**MARY BARTON – Chapter 6 – Poverty & Death**

The door was opened and Wilson came breathless in.

‘You’ve not got a bit o’ money by you, Barton?’ asked he.

‘Not I; who has now, I’d like to know? Whatten you want it for?’

‘I donnot want it for mysel’, tho’ we’ve none to spare. But don ye know Ben Davenport as worked at Carson’s? He’s down wi’ the fever, and ne’er a stick o’ fire nor a cowd potato in the house.’

‘I han got no money, I tell ye,’ said Barton. Wilson looked disappointed. Barton tried not to be interested, but he could not help it in spite of his gruffness. He rose, and went to the cupboard…There lay the remains of his dinner, hastily put by ready for supper. Bread, and a slice of cold fat boiled bacon. He wrapped them in his handkerchief…and said – ‘Come, let us be going.’

Our friends were not dainty, but even they picked their way, till they got to some steps leading down to a small area, where a person standing would have his head about one foot below the level of the street, and might at the same time…touch the window of the cellar and the damp muddy wall right opposite. You went down one step even from the foul area into the cellar in which a family of human beings lived. It was very dark inside….the smell was so fetid as almost to knock the two men down….they began to penetrate the thick darkness of the place, and to see three or four little children rolling on the damp, nay wet brick floor, through which the stagnant, filthy moisture of the street oozed up…the wife sat...and cried in the dark loneliness.

‘See, missis, I’m back again – Hold your noise, children, and don’t mither your mammy for bread; here’s a chap as has got some for you.’….They clustered round Barton, and tore from him the food he had brought with him. It was a large hunch of bread, but it vanished in an instant.

‘We mun do summat for ‘em,’ said he to Wilson. ‘You stop here, and I’ll be back in half-an-hour.’

*Barton pawns the few decent things he still possesses and gets 5 shillings to buy some basic necessities for the family.*

Wilson’s eyes filled with tears when he saw Barton enter with his purchases. He understood it all, and longed to be once more in work that he might help in some of these material ways…But though ‘silver and gold he had none’, he gave heart-service and love-works of far more value. Nor was John Barton behind in these…The two men, rough, tender nurses as they were, lighted the fire…The children clamoured again for bread; but this time Barton took a piece first to the poor, helpless, hopeless woman, who still sat by the side of her husband, listening to his anxious miserable mutterings. She took the bread…but could not eat. She was past hunger…’She’s well-nigh clemmed,’ said Barton. ‘Folk do say one mustn’t give clemmed people much to eat; but, bless us, she’ll eat nought.’….

Barton was now left alone with a little child…a fainting, dead-like woman…and the sick man, whose mutterings were rising up to screams and shrieks of agonised anxiety. He carried the woman to the fire, and chafed her hands. He looked around for something to raise her head. There was literally nothing but some loose bricks… taking off his coat he covered them with it as well as he could. He pulled her feet to the fire…Then he began, with the useful skill of a working-man, to make some gruel…he forced one or two drops between her clenched teeth. The mouth opened mechanically to receive more, and gradually she revived….It was now high time to attend to the man. He lay on straw, so damp and mouldy, no dog would have chosen it…as he restlessly tossed to and fro, they (his covers) fell off and left him shivering in spite of the burning heat of his skin. Every now and then he started up in his naked madness…but he soon fell again in exhaustion.

Then the two men consulted together. It seemed decided, without a word being spoken on the subject, that both should spend the night with the forlorn couple; that was settled. But could no doctor be had?...no; the next day an Infirmary order must be begged….

*Wilson and Barton talk during that long night…*

*Barton is speaking –*

‘How comes it they’re rich, and we’re poor? I’d like to know that. Han they done as they’d be done by for us?...They’n screwed us down to th’ lowest peg, in order to make their great big fortunes, and build their great big houses, and we, why we’re just clemming, many and many of us. Can you say there’s nought wrong in this?’

‘Well, Barton, I’ll not gainsay ye. But Mr Carson spoke to me after th’ fire, and says he, “I shall ha’ to retrench, and be very careful in my expenditure, during these bad times, I assure ye;” so yo see th’ masters suffer too.’

‘Han they ever seen a child o’their’n die for want o’ food?’ asked Barton, in a low deep voice…And in this kind of talk the night, the long heavy night of watching, wore away…The watchers agreed, that as soon as it was likely Mr Carson would be up and visible, Wilson should go to his house, and beg for an Infirmary order.

*Wilson arrives at the Carson mansion as the family are having breakfast –*

‘Missis will have her breakfast upstairs, cook, and the cold partridge as was left yesterday, and put plenty of cream in her coffee, and she thinks there’s a roll left, and she would like it well buttered.’….In the luxurious library, at the well-spread breakfast-table, sat the two Mr Carsons, father and son. Both were reading…while they lazily enjoyed their nicely-prepared food…

*Wilson is shown in –*

‘Well, Wilson, and what do you want today, man?’

‘Please, sir, Davenport’s ill of the fever, and I’m come to know if you’ve got an Infirmary order for him?’

‘Davenport – Davenport; who is the fellow? I don’t know the name.’

‘He’s worked in your factory better nor three years, sir.’

‘Very likely; I don’t pretend to know the names of the men I employ; that I leave to the overlooker. So he’s ill, eh?’

‘Ay, sir, he’s very bad; we want to get him in at the Fever Wards.’

‘I doubt if I’ve an in-patient’s order to spare at present; but I’ll give you an out-patient’s and welcome.’

Meanwhile, the younger Mr Carson had ended his review, and began to listen to what was going on. He finished his breakfast, got up, and pulled five shillings out of his pocket, which he gave to Wilson as he passed him, for the ‘poor fellow’.

**LIBBIE MARSH’S THREE ERAS**

The brightest, fullest daylight poured down into No.2, - Court, Albemarle Street, and the heat, even at the early hour of five, was almost as great as at noontide on the June days of many years past.

The court seemed alive, and merry with voices and laughter. The bedroom windows were open wide, and had been so all night, on account of the heat; and every now and then you might see a head and a pair of shoulders, simply encased in shirt sleeves, popped out, and you might hear the inquiry passed from one to the other.

‘Well, Jack, and where art thou bound for?’

‘Dunham!’

‘Why, what an old-fashioned chap thou be’st. Thy grandad afore thee went to Dunham: but thou wert always a slow coach. I’m off to Alderley – me and my missis.’

‘Ay, that’s because there’s only thee and thy missis. Wait till thou hast four childer, like me, and thou’lt be glad enough to take ‘em to Dunham, oud-fashioned way, for fourpence apiece.’

‘I’d still go to Alderley; I’d not be bothered with my childer; they should keep house at home.’

A pair of hands (the person to whom they belonged invisible behind her husband) boxed his ears at this last speech, in a very spirited, although playful manner, and the neighbours all laughed at the surprised look of the speaker, at this assault from an unseen foe….

…the streets were quite gay, even at that early hour, with parties going to this or that railway station, or to the boats which crowded the canals on this bright holiday week; and almost everyone they met seemed to enter into …exhilaration of feeling, and had a smile or nod in return…Away the boat went to make room for others; for every conveyance both by land and water is in requisition in Whitsun-week to give the hard-worked crowds the opportunity of enjoying the charms of the country…happy beings brimming with anticipations of a day’s pleasure. The country through which they passed is as uninteresting as can well be imagined; but still it is country; and the screams of delight from the children, and the low laughs of pleasure from the parents, at every blossoming tree…or tufts of late primroses…the thorough relish of everything, as if dreading to let the least circumstance of this happy day pass over without its due appreciation…And hither came party after party; old men and maidens, young men and children – whole families trooped along after the guiding fathers, who bore the youngest in their arms, or astride upon their backs, while they turned round occasionally to their wives, with whom they shared some fond local remembrance. For years has Dunham Park been the favourite resort of the Manchester workpeople.

**NORTH & SOUTH**

**Chapter 22: A Blow and its Consequences**

“I’m sorry, Miss Hale, you have visited us at this unfortunate moment, when, I fear, you may be involved in whatever risk we have to bear. Mother! Hadn’t you better go into the back rooms?...you will be safer there than here.”

“I stop here!” said his mother. “Where you are, there I stay.” And indeed, retreat into the back rooms was of no avail; the crowd had surrounded the outbuildings at the rear, and were sending forth their awful threatening roar behind… Mr. Thornton smiled scornfully as he heard them. He glanced at Margaret, standing all by herself at the window nearest the factory. Her eyes glittered, her colour was deepened on cheek and lip. As if she felt his look, she turned to him and asked a question that had been for some time in her mind:

“Where are the poor imported workpeople? In the factory there?”

“Yes! I left them cowed up in a small room, at the head of a back flight of stairs; bidding them run all risks, and escape down there, if they heard any attack made on the mill doors. But it is not them—it is me they want.”

“When can the soldiers be here?” asked his mother, in a low but not unsteady voice.

He took out his watch with the same steady composure with which he did everything. He made some little calculation:—

“Supposing Williams got straight off when I told him, and hadn’t to dodge about amongst them—it must be twenty minutes yet.”

“Twenty minutes!” said his mother, for the first time showing her terror in the tones of her voice.

“Shut down the windows instantly, mother,” exclaimed he: “the gates won’t bear such another shock. Shut down that window, Miss Hale.”

Margaret shut down her window, and then went to assist Mrs. Thornton’s trembling fingers.

From some cause or other, there was a pause of several minutes in the unseen street. Mrs. Thornton looked with wild anxiety at her son’s countenance, as if to gain the interpretation of the sudden stillness from him. His face was set into rigid lines of contemptuous defiance; neither hope nor fear could be read there…they all could hear the one great straining breath; the creak of wood slowly yielding; the wrench of iron; the mighty fall of the ponderous gates.

…the tramp of innumerable steps right under the very wall of the house, and the fierce growl of low deep angry voices that had a ferocious murmur of satisfaction in them, more dreadful than their baffled cries not many minutes before…

“Oh, God!” cried Margaret, suddenly; “there is Boucher. I know his face, though he is livid with rage,—he is fighting to get to the front—look! look!”

“Who is Boucher?” asked Mr. Thornton coolly, and coming close to the window to discover the man in whom Margaret took such an interest. As soon as they saw Mr. Thornton, they set up a yell, to call it not human is nothing,—it was as the demoniac desire of some terrible wild beast for the food that is withheld from his ravening. Even he drew back for a moment, dismayed at the intensity of hatred he had provoked.

“Let them yell!” said he. “In five minutes more—. I only hope my poor Irishmen are not terrified out of their wits by such a fiendlike noise. Keep up your courage for five minutes, Miss Hale.”

“Don’t be afraid for me,” she said hastily. “But what in five minutes? Can you do nothing to soothe these poor creatures? It is awful to see them.”

“The soldiers will be here directly, and that will bring them to reason.”

“To reason!” said Margaret, quickly. “What kind of reason?”

“The only reason that does with men that make themselves into wild beasts. By heaven! They’ve turned to the mill-door!”

“Mr. Thornton,” said Margaret, shaking all over with her passion, “go down this instant, if you are not a coward. Go down and face them like a man. Save these poor strangers, whom you have decoyed here. Speak to your workmen as if they were human beings. Speak to them kindly. Don’t let the soldiers come in and cut down poor creatures who are driven mad. I see one there who is. If you have any courage or noble quality in you, go out and speak to them, man to man!”

He turned and looked at her while she spoke. A dark cloud came over his face while he listened. He set his teeth as he heard her words.

“I will go. Perhaps I may ask you to accompany me downstairs, and bar the door behind me; my mother and sister will need that protection.”

“Oh! Mr. Thornton! I do not know—I may be wrong—only—”

But he was gone; he was downstairs in the hall; he had unbarred the front door; all she could do, was to follow him quickly, and fasten it behind him, and clamber up the stairs again with a sick heart and a dizzy head. Again she took her place by the farthest window. He was on the steps below; she saw that by the direction of a thousand angry eyes; but she could neither see nor hear anything save the savage satisfaction of the rolling angry murmur. She threw the window wide open. Many in the crowd were mere boys; cruel and thoughtless,—cruel because they were thoughtless; some were men, gaunt as wolves, and mad for prey. She knew how it was; they were like Boucher,—with starving children at home—relying on ultimate success in their efforts to get higher wages, and enraged beyond measure at discovering that Irishmen were to be brought in to rob their little ones of bread. Margaret knew it all; she read it in Boucher’s face, forlornly desperate and livid with rage. If Mr. Thornton would but say something to them—let them hear his voice only—it seemed as if it would be better than this wild beating and raging against the stony silence that vouchsafed them no word, even of anger or reproach. But perhaps he was speaking now; there was a momentary hush of their noise, inarticulate as that of a troop of animals. She tore her bonnet off, and bent forward to hear. She could only see; for if Mr. Thornton had indeed made the attempt to speak, the momentary instinct to listen to him was past and gone, and the people were raging worse than ever. He stood with his arms folded; still as a statue; his face pale with repressed excitement. They were trying to intimidate him—to make him flinch; each was urging the other on to some immediate act of personal violence. Margaret felt intuitively, that in an instant all would be uproar; the first touch would cause an explosion, in which, among such hundreds of infuriated men and reckless boys, even Mr. Thornton’s life would be unsafe,—that in another instant the stormy passions would have passed their bounds, and swept away all barriers of reason, or apprehension of consequence. Even while she looked, she saw lads in the background stooping to take off their heavy wooden clogs—the readiest missile they could find; she saw it was the spark to the gunpowder, and, with a cry, she rushed out of the room, down stairs,—she had lifted the great iron bar of the door with an imperious force—had thrown the door open wide—and was there, in face of that angry sea of men, her eyes smiting them with flaming arrows of reproach. The clogs were arrested in the hands that held them—the countenances, so fell not a moment before, now looked irresolute, and as if asking what this meant. For she stood between them and their enemy. She could not speak, but held out her arms towards them till she could recover breath.

“Oh, do not use violence! He is one man, and you are many;” but her words died away, for there was no tone in her voice; it was but a hoarse whisper. Mr. Thornton stood a little on one side; he had moved away from behind her, as if jealous of anything that should come between him and danger.

“Go!” said she, once more (and now her voice was like a cry). “The soldiers are sent for—are coming. Go peaceably. Go away. You shall have relief from your complaints, whatever they are.”

“Shall them Irish blackguards be packed back again?” asked one from out the crowd, with fierce threatening in his voice.

“Never, for your bidding!” exclaimed Mr. Thornton. And instantly the storm broke. The hootings rose and filled the air,—but Margaret did not hear them. Her eye was on the group of lads who had armed themselves with their clogs some time before. She saw their gesture—she knew its meaning—she read their aim. Another moment, and Mr. Thornton might be smitten down,—he whom she had urged and goaded to come to this perilous place. She only thought how she could save him. She threw her arms around him; she made her body into a shield from the fierce people beyond. Still, with his arms folded, he shook her off.

“Go away,” said he, in his deep voice. “This is no place for you.”

“It is,” said she. “You did not see what I saw.” If she thought her sex would be a protection,—if, with shrinking eyes she had turned away from the terrible anger of these men, in any hope that ere she looked again they would have paused and reflected, and slunk away, and vanished,—she was wrong. Their reckless passion had carried them too far to stop—at least had carried some of them too far; for it is always the savage lads, with their love of cruel excitement, who head the riot—reckless to what bloodshed it may lead. A clog whizzed through the air. Margaret’s fascinated eyes watched its progress; it missed its aim, and she turned sick with affright, but changed not her position, only hid her face on Mr. Thornton’s arm. Then she turned and spoke again:

“For God’s sake! do not damage your cause by this violence. You do not know what you are doing.” She strove to make her words distinct.

A sharp pebble flew by her, grazing forehead and cheek, and drawing a blinding sheet of light before her eyes. She lay like one dead on Mr. Thornton’s shoulder. Then he unfolded his arms, and held her encircled in one for an instant:

“You do well!” said he. “You come to oust the innocent stranger. You fall—you hundreds—on one man; and when a woman comes before you, to ask you for your own sakes to be reasonable creatures, your cowardly wrath falls upon her! You do well!” They were silent while he spoke. They were watching, open-eyed and open-mouthed, the thread of dark-red blood which wakened them up from their trance of passion. Those nearest the gate stole out ashamed; there was a movement through all the crowd—a retreating movement. Only one voice called out:

“Th’ stone was meant for thee; but thou wert sheltered behind a woman!”

Mr. Thornton quivered with rage. The blood-flowing had made Margaret conscious—dimly, vaguely conscious. He placed her gently on the door-step, her head leaning against the frame.

“Can you rest there?” he asked. But without waiting for her answer, he went slowly down the steps right into the middle of the crowd. “Now kill me, if it is your brutal will. There is no woman to shield me here. You may beat me to death—you will never move me from what I have determined upon—not you!” He stood amongst them with his arms folded, in precisely the same attitude as he had been in on the steps.

But the retrograde movement towards the gate had begun—as unreasoningly, perhaps as blindly, as the simultaneous anger. Or, perhaps, the idea of the approach of the soldiers, and the sight of that pale, upturned face, with closed eyes, still and sad as marble, though the tears welled out of the long entanglement of eyelashes, and dropped down; and, heavier, slower plash than even tears, came the drip of blood from her wound. Even the most desperate—Boucher himself—drew back, faltered away, scowled, and finally went off, muttering curses on the master, who stood in his unchanging attitude, looking after their retreat with defiant eyes. The moment that retreat had changed into a flight (as it was sure from its very character to do), he darted up the steps to Margaret.

LETTER FROM ELIZABETH GASKELL TO EDWARD HOLLAND, dated 13th January 1849

My poor Mary Barton is stirring up all sorts of angry feelings against me in Manchester; but those best acquainted with the way of thinking & feeling among the poor acknowledge its *truth*; which is the acknowledgement I most of all desire, because evils being once recognised are halfway on towards their remedy.

LETTER FROM ELIZABETH GASKELL TO MRS GREG, dated ‘early 1849’

I can remember now that the prevailing thought in my mind at the time when the tale was silently forming itself and impressing me with the force of a reality, was the seeming injustice of the inequalities of fortune…’John Barton’ was the original title of the book. Round the character of John Barton all the others formed themselves; he was my hero, the person with whom all my sympathies went, with whom I tried to identify myself at the time, because I believed from personal observation that such men were not uncommon, and would well reward such sympathy and love that should throw light down upon their groping search after the causes of suffering, and the reason why suffering is sent, and what they can do to lighten it.

Quoting from Jenny Uglow’s biography:- *Elizabeth Gaskell – a Habit of Stories*

a). LETTER TO ELIZABETH GASKELL FROM THOMAS CARLYLE (about *Mary Barton*), dated 8th November 1848

I gratefully accept it as a real contribution (about the first real one) towards developing a huge subject, which has lain dumb for too long…

b). Edmund Potter was going to buy the book for his men, ‘since he thinks it is so very true.’

c). Elizabeth confided to Katie Winkworth, ‘some say the masters are very sore, but I’m sure I *believe* I wrote the truth’, and wrote defensively to Mary Ewart: ‘No-one can feel more deeply than I how *wicked* it is to do anything to excite class against class, and the sin has been most unconscious if I have done so.’ She had simply drawn attention to ills which must be recognised.

d). LETTER TO ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH FROM GERALDINE JEWSBURY, dated 27th January 1849

I know the author of *Mary Barton*. She is a very nice woman and was much admired before any of us suspected her of writing a book. It has however raised a great clamour, for it is said to be dreadfully *one-sided.*

e). In February 1849 a third edition had brought fierce criticism of that ‘one-sidedness’ in the *Manchester Guardian*, and at the same time the expected blast came from the *British Quarterly*, which called *Mary Barton* ‘mischievous’ and complained of the exaggerated picture of industrial misery and strife and the ‘very great injustice to the employers’. Elizabeth was downcast despite the support of men like Samuel Bamford, who wrote her a long letter in early March, saying he had read the book at one go: ‘I care not what the critics say…It seems to me that you have begun a great work and I hope you will not be discouraged from going on with it.’ He found it true to his experience: ‘of John Bartons, I have known hundreds, his very self in all things except his fatal crime.’

**MARY BARTON – Chapter 8**

An idea was now springing up among the operatives, that originated with the Chartists, but which came at last to be cherished as a darling child by many and many a one. They could not believe that the government knew of their misery…the starving multitudes had heard, that the very existence of their distress had been denied in Parliament; and though they felt this strange and inexplicable, yet the idea that their misery had still to be revealed in all its depths, and that then some remedy would be found, soothed their aching hearts, and kept down their rising fury. So a petition was framed, and signed by thousands in the bright spring days of 1839, imploring Parliament to hear witnesses who could testify to the unparalleled destitution of the manufacturing districts…delegates…who might speak, not merely of what they had seen and heard, but from what they had borne and suffered. Life-worn, gaunt, anxious, hunger-stamped men, were those delegates.

One of them was John Barton…there was the really pure gladness of heart, arising from the idea that he was one of those chosen to be instruments in making known the distresses of the people, and consequently in procuring them some grand relief, by means of which they should never suffer want or care anymore.

The night before the morning on which the Manchester delegates were to leave for London, Barton might be said to hold a levee, so many neighbours came dropping in…

‘Well, there’s many a thing I’d like yo to speak onto the parliament people. Thou’lt not spare ‘em, John, I hope. Tell ‘em our minds; how we’re thinking we’ve been clemmed long enough…

‘…ask ‘em to make th’ masters break the machines…Machines is the ruin o’ poor folk…

‘I would like thee to tell ‘em to pass the short-hours’ bill. Flesh and blood gets wearied wi’ so much work…

‘…yo’ll not object to telling ‘em what a sore trial it is, this law o’theirs, keeping children fra’ factory work…There’s our Ben; why, porridge seems to go no way wi’ him, he eats so much; and I han gotten no money to send him t’ school …and th’ inspector won’t let him in to work in th’ factory, because he’s not right age…’

The next evening it was a warm, pattering, incessant rain…Mary…heard someone fumbling at the door…There stood – could it be? Yes it was, her father! Drenched and way-worn, there he stood! He came in with no word to Mary…He sat down by the fire in his wet things, unheeding…they sat in silence for some time; for Mary wished him to tell her what oppressed him so, yet durst not ask…

‘Mary, we mun speak to our God to hear us, for man will not hearken. No, not now, when we weep tears o’ blood.’

In an instant Mary understood the fact, if not the details, that so weighed down her father’s heart…After a little pause John answered,

‘If yo’ please…I’d rather say nought about that. It’s not to be forgotten or forgiven either by me or many another; but I canna tell of our downcasting just as a piece of London news. As long as I live, our rejection that day will bide in my heart; and as long as I live I shall curse them as so cruelly refused to hear us; but I’ll not speak of it no more.’

**Job Legh**

*Mary Barton* (chapter 5)

There is a class of men in Manchester, unknown even to many of the inhabitants, and whose existence will probably be doubted by many, who yet may claim kindred with all the noble names that science recognises. I said "in Manchester," but they are scattered all over the manufacturing districts of Lancashire. In the neighbourhood of Oldham there are weavers, common hand-loom weavers, who throw the shuttle with unceasing sound, though Newton's "Principia" lie open on the loom, to be snatched at in work hours, but revelled over in meal times, or at night. Mathematical problems are received with interest, and studied with absorbing attention by many a broad-spoken, common-looking, factory-hand. It is perhaps less astonishing that the more popularly interesting branches of natural history have their warm and devoted followers among this class. There are botanists among them, equally familiar with either the Linnæan or the Natural system, who know the name and habitat of every plant within a day's walk from their dwellings; who steal the holiday of a day or two when any particular plant should be in flower, and tying up their simple food in their pocket-handkerchiefs, set off with single purpose to fetch home the humble-looking weed. There are entomologists, who may be seen with a rude-looking net, ready to catch any winged insect, or a kind of dredge, with which they rake the green and slimy pools; practical, shrewd, hard-working men, who pore over every new specimen with real scientific delight. Nor is it the common and more obvious divisions of Entomology and Botany that alone attract these earnest seekers after knowledge. Perhaps it may be owing to the great annual town-holiday of Whitsun-week so often falling in May or June that the two great, beautiful families of Ephemeridæ and Phryganidæ have been so much and so closely studied by Manchester workmen, while they have in a great measure escaped general observation. If you will refer to the preface to Sir J. E. Smith's Life (I have it not by me, or I would copy you the exact passage), you will find that he names a little circumstance corroborative of what I have said. Sir J. E. Smith, being on a visit to Roscoe, of Liverpool, made some inquiries from him as to the habitat of a very rare plant, said to be found in certain places in Lancashire. Mr. Roscoe knew nothing of the plant; but stated, that if any one could give him the desired information, it would be a hand-loom weaver in Manchester, whom he named. Sir J. E. Smith proceeded by coach to Manchester, and on arriving at that town, he inquired of the porter who was carrying his luggage if he could direct him to So and So.

"Oh, yes," replied the man. "He does a bit in my way;" and, on further investigation, it turned out, that both the porter, and his friend the weaver, were skilful botanists, and able to give Sir J. E. Smith the very information which he wanted.

Such are the tastes and pursuits of some of the thoughtful, little understood, working men of Manchester.

And Margaret's grandfather was one of these. He was a little wiry-looking old man, who moved with a jerking motion, as if his limbs were worked by a string like a child's toy, with dun coloured hair lying thin and soft at the back and sides of his head; his forehead was so large it seemed to overbalance the rest of his face, which had indeed lost its natural contour by the absence of all the teeth. The eyes absolutely gleamed with intelligence; so keen, so observant, you felt as if they were almost wizard-like. Indeed, the whole room looked not unlike a wizard's dwelling. Instead of pictures were hung rude wooden frames of impaled insects; the little table was covered with cabalistic books; and a case of mysterious instruments lay beside, one of which Job Legh was using when his grand-daughter entered.

**From Chapter 17**

[Job Legh asks] "When does thy father start, Mary?"

That plaguing question again.

"Oh! very soon. I'm just getting him a bit of supper. Is Margaret very well?"

"Yes, she's well enough. She's meaning to go and keep Alice Wilson company for an hour or so this evening; as soon as she thinks her nephew will have started for Liverpool; for she fancies the old woman will feel a bit lonesome. Th' Union is paying for your father, I suppose?"

"Yes, they've given him a sovereign. You're one of th' Union, Job?"

"Ay! I'm one, sure enough; but I'm but a sleeping partner in the concern. I were obliged to become a member for peace, else I don't go along with 'em. Yo see they think themselves wise, and me silly, for differing with them; well! there's no harm in that. But then they won't let me be silly in peace and quietness, but will force me to be as wise as they are; now that's not British liberty, I say. I'm forced to be wise according to their notions, else they parsecute me, and sarve me out."

What could her father be doing up-stairs? Tramping and banging about. Why did he not come down? Or why did not Job go? The supper would be spoilt.

But Job had no notion of going.

"You see my folly is this, Mary. I would take what I could get; I think half a loaf is better than no bread. I would work for low wages rather than sit idle and starve. But, comes the Trades' Union, and says, 'Well, if you take the half-loaf, we'll worry you out of your life. Will you be clemmed, or will you be worried?' Now clemming is a quiet death, and worrying isn't, so I choose clemming, and come into th' Union. But I wish they'd leave me free, if I am a fool."

**From Chapter 37**

"Then you believe that Barton had no knowledge of my son's unfortunate,—" he looked at Jem, "of his attentions to Mary Barton. This young man, Wilson, had heard of them, you see."

"The person who told me said clearly she neither had, nor would tell Mary's father," interposed Jem. "I don't believe he'd ever heard of it; he weren't a man to keep still in such a matter, if he had."

"Besides," said Job, "the reason he gave on his death-bed, so to speak, was enough; 'specially to those who knew him."

"You mean his feelings regarding the treatment of the workmen by the masters; you think he acted from motives of revenge, in consequence of the part my son had taken in putting down the strike?"

"Well, sir," replied Job, "it's hard to say: John Barton was not a man to take counsel with people; nor did he make many words about his doings. So I can only judge from his way of thinking and talking in general, never having heard him breathe a syllable concerning this matter in particular. You see he were sadly put about to make great riches and great poverty square with Christ's Gospel"—Job paused, in order to try and express what was clear enough in his own mind, as to the effect produced on John Barton by the great and mocking contrasts presented by the varieties of human condition. Before he could find suitable words to explain his meaning, Mr. Carson spoke.

"You mean he was an Owenite; all for equality and community of goods, and that kind of absurdity."

"No, no! John Barton was no fool. No need to tell him that were all men equal to-night, some would get the start by rising an hour earlier to-morrow. Nor yet did he care for goods, nor wealth—no man less, so that he could get daily bread for him and his; but what hurt him sore, and rankled in him as long as I knew him (and, sir, it rankles in many a poor man's heart far more than the want of any creature-comforts, and puts a sting into starvation itself), was that those who wore finer clothes, and eat better food, and had more money in their pockets, kept him at arm's length, and cared not whether his heart was sorry or glad; whether he lived or died,—whether he was bound for heaven or hell. It seemed hard to him that a heap of gold should part him and his brother so far asunder. For he was a loving man before he grew mad with seeing such as he was slighted, as if Christ Himself had not been poor. At one time, I've heard him say, he felt kindly towards every man, rich or poor, because he thought they were all men alike. But latterly he grew aggravated with the sorrows and suffering that he saw, and which he thought the masters might help if they would."

"That's the notion you've all of you got," said Mr. Carson. "Now, how in the world can we help it? We cannot regulate the demand for labour. No man or set of men can do it. It depends on events which God alone can control. When there is no market for our goods, we suffer just as much as you can do."

"Not as much, I'm sure, sir; though I'm not given to Political Economy, I know that much. I'm wanting in learning, I'm aware; but I can use my eyes. I never see the masters getting thin and haggard for want of food; I hardly ever see them making much change in their way of living, though I don't doubt they've got to do it in bad times. But it's in things for show they cut short; while for such as me, it's in things for life we've to stint. For sure, sir, you'll own it's come to a hard pass when a man would give aught in the world for work to keep his children from starving, and can't get a bit, if he's ever so willing to labour. I'm not up to talking as John Barton would have done, but that's clear to me at any rate."

"My good man, just listen to me. Two men live in solitude; one produces loaves of bread, the other coats,—or what you will. Now, would it not be hard if the bread-producer were forced to give bread for the coats, whether he wanted them or not, in order to furnish employment to the other? That is the simple form of the case; you've only to multiply the numbers. There will come times of great changes in the occupation of thousands, when improvements in manufactures and machinery are made.—It's all nonsense talking,—it must be so!"

Job Legh pondered a few moments.

"It's true it was a sore time for the hand-loom weavers when power-looms came in: them new-fangled things make a man's life like a lottery; and yet I'll never misdoubt that power-looms, and railways, and all such-like inventions, are the gifts of God. I have lived long enough, too, to see that it is part of His plan to send suffering to bring out a higher good; but surely it's also part of His plan that as much of the burden of the suffering as can be, should be lightened by those whom it is His pleasure to make happy, and content in their own circumstances. Of course it would take a deal more thought and wisdom than me, or any other man has, to settle out of hand how this should be done. But I'm clear about this, when God gives a blessing to be enjoyed, He gives it with a duty to be done; and the duty of the happy is to help the suffering to bear their woe."

"Still, facts have proved and are daily proving how much better it is for every man to be independent of help, and self-reliant," said Mr. Carson, thoughtfully.

"You can never work facts as you would fixed quantities, and say, given two facts, and the product is so and so. God has given men feelings and passions which cannot be worked into the problem, because they are for ever changing and uncertain. God has also made some weak; not in any one way, but in all. One is weak in body, another in mind, another in steadiness of purpose, a fourth can't tell right from wrong, and so on; or if he can tell the right, he wants strength to hold by it. Now to my thinking, them that is strong in any of God's gifts is meant to help the weak,—be hanged to the facts! I ask your pardon, sir; I can't rightly explain the meaning that is in me. I'm like a tap as won't run, but keeps letting it out drop by drop, so that you've no notion of the force of what's within."

Job looked and felt very sorrowful at the want of power in his words, while the feeling within him was so strong and clear.

"What you say is very true, no doubt," replied Mr. Carson; "but how would you bring it to bear upon the masters' conduct,—on my particular case?" added he, gravely.

"I'm not learned enough to argue. Thoughts come into my head that I'm sure are as true as Gospel, though may be they don't follow each other like the Q. E. D. of a Proposition. The masters has it on their own conscience,—you have it on yours, sir, to answer for to God whether you've done, and are doing all in your power to lighten the evils that seem always to hang on the trades by which you make your fortunes. It's no business of mine, thank God. John Barton took the question in hand, and his answer to it was no! Then he grew bitter, and angry, and mad; and in his madness he did a great sin, and wrought a great woe; and repented him with tears as of blood; and will go through his penance humbly and meekly in t'other place, I'll be bound. I never seed such bitter repentance as his that last night."

There was a silence of many minutes. Mr. Carson had covered his face, and seemed utterly forgetful of their presence; and yet they did not like to disturb him by rising to leave the room.

At last he said, without meeting their sympathetic eyes,

"Thank you both for coming,—and for speaking candidly to me. I fear, Legh, neither you nor I have convinced each other, as to the power, or want of power, in the masters to remedy the evils the men complain of."

"I'm loth to vex you, sir, just now; but it was not the want of power I was talking on; what we all feel sharpest is the want of inclination to try and help the evils which come like blights at times over the manufacturing places, while we see the masters can stop work and not suffer. If we saw the masters try for our sakes to find a remedy,—even if they were long about it,—even if they could find no help, and at the end of all could only say, 'Poor fellows, our hearts are sore for ye; we've done all we could, and can't find a cure,'—we'd bear up like men through bad times. No one knows till they've tried, what power of bearing lies in them, if once they believe that men are caring for their sorrows and will help if they can. If fellow-creatures can give nought but tears and brave words, we take our trials straight from God, and we know enough of His love to put ourselves blind into His hands. You say our talk has done no good. I say it has. I see the view you take of things from the place where you stand. I can remember that, when the time comes for judging you; I sha'n't think any longer, does he act right on my views of a thing, but does he act right on his own. It has done me good in that way. I'm an old man, and may never see you again; but I'll pray for you, and think on you and your trials, both of your great wealth, and of your son's cruel death, many and many a day to come; and I'll ask God to bless both to you now and for evermore. Amen. Farewell!"

**NORTH & SOUTH**

**Chapter 15 Masters and Men**

*Mr Hale is speaking -*

‘…They are a rough, heathenish set of fellows, these Milton men of yours.’

‘They are that,’ relied Mr Thornton. ‘Rose water surgery won’t do for them. Cromwell would have made a capital mill-owner, Miss Hale. I wish we had him to put down this strike for us.’

‘Cromwell is no hero of mine,’ said she coldly. But I am trying to reconcile your admission of despotism with your respect for other men’s independence of character.’

He reddened at her tone. ‘I choose to be the unquestioned and irresponsible master of my hands, during the hours that they labour for me. But those hours past, our relation ceases; and then comes in the same respect for their independence that I myself exact.’

**Chapter 17 What is a Strike?**

*Margaret Hale and Nicholas Higgins are talking –*

‘But all this time you’ve not told me what you’re striking for,’ said Margaret again.

‘Why, yo’ see, there’s five or six masters who have set themselves again’ paying the wages they’ve been paying these two years past, and flourishing upon, and getting richer upon. And now they come to us, and say we’re to take less. And we won’t. We’ll just clem them to death first; and see who’ll work for ‘em then. They’ll have killed the goose that laid ‘em the golden eggs, I reckon.’

‘And so you plan dying, in order to be revenged upon them!’

‘…My lass,’ said he…’don’t yo’ think I can keep three people on sixteen shillings a week? Dun yo’ think it’s for mysel’ I’m striking work at this time?...I take up John Boucher’s cause, as lives next door but one, wi’ a sickly wife, and eight childer, none on ‘em factory age; and I don’t take up his cause only, though he’s a poor good-for-nought, as can only manage two looms at a time, but I take up th’ cause o’ justice. Why are we to have less wage now, I ask, than two year ago?’

‘Don’t ask me’ said Margaret…’Ask some of your masters. Surely they will give you a reason for it…’

…‘Ask th’ masters! They’d tell us to mind our own business, and they’d mind theirs. Our business being, yo’ understand, to take the bated wage, and be thankful; and their business to bate us down to clemming point, to swell their profits…’

‘But’ said Margaret…’the state of trade may be such as not to enable them to give you the same remuneration.’

‘State o’ trade! That’s just a piece o’ masters’ humbug. It’s rate o’ wages I was talking of…We help to make their profits, and we ought to help spend ‘em… we’re resolved to stand and fall together; not a man on us will go in for less wage than th’ Union says is our due. So I say, “Hooray for the strike”’…

**Chapter 19 Angel Visits**

Then Mr Hale brought all his budget of grievances, and laid it before Mr Thornton, for him, with his experience as a master, to arrange them, and explain their origin; which he always did, on sound economical principles; showing that, as trade was conducted, there must always be a waxing and waning of commercial prosperity; and that in the waning a certain number of masters, as well as of men, must go down into ruin, and be no more seen, were so entirely logical, that neither employer nor employed had any right to complain if it became their fate…Margaret’s whole soul rose up against him while he reasoned in this way – as if commerce were everything and humanity nothing...

*Later in the very same chapter, Boucher is talking despairingly to Higgins –*

‘It’s no use, Higgins. Hoo cannot live long a’ this’n. Hoo’s just sinking away – not for want o’ meat hersel’ – but because hoo cannot stand th’ sight o’ the little one’s clemming… if hoo dies, as I’m ‘feared hoo will afore we’ve getten th’ five per cent, I’ll fling th’ money back I’ th’ master’s face…An’ look thee, lad, I’ll hate thee, and th’ whole pack o’ th’ Union…Thou saidst, Nicholas, on Wednesday sennight – and it’s now Tuesday I’ th’ second week – that afore a fortnight we’d ha’ the masters coming a-begging to us to take back our work, at our own wage – and time’s nearly up – and there’s our lile Jack lying abed, too weak to cry, but just every now and then sobbing up his heart for want o’ food…’

**Chapter 38 Promises Fulfilled**

Mr Thornton…was trying to understand where he stood; what damage the strike had done him…The strike had thrown him terribly behindhand…Even with his own accustomed and skilled workpeople, he would have had some difficulty in fulfilling his engagements; as it was, the incompetence of the Irish hands…was a daily annoyance. It was not a favourable hour for Higgins to make his request…

‘Well, sir! What do you want with me?’ said Mr Thornton, facing round at him..

‘My name is Higgins – ‘

‘I know that,’ broke in Mr Thornton. ‘What do you want, Mr Higgins? That’s the question.’

‘I want work.’

‘Work! You’re a pretty chap to come asking me for work. You don’t want impudence, that’s very clear.’

…’Hamper will speak to my being a good hand.’

…’You’d better go and try them, then, and see whether they’ll give you work. I’ve turned off upwards of a hundred of my best hands, for no other fault than following you, and such as you; and d’ye think I’ll take you on? I might as well put a firebrand into the midst of the cotton-waste.’

Higgins turned away: then the recollection of Boucher came over him, and he faced round with the greatest concession he could persuade himself to make.

‘I’d promise yo’, master, I’d not speak a word as could do harm, if so be yo’ did right by us; and I’d promise more: I’d promise that when I seed yo’ going wrong, and acting unfair, I’d speak to yo’ in private first…’

‘Upon my word, you don’t think small beer of yourself! Hamper has had a loss of you. How came her to let you and your wisdom go?’

‘Well, we parted wi’ mutual dissatisfaction. I wouldn’t gi’e the pledge they were asking; and they wouldn’t have me at no rate…I’m a good hand, measter, and a steady man…it’s for to keep th’ widow and childer of a man who was drove mad by them knobsticks o’ yourn; put out of his place by a Paddy that did na know weft fro’ warp.’

…’I say No! to your question. I’ll not give you work. I won’t say I don’t believe your pretext for coming and asking for work… It may be true, or it may not. It’s a very unlikely story, at any rate. Let me pass. I’ll not give you work. There’s your answer.’

**Chapter 39 Making Friends**

That the man had spoken saucily to him when he had the opportunity, was nothing to Mr Thornton. He rather liked him for it; and he was conscious of his own irritability of temper at the time, which probably made them both quits. It was the five hours of waiting that struck Mr Thornton…

‘Whose children are those – yours?’ Mr Thornton had a pretty good notion whose they were…

‘They’re not mine, and they are mine.’

‘They are the children you spoke of to me this morning?’

‘When yo’ said…that my story might be true or might not, but it were a very unlikely one. Measter, I’ve not forgotten.’

Mr Thornton was silent for a moment; then he said – ‘No more have I. I remember what I said. I spoke to you about those children in a way I had no business to do. I did not believe you. I could not have taken care of another man’s children myself, if he had acted towards me as I hear Boucher did towards you. But I know now that you spoke truth. I beg your pardon.’

…‘Yo’ve no business to go prying into what happened between Boucher and me. He’s dead and I’m sorry. That’s enough.’

‘So it is. Will you take work with me? That’s what I came to ask.’

…’So, measter, I’ll come; and what’s more, I thank yo’; and that’s a deal fro’ me…’

‘And this is a deal from me,’ said Mr Thornton, giving Higgins’s hand a good grip. ‘Now mind you come sharp to your time…’

When Mary Barton was published in 1848 it shocked Victorian England to the core. **It was the first novel to have a truly working-class girl as its heroine**, and it let middle-class readers into her home and into her heart. It was a Manchester melodrama, a tale of the desperate ‘Hungry Forties’, with breath-stopping scenes of drama and excitement – a fire, a murder, a trial. It was a love story, and a tight, entangled portrayal of conflicting loyalties. But it was also a thoroughly sympathetic depiction of the lives of the mill-workers, and of the gulf between them and their masters, uncovering an abyss of incomprehension and lack of communication that would lead inevitably to tragedy.

Jenny Uglow – Introduction to *Mary Barton* (Folio Society edition, 2004)