A CANDLE faintly burned in the window, to which the black ladder had often been raised for the sliding away of all that was most precious in this world to a striving wife and a brood of hungry babies; and Stephen added to his other thoughts the stern reflection, that of all the casualties of this existence upon earth, not one was dealt out with so unequal a hand as Death. The inequality of Birth was nothing to it. For, say that the child of a King and the child of a Weaver were born to-night in the same moment, what was that disparity, to the death of any human creature who was serviceable to, or beloved by, another, while this abandoned woman lived on!

From the outside of his home he gloomily passed to the inside, with suspended breath and with a slow footstep. He went up to his door, opened it, and so into the room. Quiet and peace were there. Eachael was there, sitting by the bed. She turned her head, and the light of her face shone in upon the midnight of his mind. She sat by the bed, watching and tending his wife. That is to say, he saw that some one lay there, and he knew too well it must be she; but Eachael's hands had put a curtain up, so that she was screened from his eyes. Her disgraceful garments were removed, and some of Rachael's were in the room. Everything was in its place and order as he had seemed to be about the neck of the self-made man. She dressed them now, still without trimmed, and the hearth was freshly swept, showing her. She steeped a piece of linen in a basin, into which she poured some liquid from a bottle, and laid it with a gentle hand upon the sore. The three-legged table had been drawn close to the bedside, and on it there were two bottles. This was one. It was not so far off, but that Stephen, following her hands with his eyes, could read what was printed on it, in large letters. He turned of a deadly hue, and a sudden horror seemed to fall upon him.

"I will stay here, Stephen," said Eachael, quietly resuming her seat, "till the bells go Three. 'Tis to be done again at three, and then she may be left till morning."
He had heard the thundering and surging out of doors, and it seemed to him as if his late angry mood were going about trying to get at him. He had cast it out; she would keep it out; he trusted to her to defend him from himself.

"She don't know me, Stephen; she just drowsily mutters and stares. I have spoken to her times and again, but she don't notice! 'Tis as well so. When she comes to her right mind once more, I shall have done what I can, and she never the wiser."

"How long, Rachael, isn't looked for, that she'll be so?"

"Doctor said she would happily come to her mind to-morrow."

His eyes again fell on the bottle, and a tremble passed over him, causing him to shiver in every limb. She thought he was chilled with the wet. "No," he said; "it was not that. He had had a fright."

"A fright?"

"Ay, ay! coming in. When I were walking. When I were thinking. When I—"

He seized him again; and he stood up, holding by the mantel-shelf, as he pressed his dank cold hair down with a hand that shook as if it were palsied.

"Stephen!"

She was coming to him, but he stretched out his arm to stop her.

"No! Don't please; don't! Let me see thee setten by the bed. Let me see thee as so good, and so forgiving. Let me see thee as I see thee when I coom in. I can never see thee better than so. Never, never, never!"

He had a violent fit of trembling, and then sunk into his chair. After a time he controlled himself, resting with an elbow on one knee, and his head upon that hand, could look towards Rachael. Seen across the dim candle with his moistened eyes, she looked as if she had a glory shining round her head. He could have believed she had. He did believe it, as the noise without shook the window, rattled at the door below, and went about the house clamouring and lamenting.

"When she gets better, Stephen, 'tis to be hoped she'll leave thee to thyself again, and do thee no more hurt. Anyways we will hope so now. And now I shall keep silence, for I want thee to sleep."

He closed his eyes, more to please her than to rest his weary head; but, by slow degrees as he listened to the great noise of the wind, he ceased to hear it, or it changed into the working of his loom, or even into the voices of the day (his own included) saying what had been really said. Even this imperfect consciousness faded away at last, and he dreamed a long, troubled dream.

He thought that he, and all he had done on whom his heart had long been set—but she was not Rachael, and that surprised him, even in the midst of his imaginary happiness—stood in the church being married. While the ceremony was performing, and while he recognised among the witnesses some whom he knew to be living, and many whom he knew to be dead, darkness came over, succeeded by the shining of a tremendous light. It broke from one line in the table of commandments at the altar, and illuminated the building with the words. They were sounded through the church too, as if there were voices in the fiery letters. Upon this, the whole appearance before him and around him changed, and nothing was left as it had been, but himself and the clergyman. They stood in the daylight before a crowd so vast, that if all the people in the world could have been brought together into one space, they could not have looked, he thought, more numerous; and they all abhorred him, and there was not one pitying or friendly eye among the millions that were fastened on his face. He stood on a raised stage, under his own loom; and, looking up at the shape the loom took, and hearing the burial service distinctly read, he knew that he was there to suffer death. In an instant he stood on fell below him, and he was gone.

Out of what mystery he came back to his usual life, and to places that he knew, he was unable to consider; but, he was back in those places by some means, and with this condensation upon him, that he was never, in this world or the next, through all the unimaginable ages of eternity, to look on Rachael's face, nor hear her voice. Wandering to and fro, unceasingly, without hope, and in search of he knew not what (he only knew that he was doomed to seek it), he was the subject of a one particular shape which everything took. Whatever he looked at, grew into that form; and as he grew into it sooner or later. The object of his miserable existence was to prevent its recognition by any one among the various people he encountered. Hopeless labor! If he led them out of rooms where it was, if he shut up drawers and closets where it stood, if he sealed them, no use, it changed into the shape of the church being married. While the ceremony was performing, and while he recognised among the witnesses some whom he knew to be living, and many whom he knew to be dead, darkness came over, succeeded by the shining of a tremendous light. It broke from one line in the table of commandments at the altar, and illuminated the building with the words. They were sounded through the church too, as if there were voices in the fiery letters. Upon this, the whole appearance before him and around him changed, and nothing was left as it had been, but himself and the clergyman. They stood in the daylight before a crowd so vast, that if all the people in the world could have been brought together into one space, they could not have looked, he thought, more numerous; and they all abhorred him, and there was not one pitying or friendly eye among the millions that were fastened on his face. He stood on a raised stage, under his own loom; and, looking up at the shape the loom took, and hearing the burial service distinctly read, he knew that he was there to suffer death. In an instant he stood on fell below him, and he was gone.

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The wind was blowing again, the rain was beating on the house-tops, and the larger spaces thrashed, which he had strayed over, contracted to the four walls of his room. Saving that the fire had died out, it was as his eyes had closed upon it. Rachael seemed to have
She sat wrapped in her shawl, perfectly still. The table stood in the same place, close by the bedside, and on it, in its real proportions and appearance, was the shape so often repeated.

He thought he saw the curtain move. He looked again, and he was sure it moved. He saw a hand come forth, and grope about a little. Then the curtain moved more perceptibly, and the woman in the bed put it back, and sat up.

With her wolful eyes, so haggard and wild, so heavy and large, she looked all round the room, and passed the corner where he slept in his chair. Her eyes returned to that corner, and she put her hand over them as a shade, while she looked into it. Again they went all round the room, scarcely heeding Rachael if at all, and returned to that corner. He thought, as she once more shaded them—no so much looking at him, as looking for him with a brutal instinct that he was there—the no single trace was left in those debauched features, or in the mind that went along with them, of the woman he had married eighteen years before. But that he had seen her come to this by inches, he never could have believed her to be the same.

All this time, as if a spell were on him, he was motionless and powerless, except to watch her.

Stupidly dozing, or communing with her incapable self about nothing, she sat for a little while with her hands at her ears, and her head resting on them. Presently, she resumed her staring round the room. And now, for the first time, her eyes stopped at the table with the bottles on it.

Straightway she turned her eyes back to his corner, with the defiance of last night, and, moving very cautiously and softly, stretched out her greedy hand. She drew a mug into the bed, and sat for a while considering which of the two bottles she should choose. Finally, she lifted her insensate grasp upon the bottle that had swift and certain death in it, and, before his eyes, pulled out the cork with her teeth.

Dream or reality, he had no voice, nor had he power to stir. If this be real, and her allotted time be not yet come, wake, Rachael, wake!

She thought of that, too. She looked at Rachael, and very slowly, very cautiously, poured out the contents. The draught was at her lips. A moment and she would be past her power to stir. If this be real, and her allotted time be not yet come, wake, Rachael, wake!

"Thou'lt let me walk wi' thee at this hour, Rachael?"

"No, Stephen. 'Tis but a minute and I'm home."

"Thou'rt not fearfo' ; " he said it in a low voice, as they went out at the door; "to leave me alone wi' her!"

As she looked at him, saying " Stephen?" he went down on his knee before her, on the poor mean stairs, and put an end of her shawl to his lips.

"Thou art an Angel. Bless thee, bless thee!"

"I am, as I have told thee, Stephen, thy poor friend. Angels are not like me. Between them, and a working woman fu' of faults, there is a deep gulf set. My little sister is among them, but she is changed."

She raised her eyes for a moment as she said the words; and then they fell again, in all their gentleness and mildness, on his face.

"Thou changest me from bad to good. Thou mak'st me humbly wish fo' to be more like thee, and fear fo' to lose thee when this life is ower, an' a' the muddle cleared awa'. Thou'rt an Angel; it may be, thou hast saved my soul alive!"

She looked at him, on his knee at her feet, with her shawl still in his hand, and the reproof on her lips died away when she saw the working of his face.

"I coom home desparit. I coom home wi'out a hope, and mad wi' thinking that when I said a word o' complaint, I was reckoned a unreasonable Hand. I tol'd thee I had had a fright. It were the Poison-bottle on table. I never hurt a livin' creature; but, happenin' so suddenly upon't, I thought, 'How can I say what I might ha' done to myself, or her, or both?'"

She put her two hands on his mouth, with a face of terror, to stop him from saying...
more. He caught them in his unoccupied hand, and holding them, and still clasping the border of her shawl, said, hurriedly:

"But I see thee, Rachael, setten by the bed. I ha' seen thee a' this night. In my troublems sleep I ha' known thee still to be there. Evermore I will see thee there. I nevermore will see her or think o' her, but thou shalt be beside her. I nevermore will see or think o' anything that angers me, but thou, so much better than me, shalt be by th' side on't. And so I will try t' look t' th' time, and so I will try t' trust t' th' time, when thou and me at last shall walk together far awa', beyond the deep gulf, in th' country where thy little sister is."

He kissed the border of her shawl again, and let her go. She bade him good night in a broken voice, and went out into the street.

The wind blew from the quarter where the day would soon appear, and still blew strongly. It had cleared the sky before it, and the rain had spent itself or travelled elsewhere, and the stars were bright. He stood bare-headed in the road, watching her quick disappearance. As the shining stars were to the heavy candle in the window, so was Rachael, in the rugged fancy of this man, to the common experiences of his life.

CHAPTER XIV.

Time went on in Coketown like its own machinery: so much material wrought up, so much fuel consumed, so many powers worn out, so much money made. But, less inexorable than iron, steel, and brass, it brought its varying seasons even into that wilderness of smoke and brick, and made the only stand that ever was made in the place against its direful uniformity.

"Louisa is becoming," said Mr. Gradgrind, "almost a young woman."

Time, with its innumerable horse-power, worked away, not minding what anybody said, and presently turned out young Thomas a foot taller than when his father had last taken particular notice of him.

"Thomas is becoming," said Mr. Gradgrind, "almost a young man."

Time passed Thomas on in the mill, while his father was thinking about it, and there he stood in a long tail-coat and a stiff shirt-collar.

"Really," said Mr. Gradgrind, "the period has arrived when Thomas ought to go to Bounderby."

Time, sticking to him, passed him on into Bounderby's Bank, made him an inmate of Bounderby's house, necessitated the purchase of his first razor, and exercised him diligently in his calculations relative to number one.

The same great manufacturer, always with an immense variety of work on hand, in every stage of development, passed Sissy onward in his mill, and worked her up into a very pretty article indeed.

"I fear, Jupe," said Mr. Gradgrind, "that your continuance at the school any longer, would be useless."

"I am afraid it would, sir," Sissy answered with that amount of exact knowledge which I looked for. You are extremely deficient in your facts. Your acquaintance with figures is very limited. You are altogether backward, and below the mark."

"I am sorry, sir," she returned; "but I know it is quite true. Yet I have tried hard, sir."

"Yes," said Mr. Gradgrind, "yes, I believe you have tried hard; I have observed you, and I can find no fault in that respect."

"Thank you, sir. I have thought sometimes;" Sissy very timid here; "that perhaps I tried to learn too much, and that if I had asked to be allowed to try a little less, I might have—"

"No, Jupe, no," said Mr. Gradgrind, shaking his head in his profoundest and most eminently practical way. "No. The course you pursued, you pursued according to the system—the system—and there is no more to be said about it. I can only suppose that the circumstances of your life were too unfavourable to the development of your reasoning powers, and that we began too late. Still, as I have said already, I am disappointed."

"I wish I could have made a better acknowledgment, sir, of your kindness to a poor forlorn girl who had no claim upon you, and of your protection of her."

"Don't shed tears," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Don't shed tears. I don't complain of you. You are an affectionate, earnest, good young woman, and—and we must make that do."

"Thank you, sir, very much," said Sissy, with a grateful curtsey.

"You are useful to Mrs. Gradgrind, and (in a generally pervading way) you are serviceable in the family also; so I understand from Miss Louisa that you still preserve that reasoning powers, and that we began too late. Still, as I have said already, I am disappointed."

"I have tried hard; I have observed you, and I can find no fault in that respect."

"I should have nothing to wish, sir, if—"

"I understand you," said Mr. Gradgrind; "you still refer to your father. I have heard from Miss Louisa that you still preserve that bottle. Well! If your training in the science of arriving at exact results had been more successful, you would have been wiser on that point. I will say no more.

He really liked Sissy too well to have a contempt for her; otherwise he held her calculating powers in such very slight estimation, that he must have fallen upon that conclusion. Somehow or other, he had be-
"That's well," said Mr. Gradgrind. So, he kissed her and went away; and Louisa returned to the serene apartment of the hair-cutting character, and leaning her elbow on her hand, looked again at the short-lived sparks that so soon subsided into ashes.

"Are you there, Loo?" said her brother, looking in at the door. He was quite a young gentleman of pleasure now, and not quite a prepossessing one.

"Dear Tom," she answered, rising and embracing him, "how long it is since you have been to see me!"

"Why, I have been otherwise engaged, Loo, in the evenings; and in the daytime old Bounderby has been keeping me at it rather. But I touch him up with you, when he comes it too strong, and so we preserve an understanding. I say! Has father said anything particular to you, to-day or yesterday, Loo?"

"No, Tom. But he told me to-night that he wished to do so in the morning—"

"Ah! That's what I mean," said Tom. "Do you know where he is to-night?"—with a very deep expression.

"No."

"Then I'll tell you. He's with old Bounderby. They are having a regular confab together, up at the Bank. Why at the Bank, do you think? Well, I'll tell you again. To keep Mrs. Sparsit's ears as far off as possible, I expect.

With her hand upon her brother's shoulder, Louisa still stood looking at the fire. Her brother glanced at her face with greater interest than usual, and, encircling her waist with his arm, drew her coaxingly to him.

"You are very fond of me, an't you, Loo?"

"Indeed I am, Tom, though you do let such long intervals go by without coming to see me."

"Well, sister of mine," said Tom, "when you say that, you are near my thoughts. We might be so much oftener together—mightn't we. Always together, up at the Bank. Why at the Bank, do you think? Well, I'll tell you again. To keep Mrs. Sparsit's ears as far off as possible, I expect."

Her thoughtfulness baffled his cunning scrutiny. He could make nothing of her face. He pressed her in his arm, and kissed her cheek. She returned the kiss, but still looked at the fire.

"I say, Loo! I thought I'd come, and just hint to you what was going on; though I supposed you'd most likely guess, even if you didn't know. I can't stay, because I'm engaged to some fellows to-night. You won't forget how fond you are of me?"

"No, dear Tom, I won't forget."

"That's a capital girl," said Tom. "Good bye, Loo."

She gave him an affectionate good night, and went out with him to the door, whence the fires of Coketown could be seen, making
the distance lurid. She stood there, looking steadfastly towards them, and listening to his departing steps. They retreated quickly, as glad to get away from Stone Lodge; and she stood there yet, when he was gone and all was quiet. It seemed as if, first in her own fire within the house, and then in the fiery haze without, she tried to discover what kind of woof Old Time, that greatest and longest-established Spinner of all, would weave from the threads he had already spun into a woman. But, his factory is a secret place, his work is noiseless, and his Hands are mute.

THE TRUE STORY OF THE NUNS OF MINSK

The Czar has still some partisans left in England: not many, certainly; but some, both influential and sincere, who believe in the generosity of his protection, and the truth of his religious zeal; who accept his version of the history of the war, and see him only as the conscientious defender of his Church, regarding his occupation of the Principalities as the simple demand for tolerance towards his co-religionists, and the slaughter at Sinope as the energetic expression of his philanthropy. We would convert these men—many of whom are worth converting—and prove to them what religion and toleration mean with the Czar. We will tell them a story of some nuns at Minsk; a story which was denied by the Russian minister at Rome, with Russian veracity; but which both public and private documents in our possession establish and confirm.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century—for it is well to go back to the origin of things,—a large body in the Greek Church separated itself from the orthodox or State establishment; and, under the name of the Uniate, or United Greek Church, entered into communion with Rome, placing itself under the spiritual supremacy of the Pope, in opposition to that of the Patriarch, and afterwards of the Sovereign. This schism struck the deepest root in Lithuania, and modern Poland; and, since the partition of the empire, has had powerful political influence, in keeping up the feeling of Polish nationality; the Uniate Church and national fidelity being held as synonymous; while the Polish adherent to the Russ-Greek, or orthodox Church was generally assumed to be an apostate to his faith, and a traitor to his country. It was therefore a matter of great importance to the Czar to destroy this schismatic branch, and the usual machinery of threats, bribes, and cajolery was put in motion. Laws were passed, which forbade the hearing of mass, except on Sundays and great festivals; which forbade the teaching of the Catholic religion to the children of Catholic parents; which prescribed the sermons that were to be preached, and the catechisms that were to be used in Catholic churches; and which allowed of no theological explanations of theological differences; which, later, dispersed the Catholic priests with violence, shut up their churches, and refused all spiritual consolations to their flocks; which, communicated as schismatic, all Catholic children not baptised according to the rules of the established church within four and twenty hours after their birth, and which offered entire pardon and indemnity to any Catholic convicted of any crime whatsoever—murder, robbery, no matter what—who recanted, and became orthodox. So much vigorous legislation was not without its effect. In the spring of eighteen hundred and thirty-nine, the whole of the Episcopal body of the Uniate signed the act of recantation, petitioning the Emperor graciously to re-admit them into the bosom of the orthodox Church, and asking pardon, both of him and of God, for their long blindness and obstinacy.

Amongst these petitioners, the Bishop Siemaszko distinguished himself as particularly ardent in his professions of orthodoxy; as a proof of his zeal—or as its reward—he undertook the task of converting the Basilian nuns of Minsk, with whom is our present story, and of whom he had been "bishop and shepherd." He began his mission with moderation, even with kindness, calling on them affectionately, as their pastor, to renounce the communion of Rome, and the acts of St. Basil; but, as their refusals were more vehement than he had looked for, his behaviour suddenly changed; and one Friday, as the nuns were going to prayers, Siemaszko, accompanied by Uszakoff the civil governor of Minsk and a troop of soldiers, burst open the convent gates, to offer them their final choice between honours with the orthodox religion, and constancy to their communion with forced labour in Siberia. The nuns despised his threats as they had rejected his bribes. The reverend mother, Makrena Mirazyslawski, answered generally in the name of all, and Siemaszko then ordered them, angrily, to prepare instantly for a march. With difficulty they obtained permission to offer up a few prayers before their departure. They flung themselves before the Host, the renegade prelate cursing them as they prayed. Thirty-five knelt on the church flags; but, when they rose up to go, one was found dead, Rosalie Lenszeka. Her heart had broken between fear and grief.

They were marched through the town; the orphan children, of whom they had forty-seven in the convent, following them with tears and lamentations, and many of the inhabitants crowding round, weeping too; for, according to various depositions, these nuns of St. Basil were much beloved. Their kindness and benevolence to the poor and the afflicted was a matter