seth, too, had straightened his back, and was putting out his hand towards his paper cap. Adam alone had gone on with his work as if nothing had happened. But observing the cessation of the tools, he looked up, and said, in a tone of indignation, "Look there, now! I can't abide to see men throw away their tools i' that way, the minute the clock begins to strike, as if they took no

pleasure i' their work and was afraid o' doing a stroke too much."

Seth looked a little conscious, and began to be slower in his preparations for going, but Mum Taft broke silence, and said, "Aye, aye, Adam lad, ye talk like a young un. When y' are six-an'-forty like me, istid o' six-an'-twenty, ye wonna be so flush o' workin' for nought."

"Nonsense," said Adam, still wrathful; "what's age got to do with it, I wonder? Ye arena getting stiff yet, I reckon. I hate to see a man's arms drop down as if he was shot, before the clock's fairly struck, just as if he'd never a bit o' pride and delight in 's work. The very grindstone 'ull go on turning a bit after you loose it."

"Bodderation, Adam!" exclaimed Wiry Ben; "lave a chap aloon, will 'ee? Ye war afinding faut wi' preachers a while agoo—y' are fond enough o' preachin' yoursen. Ye may like work better nor play, but I like play better nor work; that'll 'commodate ye—it laves ye th' more to do."

With this exit speech, which he considered effective, Wiry Ben shouldered his basket and left the workshop, quickly followed by Mum Taft and Sandy Jim. Seth lingered, and looked wistfully at Adam, as if he expected him to say something.

"Shalt go home before thee go'st to the preaching?" Adam asked, looking up.

"Nay; I've got my hat and things at Will Maskery's. I shan't be home before going for ten. I'll happen see Dinah Morris safe home, if she's willing. There's nobody comes with her from Poyser's, thee know'st."

"Then I'll tell mother not to look for thee," said Adam.

"Thee artna going to Poyser's thyself to-night?" said Seth rather timidly, as he turned to leave the workshop.

"Nay, I'm going to th' school."

Hitherto Gyp had kept his comfortable bed, only lifting up his head and watching Adam more closely as he noticed the other workmen departing. But no sooner did Adam put his

ruler in his pocket, and begin to twist his apron round his waist, than Gyp ran forward and looked up in his master's face with patient expectation. If Gyp had had a tail he would doubtless have wagged it, but being destitute of that vehicle for his emotions, he was like many other worthy personages, destined to appear more phlegmatic than nature had made him.

"What! Art ready for the basket, eh, Gyp?" said Adam, with the same gentle modulation of voice as when he spoke to Seth.

Gyp jumped and gave a short bark, as much as to say, "Of course." Poor fellow, he had not a great range of expression.

The basket was the one which on workdays held Adam's and Seth's dinner; and no official, walking in procession, could look more resolutely unconscious of all acquaintances than Gyp with his basket, trotting at his master's heels.

On leaving the workshop Adam locked the door, took the key out, and carried it to the house on the other side of the woodyard. It was a low house, with smooth grey thatch and buff walls, looking pleasant and mellow in the evening light. The leaded windows were bright and speckless, and the door-stone was as clean as a white boulder at ebb tide. On the door-stone stood a clean old woman, in a dark-striped linen gown, a red kerchief, and a linen cap, talking to some speckled fowls which appeared to have been drawn towards her by an illusory expectation of cold potatoes or barley. The old woman's sight seemed to be dim, for she did not recognize Adam till he said, "Here's the key, Dolly; lay it down for me in the house, will you?"

"Aye, sure; but wunna ye come in, Adam? Miss Mary's i' th' house, and Mester Burge 'ull be back anon; he'd be glad t' ha' ye to supper wi'm, I'll be's warrand."

"No, Dolly, thank you; I'm off home. Good evening."

Adam hastened with long strides, Gyp close to his heels, out of the workyard, and along the highroad leading away

from the village and down to the valley. As he reached the foot of the slope, an elderly horseman, with his portmanteau strapped behind him, stopped his horse when Adam had passed him, and turned round to have another long look at the stalwart workman in paper cap, leather breeches, and dark-blue worsted stockings.

Adam, unconscious of the admiration he was exciting, presently struck across the fields, and now broke out into the tune which had all day long been running in his head:

Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noonday clear;
For God's all-seeing eye surveys
Thy secret thoughts, thy works and ways.

Chapter II. The Preaching.

[Table of Contents](#)

About a quarter to seven there was an unusual appearance of excitement in the village of Hayslope, and through the whole length of its little street, from the Donnithorne Arms to the churchyard gate, the inhabitants had evidently been drawn out of their houses by something more than the pleasure of lounging in the evening sunshine. The Donnithorne Arms stood at the entrance of the village, and a small farmyard and stackyard which flanked it, indicating that there was a pretty take of land attached to the inn, gave the traveller a promise of good feed for himself and his horse, which might well console him for the ignorance in which the weather-beaten sign left him as to the heraldic bearings of that ancient family, the Donnithornes. Mr. Casson, the landlord, had been for some time standing at the door with his hands in his pockets, balancing himself on his heels and toes and looking towards a piece of unenclosed ground, with a maple in the middle of it, which he knew to be the destination of certain grave-looking men and women whom he had observed passing at intervals.

Mr. Casson's person was by no means of that common type which can be allowed to pass without description. On a front view it appeared to consist principally of two spheres, bearing about the same relation to each other as the earth and the moon: that is to say, the lower sphere might be said, at a rough guess, to be thirteen times larger than the upper which naturally performed the function of a mere satellite and tributary. But here the resemblance ceased, for Mr. Casson's head was not at all a melancholy-looking

satellite nor was it a “spotty globe,” as Milton has irreverently called the moon; on the contrary, no head and face could look more sleek and healthy, and its expression—which was chiefly confined to a pair of round and ruddy cheeks, the slight knot and interruptions forming the nose and eyes being scarcely worth mention—was one of jolly contentment, only tempered by that sense of personal dignity which usually made itself felt in his attitude and bearing. This sense of dignity could hardly be considered excessive in a man who had been butler to “the family” for fifteen years, and who, in his present high position, was necessarily very much in contact with his inferiors. How to reconcile his dignity with the satisfaction of his curiosity by walking towards the Green was the problem that Mr. Casson had been revolving in his mind for the last five minutes; but when he had partly solved it by taking his hands out of his pockets, and thrusting them into the armholes of his waistcoat, by throwing his head on one side, and providing himself with an air of contemptuous indifference to whatever might fall under his notice, his thoughts were diverted by the approach of the horseman whom we lately saw pausing to have another look at our friend Adam, and who now pulled up at the door of the Donnithorne Arms.

“Take off the bridle and give him a drink, ostler,” said the traveller to the lad in a smock-frock, who had come out of the yard at the sound of the horse’s hoofs.

“Why, what’s up in your pretty village, landlord?” he continued, getting down. “There seems to be quite a stir.”

“It’s a Methodis’ preaching, sir; it’s been gev hout as a young woman’s a-going to preach on the Green,” answered Mr. Casson, in a treble and wheezy voice, with a slightly mincing accent. “Will you please to step in, sir, an’ tek somethink?”

“No, I must be getting on to Rosseter. I only want a drink for my horse. And what does your parson say, I wonder, to a young woman preaching just under his nose?”

“Parson Irwine, sir, doesn’t live here; he lives at Brox’on, over the hill there. The parsonage here’s a tumble-down place, sir, not fit for gentry to live in. He comes here to preach of a Sunday afternoon, sir, an’ puts up his hoss here. It’s a grey cob, sir, an’ he sets great store by’t. He’s allays put up his hoss here, sir, iver since before I hed the Donnithorne Arms. I’m not this countryman, you may tell by my tongue, sir. They’re cur’ous talkers i’ this country, sir; the gentry’s hard work to hunderstand ‘em. I was brought hup among the gentry, sir, an’ got the turn o’ their tongue when I was a bye. Why, what do you think the folks here says for ‘hevn’t you?’—the gentry, you know, says, ‘hevn’t you’—well, the people about here says ‘hanna yey.’ It’s what they call the dileck as is spoke hereabout, sir. That’s what I’ve heard Squire Donnithorne say many a time; it’s the dileck, says he.”

“Aye, aye,” said the stranger, smiling. “I know it very well. But you’ve not got many Methodists about here, surely—in this agricultural spot? I should have thought there would hardly be such a thing as a Methodist to be found about here. You’re all farmers, aren’t you? The Methodists can seldom lay much hold on *them*.”

“Why, sir, there’s a pretty lot o’ workmen round about, sir. There’s Mester Burge as owns the timber-yard over there, he underteks a good bit o’ building an’ repairs. An’ there’s the stone-pits not far off. There’s plenty of emply i’ this countryside, sir. An’ there’s a fine batch o’ Methodisses at Treddles’on—that’s the market town about three mile off—you’ll maybe ha’ come through it, sir. There’s pretty nigh a score of ‘em on the Green now, as come from there. That’s where our people gets it from, though there’s only two men of ‘em in all Hayslope: that’s Will Maskery, the wheelwright, and Seth Bede, a young man as works at the carpenterin’.”

“The preacher comes from Treddleston, then, does she?”

“Nay, sir, she comes out o’ Stonyshire, pretty nigh thirty mile off. But she’s a-visitin’ hereabout at Mester Poyser’s at

the Hall Farm—it's them barns an' big walnut-trees, right away to the left, sir. She's own niece to Poyser's wife, an' they'll be fine an' vexed at her for making a fool of herself i' that way. But I've heared as there's no holding these Methodisses when the maggit's once got i' their head: many of 'em goes stark starin' mad wi' their religion. Though this young woman's quiet enough to look at, by what I can make out; I've not seen her myself."

"Well, I wish I had time to wait and see her, but I must get on. I've been out of my way for the last twenty minutes to have a look at that place in the valley. It's Squire Donnithorne's, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, that's Donnithorne Chase, that is. Fine hoaks there, isn't there, sir? I should know what it is, sir, for I've lived butler there a-going i' fifteen year. It's Captain Donnithorne as is th' heir, sir—Squire Donnithorne's grandson. He'll be comin' of hage this 'ay-'arvest, sir, an' we shall hev fine doin's. He owns all the land about here, sir, Squire Donnithorne does."

"Well, it's a pretty spot, whoever may own it," said the traveller, mounting his horse; "and one meets some fine strapping fellows about too. I met as fine a young fellow as ever I saw in my life, about half an hour ago, before I came up the hill—a carpenter, a tall, broad-shouldered fellow with black hair and black eyes, marching along like a soldier. We want such fellows as he to lick the French."

"Aye, sir, that's Adam Bede, that is, I'll be bound—Thias Bede's son everybody knows him hereabout. He's an uncommon clever stiddy fellow, an' wonderful strong. Lord bless you, sir—if you'll hexcuse me for saying so—he can walk forty mile a-day, an' lift a matter o' sixty ston'. He's an uncommon favourite wi' the gentry, sir: Captain Donnithorne and Parson Irwine meks a fine fuss wi' him. But he's a little lifted up an' peppery-like."

"Well, good evening to you, landlord; I must get on."

"Your servant, sir; good evenin'."

The traveller put his horse into a quick walk up the village, but when he approached the Green, the beauty of the view that lay on his right hand, the singular contrast presented by the groups of villagers with the knot of Methodists near the maple, and perhaps yet more, curiosity to see the young female preacher, proved too much for his anxiety to get to the end of his journey, and he paused.

The Green lay at the extremity of the village, and from it the road branched off in two directions, one leading farther up the hill by the church, and the other winding gently down towards the valley. On the side of the Green that led towards the church, the broken line of thatched cottages was continued nearly to the churchyard gate; but on the opposite northwestern side, there was nothing to obstruct the view of gently swelling meadow, and wooded valley, and dark masses of distant hill. That rich undulating district of Loamshire to which Hayslope belonged lies close to a grim outskirts of Stonyshire, overlooked by its barren hills as a pretty blooming sister may sometimes be seen linked in the arm of a rugged, tall, swarthy brother; and in two or three hours' ride the traveller might exchange a bleak treeless region, intersected by lines of cold grey stone, for one where his road wound under the shelter of woods, or up swelling hills, muffled with hedgerows and long meadow-grass and thick corn; and where at every turn he came upon some fine old country-seat nestled in the valley or crowning the slope, some homestead with its long length of barn and its cluster of golden ricks, some grey steeple looking out from a pretty confusion of trees and thatch and dark-red tiles. It was just such a picture as this last that Hayslope Church had made to the traveller as he began to mount the gentle slope leading to its pleasant uplands, and now from his station near the Green he had before him in one view nearly all the other typical features of this pleasant land. High up against the horizon were the huge conical masses of hill, like giant mounds intended to fortify this region of

corn and grass against the keen and hungry winds of the north; not distant enough to be clothed in purple mystery, but with sombre greenish sides visibly specked with sheep, whose motion was only revealed by memory, not detected by sight; wooed from day to day by the changing hours, but responding with no change in themselves—left for ever grim and sullen after the flush of morning, the winged gleams of the April noonday, the parting crimson glory of the ripening summer sun. And directly below them the eye rested on a more advanced line of hanging woods, divided by bright patches of pasture or furrowed crops, and not yet deepened into the uniform leafy curtains of high summer, but still showing the warm tints of the young oak and the tender green of the ash and lime. Then came the valley, where the woods grew thicker, as if they had rolled down and hurried together from the patches left smooth on the slope, that they might take the better care of the tall mansion which lifted its parapets and sent its faint blue summer smoke among them. Doubtless there was a large sweep of park and a broad glassy pool in front of that mansion, but the swelling slope of meadow would not let our traveller see them from the village green. He saw instead a foreground which was just as lovely—the level sunlight lying like transparent gold among the gently curving stems of the feathered grass and the tall red sorrel, and the white ambels of the hemlocks lining the bushy hedgerows. It was that moment in summer when the sound of the scythe being whetted makes us cast more lingering looks at the flower-sprinkled tresses of the meadows.

He might have seen other beauties in the landscape if he had turned a little in his saddle and looked eastward, beyond Jonathan Burge's pasture and woodyard towards the green corn-fields and walnut-trees of the Hall Farm; but apparently there was more interest for him in the living groups close at hand. Every generation in the village was there, from old "Feyther Taft" in his brown worsted night-

cap, who was bent nearly double, but seemed tough enough to keep on his legs a long while, leaning on his short stick, down to the babies with their little round heads lolling forward in quilted linen caps. Now and then there was a new arrival; perhaps a slouching labourer, who, having eaten his supper, came out to look at the unusual scene with a slow bovine gaze, willing to hear what any one had to say in explanation of it, but by no means excited enough to ask a question. But all took care not to join the Methodists on the Green, and identify themselves in that way with the expectant audience, for there was not one of them that would not have disclaimed the imputation of having come out to hear the “preacher woman”—they had only come out to see “what war a-goin’ on, like.” The men were chiefly gathered in the neighbourhood of the blacksmith’s shop. But do not imagine them gathered in a knot. Villagers never swarm: a whisper is unknown among them, and they seem almost as incapable of an undertone as a cow or a stag. Your true rustic turns his back on his interlocutor, throwing a question over his shoulder as if he meant to run away from the answer, and walking a step or two farther off when the interest of the dialogue culminates. So the group in the vicinity of the blacksmith’s door was by no means a close one, and formed no screen in front of Chad Cranage, the blacksmith himself, who stood with his black brawny arms folded, leaning against the door-post, and occasionally sending forth a bellowing laugh at his own jokes, giving them a marked preference over the sarcasms of Wiry Ben, who had renounced the pleasures of the Holly Bush for the sake of seeing life under a new form. But both styles of wit were treated with equal contempt by Mr. Joshua Rann. Mr. Rann’s leathern apron and subdued griminess can leave no one in any doubt that he is the village shoemaker; the thrusting out of his chin and stomach and the twirling of his thumbs are more subtle indications, intended to prepare unwary strangers for the discovery that they are in the

presence of the parish clerk. "Old Joshway," as he is irreverently called by his neighbours, is in a state of simmering indignation; but he has not yet opened his lips except to say, in a resounding bass undertone, like the tuning of a violoncello, "Sehon, King of the Amorites; for His mercy endureth for ever; and Og the King of Basan: for His mercy endureth for ever"—a quotation which may seem to have slight bearing on the present occasion, but, as with every other anomaly, adequate knowledge will show it to be a natural sequence. Mr. Rann was inwardly maintaining the dignity of the Church in the face of this scandalous irruption of Methodism, and as that dignity was bound up with his own sonorous utterance of the responses, his argument naturally suggested a quotation from the psalm he had read the last Sunday afternoon.

The stronger curiosity of the women had drawn them quite to the edge of the Green, where they could examine more closely the Quakerlike costume and odd deportment of the female Methodists. Underneath the maple there was a small cart, which had been brought from the wheelwright's to serve as a pulpit, and round this a couple of benches and a few chairs had been placed. Some of the Methodists were resting on these, with their eyes closed, as if wrapt in prayer or meditation. Others chose to continue standing, and had turned their faces towards the villagers with a look of melancholy compassion, which was highly amusing to Bessy Cranage, the blacksmith's buxom daughter, known to her neighbours as Chad's Bess, who wondered "why the folks war amakin' faces a that'ns." Chad's Bess was the object of peculiar compassion, because her hair, being turned back under a cap which was set at the top of her head, exposed to view an ornament of which she was much prouder than of her red cheeks—namely, a pair of large round ear-rings with false garnets in them, ornaments condemned not only by the Methodists, but by her own cousin and namesake

Timothy's Bess, who, with much cousinly feeling, often wished "them ear-rings" might come to good.

Timothy's Bess, though retaining her maiden appellation among her familiars, had long been the wife of Sandy Jim, and possessed a handsome set of matronly jewels, of which it is enough to mention the heavy baby she was rocking in her arms, and the sturdy fellow of five in knee-breeches, and red legs, who had a rusty milk-can round his neck by way of drum, and was very carefully avoided by Chad's small terrier. This young olive-branch, notorious under the name of Timothy's Bess's Ben, being of an inquiring disposition, unchecked by any false modesty, had advanced beyond the group of women and children, and was walking round the Methodists, looking up in their faces with his mouth wide open, and beating his stick against the milk-can by way of musical accompaniment. But one of the elderly women bending down to take him by the shoulder, with an air of grave remonstrance, Timothy's Bess's Ben first kicked out vigorously, then took to his heels and sought refuge behind his father's legs.

"Ye gallows young dog," said Sandy Jim, with some paternal pride, "if ye donna keep that stick quiet, I'll tek it from ye. What dy'e mane by kickin' foulks?"

"Here! Gie him here to me, Jim," said Chad Cranage; "I'll tie hirs up an' shoe him as I do th' hosses. Well, Mester Casson," he continued, as that personage sauntered up towards the group of men, "how are ye t' naight? Are ye coom t' help groon? They say folks allays groon when they're hearkenin' to th' Methodys, as if they war bad i' th' inside. I mane to groon as loud as your cow did th' other naight, an' then the praicher 'ull think I'm i' th' raight way."

"I'd advise you not to be up to no nonsense, Chad," said Mr. Casson, with some dignity; "Poyser wouldn't like to hear as his wife's niece was treated any ways disrespectful, for all he mayn't be fond of her taking on herself to preach."

“Aye, an’ she’s a pleasant-looking un too,” said Wiry Ben. “I’ll stick up for the pretty women preachin’; I know they’d persuade me over a deal sooner nor th’ ugly men. I shouldna wonder if I turn Methody afore the night’s out, an’ begin to coort the preacher, like Seth Bede.”

“Why, Seth’s looking rether too high, I should think,” said Mr. Casson. “This woman’s kin wouldn’t like her to demean herself to a common carpenter.”

“Tchu!” said Ben, with a long treble intonation, “what’s folks’s kin got to do wi’t? Not a chip. Poyser’s wife may turn her nose up an’ forget bygones, but this Dinah Morris, they tell me, ’s as poor as iver she was—works at a mill, an’s much ado to keep hersen. A strappin’ young carpenter as is a ready-made Methody, like Seth, wouldna be a bad match for her. Why, Poyser’s make as big a fuss wi’ Adam Bede as if he war a nevvie o’ their own.”

“Idle talk! idle talk!” said Mr. Joshua Rann. “Adam an’ Seth’s two men; you wunna fit them two wi’ the same last.”

“Maybe,” said Wiry Ben, contemptuously, “but Seth’s the lad for me, though he war a Methody twice o’er. I’m fair beat wi’ Seth, for I’ve been teasin’ him iver sin’ we’ve been workin’ together, an’ he bears me no more malice nor a lamb. An’ he’s a stout-hearted feller too, for when we saw the old tree all afire a-comin’ across the fields one night, an’ we thought as it war a bogey, Seth made no more ado, but he up to’t as bold as a constable. Why, there he comes out o’ Will Maskery’s; an’ there’s Will hisself, lookin’ as meek as if he couldna knock a nail o’ the head for fear o’ hurtin’t. An’ there’s the pretty preacher woman! My eye, she’s got her bonnet off. I mun go a bit nearer.”

Several of the men followed Ben’s lead, and the traveller pushed his horse on to the Green, as Dinah walked rather quickly and in advance of her companions towards the cart under the maple-tree. While she was near Seth’s tall figure, she looked short, but when she had mounted the cart, and was away from all comparison, she seemed above the

middle height of woman, though in reality she did not exceed it—an effect which was due to the slimness of her figure and the simple line of her black stuff dress. The stranger was struck with surprise as he saw her approach and mount the cart—surprise, not so much at the feminine delicacy of her appearance, as at the total absence of self-consciousness in her demeanour. He had made up his mind to see her advance with a measured step and a demure solemnity of countenance; he had felt sure that her face would be mantled with the smile of conscious saintship, or else charged with denunciatory bitterness. He knew but two types of Methodist—the ecstatic and the bilious. But Dinah walked as simply as if she were going to market, and seemed as unconscious of her outward appearance as a little boy: there was no blush, no tremulousness, which said, “I know you think me a pretty woman, too young to preach”; no casting up or down of the eyelids, no compression of the lips, no attitude of the arms that said, “But you must think of me as a saint.” She held no book in her ungloved hands, but let them hang down lightly crossed before her, as she stood and turned her grey eyes on the people. There was no keenness in the eyes; they seemed rather to be shedding love than making observations; they had the liquid look which tells that the mind is full of what it has to give out, rather than impressed by external objects. She stood with her left hand towards the descending sun, and leafy boughs screened her from its rays; but in this sober light the delicate colouring of her face seemed to gather a calm vividness, like flowers at evening. It was a small oval face, of a uniform transparent whiteness, with an egg-like line of cheek and chin, a full but firm mouth, a delicate nostril, and a low perpendicular brow, surmounted by a rising arch of parting between smooth locks of pale reddish hair. The hair was drawn straight back behind the ears, and covered, except for an inch or two above the brow, by a net Quaker cap. The eyebrows, of the same colour as the hair, were

perfectly horizontal and firmly pencilled; the eyelashes, though no darker, were long and abundant—nothing was left blurred or unfinished. It was one of those faces that make one think of white flowers with light touches of colour on their pure petals. The eyes had no peculiar beauty, beyond that of expression; they looked so simple, so candid, so gravely loving, that no accusing scowl, no light sneer could help melting away before their glance. Joshua Rann gave a long cough, as if he were clearing his throat in order to come to a new understanding with himself; Chad Cranage lifted up his leather skull-cap and scratched his head; and Wiry Ben wondered how Seth had the pluck to think of courting her.

“A sweet woman,” the stranger said to himself, “but surely nature never meant her for a preacher.”

Perhaps he was one of those who think that nature has theatrical properties and, with the considerate view of facilitating art and psychology, “makes up,” her characters, so that there may be no mistake about them. But Dinah began to speak.

“Dear friends,” she said in a clear but not loud voice “let us pray for a blessing.”

She closed her eyes, and hanging her head down a little continued in the same moderate tone, as if speaking to some one quite near her: “Saviour of sinners! When a poor woman laden with sins, went out to the well to draw water, she found Thee sitting at the well. She knew Thee not; she had not sought Thee; her mind was dark; her life was unholy. But Thou didst speak to her, Thou didst teach her, Thou didst show her that her life lay open before Thee, and yet Thou wast ready to give her that blessing which she had never sought. Jesus, Thou art in the midst of us, and Thou knowest all men: if there is any here like that poor woman—if their minds are dark, their lives unholy—if they have come out not seeking Thee, not desiring to be taught; deal with them according to the free mercy which Thou didst show to

her Speak to them, Lord, open their ears to my message, bring their sins to their minds, and make them thirst for that salvation which Thou art ready to give.

“Lord, Thou art with Thy people still: they see Thee in the night-watches, and their hearts burn within them as Thou talkest with them by the way. And Thou art near to those who have not known Thee: open their eyes that they may see Thee—see Thee weeping over them, and saying ‘Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life’—see Thee hanging on the cross and saying, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do’—see Thee as Thou wilt come again in Thy glory to judge them at the last. Amen.”

Dinah opened her eyes again and paused, looking at the group of villagers, who were now gathered rather more closely on her right hand.

“Dear friends,” she began, raising her voice a little, “you have all of you been to church, and I think you must have heard the clergyman read these words: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.’ Jesus Christ spoke those words—he said he came *to preach the Gospel to the poor*. I don’t know whether you ever thought about those words much, but I will tell you when I remember first hearing them. It was on just such a sort of evening as this, when I was a little girl, and my aunt as brought me up took me to hear a good man preach out of doors, just as we are here. I remember his face well: he was a very old man, and had very long white hair; his voice was very soft and beautiful, not like any voice I had ever heard before. I was a little girl and scarcely knew anything, and this old man seemed to me such a different sort of a man from anybody I had ever seen before that I thought he had perhaps come down from the sky to preach to us, and I said, ‘Aunt, will he go back to the sky to-night, like the picture in the Bible?’

“That man of God was Mr. Wesley, who spent his life in doing what our blessed Lord did—preaching the Gospel to

the poor—and he entered into his rest eight years ago. I came to know more about him years after, but I was a foolish thoughtless child then, and I remembered only one thing he told us in his sermon. He told us as ‘Gospel’ meant ‘good news.’ The Gospel, you know, is what the Bible tells us about God.

“Think of that now! Jesus Christ did really come down from heaven, as I, like a silly child, thought Mr. Wesley did; and what he came down for was to tell good news about God to the poor. Why, you and me, dear friends, are poor. We have been brought up in poor cottages and have been reared on oat-cake, and lived coarse; and we haven’t been to school much, nor read books, and we don’t know much about anything but what happens just round us. We are just the sort of people that want to hear good news. For when anybody’s well off, they don’t much mind about hearing news from distant parts; but if a poor man or woman’s in trouble and has hard work to make out a living, they like to have a letter to tell ‘em they’ve got a friend as will help ‘em. To be sure, we can’t help knowing something about God, even if we’ve never heard the Gospel, the good news that our Saviour brought us. For we know everything comes from God: don’t you say almost every day, ‘This and that will happen, please God,’ and ‘We shall begin to cut the grass soon, please God to send us a little more sunshine’? We know very well we are altogether in the hands of God. We didn’t bring ourselves into the world, we can’t keep ourselves alive while we’re sleeping; the daylight, and the wind, and the corn, and the cows to give us milk—everything we have comes from God. And he gave us our souls and put love between parents and children, and husband and wife. But is that as much as we want to know about God? We see he is great and mighty, and can do what he will: we are lost, as if we was struggling in great waters, when we try to think of him.

“But perhaps doubts come into your mind like this: Can God take much notice of us poor people? Perhaps he only made the world for the great and the wise and the rich. It doesn’t cost him much to give us our little handful of victual and bit of clothing; but how do we know he cares for us any more than we care for the worms and things in the garden, so as we rear our carrots and onions? Will God take care of us when we die? And has he any comfort for us when we are lame and sick and helpless? Perhaps, too, he is angry with us; else why does the blight come, and the bad harvests, and the fever, and all sorts of pain and trouble? For our life is full of trouble, and if God sends us good, he seems to send bad too. How is it? How is it?

“Ah, dear friends, we are in sad want of good news about God; and what does other good news signify if we haven’t that? For everything else comes to an end, and when we die we leave it all. But God lasts when everything else is gone. What shall we do if he is not our friend?”

Then Dinah told how the good news had been brought, and how the mind of God towards the poor had been made manifest in the life of Jesus, dwelling on its lowliness and its acts of mercy.

“So you see, dear friends,” she went on, “Jesus spent his time almost all in doing good to poor people; he preached out of doors to them, and he made friends of poor workmen, and taught them and took pains with them. Not but what he did good to the rich too, for he was full of love to all men, only he saw as the poor were more in want of his help. So he cured the lame and the sick and the blind, and he worked miracles to feed the hungry because, he said, he was sorry for them; and he was very kind to the little children and comforted those who had lost their friends; and he spoke very tenderly to poor sinners that were sorry for their sins.

“Ah, wouldn’t you love such a man if you saw him—if he were here in this village? What a kind heart he must have!