HARD TIMES.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CHAPTER IV.

NOT being Mrs. Grundy, who was Mr. Bounderby?

Why, Mr. Bounderby was as near being Mr. Gradgrind’s bosom friend, as a man perfectly devoid of sentiment can approach that spiritual relationship towards another man perfectly devoid of sentiment. So near was Mr. Bounderby—or, if the reader should prefer it, so far off.

He was a rich man: banker, merchant, manufacturer, and what not. A big, loud man, with a stare and a metallic laugh. A man made out of a coarse material, which seemed to have been stretched to make so much of him. A man with a great puffed head and forehead, swelled veins in his temples, and such a strained skin to his face that it seemed to hold his eyes open and lift his eyebrows up. A man with a pervading appearance on him of being inflated like a balloon, and ready to start. A man who could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man. A man who was always proclaiming, through that brassy speaking-trumpet of a voice of his, his old ignorance and his old poverty. A man who was the Bully of humility.

A year or two younger than his eminently practical friend, Mr. Bounderby looked older; his seven or eight and forty might have had the seven or eight added to it again, without surprising anybody. He had not much hair. One might have fancied he had talked it off; and that what was left, all standing up in disorder, was in that condition from being constantly blown about by his windy boastfulness.

In the formal drawing-room of Stone Lodge, standing on the hearth-rug, warming himself before the fire, Mr. Bounderby delivered some observations to Mrs. Gradgrind on the circumstance of its being his birthday. He stood before the fire, partly because it was a cool spring afternoon, though the sun shone; partly because the shade of Stone Lodge was always haunted by the ghost of damp mortar; partly because he thus took up a commanding position, from which to subdue Mrs. Gradgrind.

“I hadn’t a shoe to my foot. As to a stocking, I didn’t know such a thing by name. I passed the day in a ditch, and the night in a pigsty. That’s the way I spent my tenth birthday. Not that a ditch was new to me, for I was born in a ditch.”

Mrs. Gradgrind, a little, thin, white, pink-eyed bundle of shawls, of surpassing feebleness, mental and bodily; who was always taking physic without any effect, and who, whenever she showed a symptom of coming to life, was invariably stunned by some weighty piece of fact tumbling on her; Mrs. Gradgrind hoped it was a dry ditch?

“No! As wet as a sop. A foot of water in it,” said Mr. Bounderby.

“Enough to give a baby cold,” Mrs. Gradgrind considered.

“Cold! I was born with inflammation of the lungs, and of everything else, I believe, that was capable of inflammation,” returned Mr. Bounderby. “For years, ma’am, I was one of the most miserable little wretches ever seen. I was so sickly, that I was always moaning and groaning. I was so ragged and dirty, that you wouldn’t have touched me with a pair of tongs.”

Mrs. Gradgrind faintly looked at the tongs, as the most appropriate thing her imbecility could think of doing.

“How I fought through it, I don’t know,” said Bounderby; “I was determined, I suppose. I have been a determined character in later life, and I suppose I was then. Here I am, Mrs. Gradgrind, anyhow, and nobody to thank for my being here but myself.”

Mrs. Gradgrind meekly and weakly hoped that his mother—

“My mother? Bolted, ma’am!” said Bounderby.

Mrs. Gradgrind, stunned as usual, collapsed and gave it up.

“My mother left me to my grandmother,” said Bounderby; “and, according to the best of my remembrance, my grandmother was the wickedest and the worst old woman that ever lived. If I got a little pair of shoes by any chance, she would take ’em off and sell ’em for drink. Why, I have known that grandmother of mine lie in her bed and drink her four-teen glasses of liquor before breakfast!”

Mrs. Gradgrind, weakly smiling, and giving
no other sign of vitality, looked (as she always did) like an indifferently executed transparency of a small female figure, without enough light behind it.

"She kept a chandler's shop," pursed Bounderby, "and kept me in an egg-box. That was the origin of my education; an old egg-box. As soon as I was big enough to run away, of course I ran away. Then I became a young vagabond; and instead of one old woman knocking me about and starving me, everybody of all ages knocked me about and starved me. They were right; they had no business to do anything else. I was a nuisance, an incumbrance, and a pest. I know that, very well."

His pride in having at any time of his life achieved such a great social distinction as to be a nuisance, an incumbrance, and a pest, was only to be satisfied by three sombre repetitions of the boast.

"I was to pull through it I suppose, Mrs. Gradgrind. Whether I was to do it or not, ma'am, I did it. I pulled through it, though nobody threw me out a rope. Vagabond, errand-boy, vagabond, labourer, porter, clerk, chief manager, small partner, Josiah Bounderby of Coketown. Those are the antece­dents, and the culmination. The reason is (as you know) to the education of the reason that made him won't do for everybody, with my head in its present throb. So, she once more died away, and I frowned impatiently.

"As if, with my head in its present throbbing state, you couldn't go and look at the shells and minerals and things provided for you, instead of circuses!" said Mrs. Grad­grind. "You know, as well as I do, no young people have circus masters, or keep circuses in cabinets, or attend lectures about circuses.

What can you possibly want to know of circuses then? I am sure you have enough to do, if that's what you want. With my head in its present state, I couldn't remember the mere names of half the facts you have got to attend to."

"That's the reason!" pouted Louisa. "Don't tell me that's the reason, because it can be nothing of the sort," said Mrs. Gradgrind. "Go and be somethingological directly."

Mrs. Gradgrind was not a scientific character, and usually dismissed her children to their studies with this general injunction to choose their pursuit.

In truth, Mrs. Gradgrind's stock of facts in general was woefully defective, but Mr. Grad­grind in raising her to her high matrimonial position had been influenced by two reasons.

Firstly, she was most satisfactory as a question of figures; and, secondly, she had "no nonsense" about her. By nonsense he meant fantasy; and truly it is probable she was as free from any alloy of that nature, as any human being not arrived at the perfection of an absolute idiot, ever was.

The simple circumstance of being left alone with work to do for everybody, he knows well—such and such his education was, however, and you may force him to swallow boiling fat, but you shall never force him to suppress the facts of his life."

Being heated when he arrived at this climax, Josiah Bounderby of Coketown stopped. He stopped just as his eminently practical friend, still accompanied by the two young culprits, entered the room. His eminently practical friend, on seeing him, stopped also, and gave Louisa a reproachful look that plainly said, "Behold your Bounderby!"

"Well!" blustered Mr. Bounderby, "what's the matter? What is young Thomas in the dumps about?"

He spoke of young Thomas, but he looked at Louisa.

"We were peeping at the circus," muttered Louisa haughtily, without lifting up her eyes, "and father caught us."

"And Mrs. Gradgrind," said her husband in a lofty manner, "I should as soon have expected to find my children reading poetry."

"Dear me," whimpered Mrs. Gradgrind. "How can you, Louisa and Thomas! I wonder at you. I declare you're enough to make me forget ever having had a family at all. I have a great mind to say I wish I hadn't. Then what would you have done, I wonder?"

Mr. Gradgrind did not seem favourably impressed by these cogent remarks. He frowned impatiently.

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with interest at a parcel of vagabonds," returned Bounderby. "When I was a vagabond myself, nobody looked with any interest at me; I know that."

"Then comes the question," said the eminently practical father, with his eyes on the fire, "in what has this vulgar curiosity its rise?"

"I'll tell you in what. In idle imagination."

"I hope not," said the eminently practical; "I confess, however, that the misgiving has crossed me on my way home."

"In idle imagination, Gradgrind," repeated Bounderby. "A very bad thing for anybody, but a cursed bad thing for a girl like Louisa. I should ask Mrs. Gradgrind's pardon for strong expressions, but that she knows very well I am not a refined character. Whoever expects refinement in me will be disappointed. I hadn't a refined bringing up."

"Whether," said Mr. Gradgrind, pondering with his hands in his pockets, and his cavernous eyes on the fire, "whether any instructor or servant can have suggested anything? Whether Louisa or Thomas can have been reading anything? Whether, in spite of all precautions, any idle story-book can have got into the girls' hands? Because, in minds that have been practically formed by rule and line, from the cradle upwards, this is so curious, so incomprehensible."

"Stop a bit!" cried Bounderby, who all this time had been standing, as before, on the hearth, bursting at the very furniture of the room with explosive humility. "You have one of those strollers' children in the school."

"Cecilia Jupe, by name," said Mr. Gradgrind, with something of a stricken look at his friend. "Now, stop a bit!" cried Bounderby again.

"How did she come there?"

"Why, the fact is, I saw the girl myself for the first time, only just now. She specially applied here at the house to be admitted, as expressing a man who had been far too busily employed in making himself, to acquire any fashion of wearing his hat—and with his hands in his pockets sauntered out into the hall. "I never wear gloves," it was his custom to say. "I didn't climb up the ladder in them. Shouldn't be so high up, if I had."

Being left to saunter in the hall a minute or two while Mr. Gradgrind went upstairs for the address, he opened the door of the children's study and looked into that serene floor-clothed apartment, which, notwithstanding its bookcases and its cabinets and its variety of learned and philosophical appliances, had much of the genial aspect of a room devoted to hair-cutting. Louisa languidly leaned upon the window looking out, without looking at anything, while young Thomas stood smirking revengefully at the fire. Adam Smith and Malthus, two younger Gradgrinds, were out at lecture in custody; and little Jane, after manufacturing a good deal of moist pipe-clay on her face with slate-pencil and tears, had fallen asleep over vulgar fractions.

"It's all right now, Louisa; it's all right, young Thomas," said Mr. Bounderby; "you won't do so any more. I'll answer for it's being all over with father. Well, Louisa, that's worth a kiss, isn't it?"

"You can take one, Mr. Bounderby," returned Louisa, when she had coldly paused, and slowly walked across the room, and ungraciously raised her cheek towards him, with her face turned away.

"Always my pet; ain't you, Louisa?" said Mr. Bounderby. "Good bye, Louisa!"

He went his way, but she stood on the same spot, rubbing the cheek he had kissed, with her handkerchief, until it was burning red. She was still doing this, five minutes afterwards.

"What are you about, Loo!" her brother sulkily remonstrated. "You'll rub a hole in your face!"

"You may cut the piece out with your penknife if you like, Tom. I wouldn't cry!"

**CHAPTER V.**

**Coketown, to which Messrs. Bounderby and Gradgrind now walked, was a triumph of fact; it had no greater taint of fancy in it than Mrs. Gradgrind herself. Let us strike**
A town so sacred to fact, and so triumphant in its assertion, of course got on well! Why no, not quite well. No? Dear me!

No. Coketown did not come out of its own furnaces, in all respects like gold that had stood the fire. First, the perplexing mystery of the place was, Who belonged to the eighteen denominations? Because, whoever did, the laboring people did not. It was very strange to walk through the streets on a Sunday morning, and note how few of them the barbarous jangling of bells that was driving the sick and nervous mad, called away from their own quarter, from their own close rooms, from the corners of the street owning that, where they lounged listlessly, gazing at all the church and chapel going, as at a thing with which they had no manner of concern. Nor was it merely the stranger who noticed this, because there was a native organization in Coketown itself, whose members were to be heard of in the House of Commons every session, indignantly petitioning for acts of parliament that should make these people religious by main force. Then, came the Teetotal Society, who complained that these same people would get drunk, and showed in tabular statements that they did get drunk, and proved at tea parties which found their way all over the world, and elegancies of life which made we will not ask how much of the fine lady, who could scarcely bear to hear the place mentioned. The rest of its features were voluntary, and they were these.

You saw nothing in Coketown but what was severely workful. If the members of a religious persuasion built a chapel there— as the members of eighteen religious persuasions had done—they made it a pious warehouse, of red brick, with sometimes (but this only in highly ornamented examples) a bell in a steeple, and stuccoed edifice with a square steeple over the door, terminating in four short pinnacles like florid wooden legs. All the public inscriptions in the town were painted alike, in severe characters of black and white. The jail might have been the infirmary, the infirmary might have been the jail, the town-hall might have been either, or both, or anything else, for anything that appeared to the contrary in the graces of their construction. Fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the material aspect of the town; fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the immaterial. The M'Choakumchild school was all fact, and the school of design was all fact, and everything was fact between the living-in hospital and the cemetery, and what you couldn't state in figures, or show to be purchasable in the cheapest market and salable in the dearest, was not, and never should be, world without end, Amen.
of meat, and yet were eternally dissatisfied and unmanageable. In short it was the moral of the old nursery fable:

There was an old woman, and what do you think? She lived upon nothing but victuals and drink; Victuals and drink were the whole of her diet, and yet this old woman would never be quiet.

Is it possible, I wonder, that there was any analogy between the case of the Coketown population and the case of the little Gradgrinds? Surely, none of us in our sober senses and acquainted with figures, are to be told at this time of day that one of the foremost elements in the existence of the Coketown working people had been for scores of years deliberately set at naught? That there was any Fancy in them demanding to be brought into healthy existence instead of struggling on in convulsions? That exactly in the ratio as they worked long and monotonously, the craving grew within them for some physical relief—some relaxation, encouraging good humour and good spirits, and giving them a vent—some recognised holiday, though it were but for an honest dance to a stirring band of music—some occasional light pie in which even M'Choakumchild had no share which could not and would not be satisfied aright, or must and would inevitably go wrong, until the laws of the Creation were repealed?

"This man lives at Pod's End, and I don't quite know Pod's End," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Which is it, Bounderby?"

Mr. Bounderby knew it was somewhere down town, but knew no more respecting it. So they stopped for a moment, looking about. Almost as they did so, there came running round the corner of the street, at a quick pace and with a frightened look, a girl whom Mr. Gradgrind recognised. "Halloa!" said he. "Stop! Where are you going? Stop!"

Girl number twenty stopped then, palpitating, and made him a curtsey.

"Why are you tearing about the streets," said Mr. Gradgrind, "in this improper manner?"

"I was—I was run after, sir," said the girl panted, "and I wanted to get away."

"Run after?" repeated Mr. Gradgrind.

"Who would run after you?"

The question was unexpectedly and suddenly answered for her, by the colourless boy, Bitzer, who came round the corner with such blind speed and so little anticipating a stoppage on the pavement, that he brought himself up against Mr. Gradgrind's waistcoat, and re-bounded into the road.

"What do you mean, boy?" said Mr. Gradgrind. "What are you doing? How dare you dash against—everybody—in this manner?"

Bitzer picked up his cap, which the concussion had knocked off, and backing, and knuckling his forehead, pleaded that it was an accident.

"Was this boy running after you, Jupe?" asked Mr. Gradgrind.

"Yes, sir," said the girl reluctantly.

"No, I wasn't, sir!" cried Bitzer. "Not till she ran away from me. But the horse-riders never mind what they say, sir; they're famous for it. You know the horse-riders are famous for never mind what they say," addressing Sissy. "It's as well known in the town as—please, sir, as the multiplication table isn't known to the horse-riders." Bitzer tried Mr. Bounderby with this.

"He frightened me so," said the girl, "with his cruel faces!"

"Oh!" cried Bitzer. "Oh! An't you one of the rest! An't you a horse-rider! I never looked at her, sir. I asked her if she would know how to define a horse to-morrow, and offered to tell her again, and she ran away, and I ran after her, sir, that she might know how to answer when she was asked. You wouldn't have thought of saying such mischief if you hadn't been a horse-rider!"

"Her calling seems to be pretty well known among 'em," observed Mr. Bounderby. "You'd have had the whole school peeping in a row, in a week."

"Truly, I think so," returned his friend. "Bitzer, turn you about and take yourself home. Jupe, stay here a moment. Let me hear of your running in this manner any more, boy, and you will hear of me through the master of the school. You understand what I mean. Go along."

The boy stopped in his rapid blinking, knuckled his forehead again, glanced at Sissy, turned about, and retreated.

"Now, girl," said Mr. Gradgrind, "take this gentleman and me to your father's; we are going there. What have you got in that bottle you are carrying?"

"Gin," said Mr. Bounderby.

"Dear, no sir! It's the nine oils."

"The nine oils, sir. To rub father with."

Then, said Mr. Bounderby, with a loud, short laugh, "what the devil do you rub your father with nine oils for?"

"It's what our people always use, sir; when they get any hurts in the ring," replied the girl, looking over her shoulder, to assure herself that her pursuer was gone. "They bruise themselves very bad sometimes."

"Serve 'em right," said Mr. Bounderby, "for being idle." She glanced up at his face, with mingled astonishment and dread.

"By George!" said Mr. Bounderby, "when I was four or five years younger than you, I had worse bruises upon me than ten oils, twenty oils, forty oils, would have rubbed off. I didn't get 'em by posture-making, but by being banged about. There was no rope-dancing for me; I danced on the bare ground and was larruped with the rope."

Mr. Gradgrind, though hard enough, was by no means so rough a man as Mr. Bounderby. His character was not unkind, all
Jerome Cardan, the Milanese physician, was afraid of corpse-lights. The most elaborate superstition of this kind, it is said, occurred in Saxony, the dogs, it is said, assembled in a yard, and the way it took was precisely the way a nightly thumping or stamping about their room - the spirit. In the same century, that when a certain fountain, usually clear, was put into it, the maid-servant's room, and saw five of these lights. Afterwards the room was whitened, and to hasten the drying, a brasier of charcoal was put into it. The servants went to bed, and five of them were dead next morning.

Philippus Camerarius wrote thus of signs of death: "Some princes are warned by a roaring of lions, or a strange howling of dogs, a nightly thumping or stamping about their castles, or the unmilky striking of their clocks. In monasteries, it happens not unfrequently that the seats of monks or nuns, who are about to die, are occupied by shadows without heads. I know a noble family that has the surest token of death by the occurrence of a landslip in their grounds. Another family of great note is warned of death by the occurrence of a landslip in their grounds. Whatever may be disposed to shudder at the reading of such things may judge of the dread excited by the commonest occurrences, when rich and poor alike were taught thus to interpret them in solemn earnest.

Lavater wrote, near the end of the sixteenth century, that when a town councillor or other public person was about to die, a local report, or other token of death, proceeded from the seat in hall or church habitually occupied by him. In monasteries he wrote that monks had heard their coffins being ordered for them exactly as they were really ordered not many days after, and he said, when any one is about to die, when the lady of the house lay dead, the housekeeper went into the maid-servant's room, and saw five of these lights. Afterwards the room was whitened, and to hasten the drying, a brasier of charcoal was put into it. The servants went to bed, and five of them were dead next morning.

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A FEW more pages may be devoted to recalling some of the many shapes taken by those superstitions which occupied so prominent a place among the household words of our forefathers. It is well for us to think sometimes of household words now past and gone. The other day we discussed only the spirits of the elements, and found how the belief in them beset the daily life of men with gloom and terror. But there existed other goblin fancies.

Even at this day, can we say fairly that the belief in death omens has gone the way of all error? The death-watch still sets many a heart beating, and there are even people who would resent the imputation of ignorance unable to hear unmoved at night the howling of a dog. The dog always was considered a beast sensitive to impressions from the spirit world. Eunuchen dogs, says Homer, could see and hear nothing. In the sixteenth century, Jerome Cardan, the Milanese physician, relates that a dog howled before his marriage, and explains that his guardian angel came in grief to his threshold, and that the dog felt the presence of the spirit. In the same century—in the year fifteen hundred and fifty-three, a few weeks before a great mortality in Saxony, the dogs, it is said, assembled in a great troop at Meissen, and ran howling and yelling dismally through field and forest.

There are still women, and even men, afraid of corpse-lights. The most elaborate superstition of this kind, it is said, which used to prevail in Wales, through Cardigan, Ceredigion, and Pembroke. A fire, it was believed, rose out of the bed of the person who was about to die; it went thence to the churchyard, and the way it took was precisely the way