...ORDER.

...TER BESANT.

CHAPTER IV

DRUSILLA'S STORY

I was born in Cheapside, almost beneath the bells of Bow on October 5, in the year of grace 1753, being the fifth and youngest child of Solomon Hetherington and Prudence, his wife My father was a citizen and glover, a member of the Honorable Company of Glovers, his ambition being always to be elected, before becoming lord mayor, master of his company These ambitions are laudable in a city merchant, yet, alas, they are not always attained and in my unhappy father's case they were very far from being reached as you shall presently hear

There is, I am told, some quality in the London air which causeth the city, in spite of much that is foolish as regards cleanliness, to be a healthy place, and favorable to children So that, for my own part, though I was brought up in the very center and heart of the city, with no green fields to run in, nor any gardens save those belonging to the Drapers' company I, as well as my brothers and sisters, was a healthy and well faring child up to the age of 8 when I, with all my brothers and sisters, was afflicted with that scourge of mankind, smallpox This dreadful disease, to the unspeakable grief of my parents killed their four eldest children, and spared none but myself, the youngest, and a girl I recovered so far that, although I was weakly and ailing for a long time, I was not marked by a single spot or any of those ugly pits, which sometimes ruin many a woman's beauty and thereby rob her of that choicest blessing, the love of a husband So different, however, was I from the stout and hearty girl before the smallpox, that my parents were advised that the best chance to save my life—this being for the time their chief and even their only hope—was to send me into the country, there to live in fresh, pure air, running in the sun, and fed on oatmeal porridge, good milk, fat bacon and new laid eggs

Then my father bethought him of his own mother who lived far away indeed from London, namely at Warkworth, in Northumberland And he proposed to my mother that they should take this long journey, carrying me with them, and leave me for awhile in charge of my grandmother, which being done, and my health showing signs of amendment, they were constrained to go back to their own business, leaving me in good hands, yet with sorrowful hearts, because they were going home without me And for six or seven years I saw them no more

No girl, to be sure, had kinder treatment or more indulgent governess than myself My grandmother, Dame Hetherington—though not a lady by birth, but only a farmer's daughter—lived in the house which stands outside the town, beyond the bridge, among the trees

My grandmother was a wise woman, and reflected that, as I was sent away from London in order to recover my health and grow strong, I was allowed and encouraged to run about in the open air as much as possible, so that, as this part of England is quite safe, and there are here few gypsies (who mostly stay on the other side of Cheviot) nor any robbers on the road—nor, indeed, any road at all to signify—I very soon grew to know the whole country within the reach of a hearty girl's feet

There is plenty to see, though this part of Northumberland is flat, while the rest is wild and mountainous There are the ruins of the old castle, about which it is always pleasant for a child to run and climb, or for a grown person to meditate on the vanity of earthly things, seeing that this pile of ruins was once a great and stately castle, and this greensward was once hidden beneath the feet of fierce soldiers, who now are dust and ashes in the grave yard From the castle one looks down upon the Coquet, which would ever continue in my eyes the sweetest of rivers even were I to see the far famed Tiber or the silver Thames, or the great Ganges or the mysterious Nile, or even the sacred Jordan

Higher up the river was Morwick Mill where Ralph Embleton lived with his uncle

Beyond the town, half a mile out to sea, lies the little island of Coquet Ralph once rowed me across the narrow channel and we explored the desert island and thought of Robinson Crusoe which he had read and told me But this was before the time when we took to pretending at glooms

In those days, which seem to have been so happy, and I dare say were, Ralph was free and could come and go as pleased him best, save that he went every morning to the vicar, who taught him Latin and Greek, and sometimes remembered—but in kindly moderation—the advice of Solomon The reason of this freedom was that his uncle, with whom he lived loved the lad greatly, and intended great things for him, even designing that he should become a great scholar and go to Cambridge For once there was a member of his family who took to learning and rose from being a poor scholar in that university, which has ever been a kindly nurse or foster mother of poor scholars, to be a doctor of divinity and a bishop, but my Ralph was never to be a bishop or even a doctor of divinity And a sad change was to happen at the mill

Everybody was our friend in those days, from Mr Cuthbert Carnaby, justice of the peace, and the vicar, down to Sailor Nan and her lodger, Dan Gedge, the Strong Man Everybody had a kind word for Ralph, and nobody told me then how wicked it was to run about with a boy of such unnatural depravity This, as you will see, was to come He was a tall boy for his years, and he was six years older than myself, which proves how good natured he must have been, for few boys of 15 or 16 care for the companionship of a girl of 9 or 10 As for his face, it has always been the dearest face in the world to me, and always will be, so that I know not whether other people would call it a handsome face His eyes were eager, as if—which was the case—he always wanted to be up and doing They were blue eyes, because he was a Northumberland lad, yet not soft and dreamy eyes, as is too often the case with the people of the north His face was oval and his features regular He carried his head thrown back, and walked erect with both hands ready, as if there was generally a fight to be expected, and it was well to be prepared To be sure, Ralph was one of those who love a fight and do not sulk if they are beaten, but bide a bit and then on again

When Ralph was nearly 15, a great and terrible misfortune befell him His uncle, Mr Samuel Embleton, though not an old man, died suddenly After he was buried it was found that he had left by will Morwick Mill, and the farm, his household furniture, his books, which were not many, and all the money he had in the world, to Ralph as his sole heir This inheritance proved at first the cause of great unhappiness to the poor boy For, unfortunately, the will named Mathew Humble as guardian and executor, to whom the testator devised his best wig and his best coat, with his second best bed and a gold headed stick Now it angered Mathew to think that he being also nephew and sister's son of Samuel Embleton, of Morwick Mill, was left no part or portion of this goodly heritage It would seem that, knowing his uncle's design to send Ralph to Cambridge, and his hope that he would become a credit to the family and a pillar of the church, he had hoped and even grown to believe firmly and to expect it as a right, that the mill at least, if not the farm, or a portion of it, would be left to him It was, therefore, a bitter blow for him to find that he was left nothing at all except what he could make or save as guardian of the heir and administrator of the estate, with free quarters at the mill for six years Surely for a man of probity and common sense that would have been considered a great deal

He came with his sister, who was as much disappointed as himself, in a spirit of rancor, malice and envy He regarded the innocent boy as a supplanter The first thing he did was to inform him that he should have no skulking or idleness He therefore put a stop to the Latin and Greek lessons with the vicar, and employed the boy about the work of the place, giving him the hardest and most disagreeable tasks on the farm For freedom was substituted servitude, for liberty, restraint; for affection and kindness, harsh language and continual floggings, while Barbara, with her tongue, that ill governed weapon of a woman, made him feel for the first time in his life how idle, how useless, how greedy a creature he was The boy bore with all, as meekly as was his duty, for quite two years But he often came to me or to the fugleman with fists clinched, declaring that he would endure this ill usage no longer, and asking in wonder what he had done to deserve it And at such times he would swear to leave the mill, and run away and seek his fortune anywhere—somewhere in the world It was always in his mind from the first, when Mathew began his ill treatment, that he would run away and seek his fortune In this design he was strengthened by the example of my father, who left the village when a boy of 14 to seek his fortune, and found—you shall hear presently what he found I dissuaded him as much as I could, because it was dreadful for me to think of being left without him, or of his running about the country helpless and friendless The fugleman, who knew the world and had traveled far, pointed out to him very sensibly that he would have to endure this hardness for a very short time longer, that he was already 16 and as tall as most men, and could not for very shame be flogged much longer, while as for Barbara's tongue, he declared that a brave man ought not to value what a woman said, let her tongue run as free as the sergeant at drill of recruits, no more than the price of a rope's end, and again, that in five years' time, as soon as Ralph was 21, he would have the right to turn his cousin out of the mill, which would then become his own property, and a very pretty property, too, where an old friend would expect to find a pipe and a glass of Hollands or rum And he promised himself to assist at the ducking in the river which he supposed that Ralph would give his cousin when that happy day should arrive, as well as at the great feast and rejoicing which he supposed would follow The result of these exhortations, to which were added those of my grandmother, was that he remained at home and when Mathew Humble cruelly belabored him he showed no anger or desire for revenge, and when Barbara smote him with harsh words and found texts out of the Bible to taunt him with he made no reply Nor did he rebel even though they treated him as if he were a common plowboy and farm drudge, instead of the heir to all

I confess, and have long felt sincerely, the wickedness of the thing which at length brought open disgrace upon poor Ralph, and drove him away from us Yet, deserving of blame and punishment as our actions were, I cannot but think that the conduct of Mathew in bringing the chief culprit—he knew nothing of my share or of the fugleman's—before his worship Mr Justice Carnaby, was actuated more by malice than by an honest desire to bring criminals to punishment Besides, he had for some months before this been spreading abroad wicked rumors about Ralph saying among other false and malicious things that the boy was idle gluttonous, lying and even thieving in somuch that the vicar who knew the contrary and that the boy was as good a lad as ever walked though fond of merriment and a little headstrong openly rebuked him for malice and evil thinking, saying plainly that these things were not so and that if they were so Mathew was much to blame in blabbing them about the country rather than trying to correct the lad's faults and doing his best to hide them from the general knowledge Yet there are some who always believe what is spoken to one's dispraise and sour looks and unfriendly faces were bestowed upon the boy while my grandmother was warned not to allow me to run wild with a lad of so notorious a bad character This is all that I meant when I said just now that at first all were our friends

When Ralph was gone I took little joy in anything until I got my first letter from him, which was not for a very long time afterward

Now, one day, as I was walking sorrowfully home, having sat all the afternoon with the fugleman, I saw Sailor Nan beckoning to me from her stone outside the door

"Child," she said, "where's your sweetheart?"

"Alack," I replied, "I know not, Sailor Nan."

"Young maids," she went on, "must not puke and pine because they hear nothing for a while of the lads they love Be of good cheer Why, I read him his fortune myself in his own left hand Did my fortunes ever turn out wrong? As good a tale of luck and fair weather as I ever read. Come, child, give me thy hand; let me read your lines too."

It is strange how in the lines of one's hand are depicted beforehand all the circumstances of life, easy to be read beforehand by those who are wise. Yet have I been told that it is not enough to learn the rules unless you have the gift

"He will come back," she repeated,

"He will come back!" she repeated.

after long looking into the hand. Now, your own hand Here is a long line of life—yet not as long as my own Here is the line of marriage—a good line; a happy marriage; a fortunate girl—yet there will be trouble Is it an old man? I cannot rightly read Something is in the way Trouble, and even grievous trouble But all to come right in the end."

"Is my fortune," I asked, "connected with the fortune of Ralph?"

She laughed her rough, hoarse sea laugh.

"If it is an old man, or if it is a young man, say him nay Bide your old love. If he press or if he threaten, say him nay Bide your old sweetheart

"There was an old man came over the lea,
Heigho! but I won't have 'un;
Came over the lea,
A-courtin' to me,
Wi' his old gray beard just newly shaven."

She crooned out the words in a cracked and rusty voice, and pushed my hand away roughly Then she replaced her pipe in her mouth, and went on smoking the tobacco, which was her chief food and her chief solace, and took no further heed of me

CHAPTER V.

A SECOND WHITTINGTON.

The summer and the autumn passed but no sign or letter came from Ralph. The people in the town ceased, after the manner of mankind, to think of the boy. He was gone and forgotten, yet there were two or three of us who spoke and thought of him continually First, there was the fugleman, who found his life dull without the boy to talk with He promised to make a collection of birds' eggs in the spring as a present for him when he should return. Then there was the old woman, Sailor Nan, who kept his memory green Lastly, there were my grandmother and myself We knew not, however, where he was or anything about him, nor could we guess what he was doing or whither he had gone

Twice in the year, namely at Christmas or the New Year, and at midsummer, I had letters from my parents, to which I duly replied It was in May when Ralph ran away, so that they had three letters from me that year When my Christmas letters arrived there was mention of our boy, but so strange a tale that we could not understand what to believe or what the thing might mean

The letter told us that Ralph reached London safely in four or five weeks after leaving us, having walked all the way, save for such trifling lifts and helps as might be had for nothing on the road; he found out my father's shop he gave him the letter he slept in the house, and was hospitably entertained In the morning he was taken by my father to the East India's company's great house in Cornhill, and left there by him to talk with a gentleman about the obtaining of a post in their service that, the conversation finished, being dismissed by the gentleman with whom he had taken counsel, Ralph left the office Then he disappeared, and was seen no more Not to the inquiries made was there any answer given or any news of him ascertained "So wicked is this unhappy town," wrote my mother, "that men are capable of murdering even an innocent lad from the country for the sake of the silver buckles, or the very coat upon his back Yet there are other ways in which he may have been drawn away He loved not the thought of city life he may have taken the recruiting sergeant's shilling, or he may have been pressed for a sailor and sent to sea, or, which heaven forbid, he may have been decoyed into bad company, and now be in the company of rogues Whatever the cause, he hath disappeared and made no sign Yet he seemed a good and honest lad"

So perplexed were we with the strange and unintelligible intelligence that, after turning it about in talk for a week, it was resolved that we would consult Mr Carnaby in the matter It would perhaps have been better if we had kept the thing to ourselves For this gentleman, though he kindly considered the case, could do nothing to remove the dreadful doubt under which we lay, except that he recommended us to patience and resignation, virtues of which, Heaven knows! we women who stay at home must needs continually practice We should, I say, have done better had we held our tongues, because Mr Carnaby told the barber, who told the townsfolk one by one, and then it was whispered about that Ralph had joined the gypsies, according to some, or been pressed and sent to sea, according to others; or had enlisted, according to others; with wild stories told in addition, born of imagination, idle or malignant, as that he had joined a company of common rogues and robbers; or—but I scorn to repeat these things Everybody, however, at this juncture, remembered the wicked things said of the boy by his cousin As for Mathew himself, overjoyed at the welcome news, which he received open mouthed, so to speak, he went about calling all his acquaintances to witness that he had long since prophesied ruin and disaster to the boy, which, indeed, to the fullest extent, a lad so depraved as to horsewhip his own guardian, richly deserved As for coming back, he said that was not likely, and, indeed, impossible because he was already knocked on the head—Mathew was quite convinced of this—in some midnight brawl, or at least fallen so low that he would never dare to return among respectable people. These things we could not believe, yet they sank into our hearts and made us uneasy. For where could the boy be, and why did he not send us one letter, at least, to tell us what he had done, and how he had fared?

"Child," said my grandmother, "it is certain that Mathew does not wish his cousin to return He bears malice in his heart against the boy, and he remembers that should he never get back the mill will be his own" Already he began to give himself the airs of the master, and to talk of selling a field here and a field there, and of improving the property, as if all was his

"He will come back," said the fugleman "Brave hearts and lusty legs do not get killed Maybe he hath enlisted Then he may have gone a-soldiering to America, or somewhere in the world, and no doubt will get promotion—ay, corporal first, sergeant next, and perhaps be made fugleman Or maybe, as your lady mother says, he hath been pressed, and is now at sea, so that he cannot write. But, wherever he is, be sure he is doing well. Wherefore, heart up!"

Well, to shorten the story, we got no news at all, and could never discover, for many years, what had become of the boy When four years had passed by without a word or line from him, Mathew grew horribly afraid, because Ralph's one-and twentieth birthday drew near, and he thought the time was come when the heir would appear and claim his own. What preparations he made to receive him I know not Perhaps a blunderbuss and a cup of poison But the day passed, and there was no sign of Ralph Then, indeed, Mathew became quite certain that he would no more be disturbed and that the mill was his own

As for myself, I sat at home chiefly with my grandmother who was now beginning to grow old, yet brisk and notable still There was a great deal to be done, and the days pass swiftly to industrious hands, yet not one so busy and not one so swift but I could find time to think and to pray for Ralph

Still the fugelman kept up my heart, and Sailor Nan swore as if she was still captain of the foretop, that he would come home safe I was young, happily, and youth is the time for hope And about the end of the sixth year I had cause to think about other things, because my own misfortunes began

I had long observed in the letters of my dear parents a certain difference, which constantly caused doubt and questioning, for my mother exhorted me continually, in every letter, to the practice of frugality, thrift, simple living, and the acquisition of housewifely knowledge, and, in short, all those virtues which especially adorn the condition of poverty She also never failed to bid me reflect upon the uncertainty of human affairs and the instability of fortune, and every letter furnished examples of rich men become poor, and great ladies reduced to beg their bread My grandmother bade me lay these things to heart, and I perceived that she was disturbed, and she would have written to my father to ask if things were going ill, but for two reasons The first was that she could neither read nor write, those arts not having been taught her in her childhood; and I testify that she was none the worse for want of them, but her natural shrewdness even increased, because she had to depend upon herself, and could not still be running to a book for guidance The second reason was that the letters of my father, both to her and to myself, were full of glorious anticipation and confidence Yes, while my mother wrote in sadness he wrote in triumph, when she bade me learn to scour pots he commanded me to study the fashions, when she prophesied disaster he proclaimed good fortune. Thus he ordered that I was to be taught whatever could be learned in so remote a town as Warkworth, and that especial care was to be taken in my carriage and demeanor, begging my grandmother to observe the deportment of Mrs Carnaby, and to bid me copy her as an example, for, he said, a city heiress not uncommonly married with a gentleman of good family, though impoverished fortunes; that some city heiresses had of late married noblemen, that as he had no son, nor any other child but myself, I would inherit the whole of his vast fortune (I thought how I could give it all to Ralph), and, therefore, I must study how to maintain myself in the position which I should shortly occupy He desired me especially to pay very particular attention not to seem quite rustical and country bred, and to remember that the common speech of Northumberland would raise a laugh in London With much more to the same effect

I say not that my father wrote all this in a single letter, but in several; so that all these things became implanted in my mind, and both my grandmother and myself were, in spite of my mother's letters, firmly persuaded that we were already very rich and considerable people, and that my father was a merchant of the greatest renown—already a common councilman, and shortly to be alderman, sheriff and lord mayor—in the city of London. This belief was also held by our neighbors and friends, and it gave my grandmother, who was, besides, a lady of dignified manners, more consideration than she would otherwise have obtained, with the title of madam, which was surely due to the mother of so great and successful a man

Now the truth was this: My father was the most sanguine of men, and the most ready to deceive himself He lived continually (if I may presume to say so without breaking the fifth commandment) in a fool's paradise When he was a boy nothing would do for him but he must go to London, refusing to till the acres which would afterward be his own, because he was ambitious, and ardently desired to be another Whittington See the dangers of the common chap books, in which he had read the story of this great lord mayor! He so far resembled Whittington that he went up to London (by wagon from Newcastle) with little in his pocket, except a letter of recommendation from the then vicar of Warkworth to his brother, at the time a glover in Cheapside. How he became apprentice—like Whittington—to this glover, how he fell in love—like Whittington—with his master's daughter, how he married her—like Whittington—and inherited the business, stock, capital, good will and all, may here only be thus briefly told, but by the death of his master he became actual and sole owner of a London shop, whereupon, my poor father's brain being always full of visions, he was inflamed with the confidence that now, indeed, he had nothing to look for but the making of an immense fortune Worse than this, he thought that the fortune would come of its own accord How a man living in the city of London could make so prodigious a mistake, I know not Therefore he left the whole care of the business to his wife and his apprentice, and for his own part spent the day in coffee houses or on 'change, or wherever merchants and traders meet together This made him full of great talk, and he presently proceeded to imagine that he himself was concerned in the great ventures and enterprises of which he heard so much, or perhaps, because he could not actually have thought himself a merchant adventurer, he believed that before long he also should be embarking cargoes to the East and West Indies, running under convoy of frigates safe through the enemy's privateers It was out of the profits of these imaginary cargoes that he was to obtain that vast wealth of which he continually thought and talked until, in the end, he believed that he possessed it. Meantime his poor wife, my mother, left in charge of the shop, and with her household cares as well, found, to her dismay, that the respectable business which her father had made was quickly falling from them, as their old friends died, one by one, or retired from trade, and no new ones coming in their places; for, as I have been credibly informed, the business of a tradesman or merchant in London is so precarious and uncertain that, unless it be constantly watched, pushed, nursed, encouraged, coaxed, fed and flattered, it presently withers away and perishes.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

The amount of shortage of Cashier Lounsbury of the New York postoffice, who suicided, has been found to reach $40,000.