

**MADE OR  
MARRED**

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Made or Marred by Jessie Fothergill

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**JESSIE FOTHERGILL**

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BY

JESSIE FOTHERGILL,

AUTHOR OF

'THE FIRST VIOLIN,' 'PROBATION,' ETC.



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## CHAPTER I.

### LAWRENCE STREET.

IN the north-west of England there is a certain great city, which, to serve my purpose, I may call Irkford. Though far from being a second London, it has a cosmopolitan character, which somewhat sets it apart from other provincial towns and cities. It is pre-eminently a great manufacturing centre, but its numerous other branches of commerce have drawn to it merchants of almost every kind, and of all nations; and 'Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks,' taking the words in their broadest sense, may be daily encountered, either in the streets of the city itself, or in any of its large and numerous suburbs. Greeks also, French, and great abundance of Germans—it would be difficult to find the nationality which had not contributed at least a few specimens to the population of this great, dingy city. Naturally, in so large a centre of wealth and commerce, all sorts and conditions

of men flourish, or the reverse, according to their circumstances or capacities ; from the merchant-prince, with his house like a palace, down through every grade of smaller capitalist, assistant, clerk, *employé*, till we come to factory hands, artisans, 'rogues and vagabonds,' miscellaneous trades and professions, good, bad, and indifferent—in the great city there is place for some of all, and they are all to be found there ; high and low jogging elbows pretty often in the crowded streets ; but—and this is one of the great characteristics of the Irkford people—one and all, from the merchant-prince at the top of the ladder to the beggar at the bottom, so busy that it seems as if a hundred years would scarce suffice in which for them to accomplish their purposes : too busy to notice when they knock up against one another in the street ; too busy, it almost seems, to pause and speak to a friend whom they may meet ; for if you will take the trouble, and be so frivolously careless of your time as to watch the meeting of two acquaintances in Irkford, you will generally find that they dash against each other ; recognise each other with a kind of shock ; begin to talk very rapidly, both at once, each gradually edging away from the other, until at last the slightly-clasped fingers slowly separate ; one man's finger-tip touches the finger-tip of the other man, and with a short nod, they may be heard severally murmuring 'Morning !' in an absent manner, after which anyone can see them tearing up and down the thronged-out streets, with almost impossible haste, as if grudging that meagre parley of a minute and a half, just concluded. Such things as these take place during the hours of toil : the business hours. After the factory-hands have ceased to work, when the warehouses and offices are closed,

and the city streets are somewhat less crowded, then, it would seem, Irkford, young and old, rich and poor, has some leisure to devote to amusement, relaxation, rest, of one kind or another.

It is a town surrounded on all sides by suburbs. There are certain regions built over with handsome houses, standing back from the road, where none but the rich or very well-to-do live. There is the second-class kind of suburb, the inhabitants of which may be comfortably off, but whom no one would accuse of having a superfluity of wealth. There are yet others, to walk or drive through which gives one a sense of melancholy—so endless are their long uniform streets, so exactly alike the interminable rows of small houses; so portentously similar the organ-grinder and the man with the street-piano; the blind beggar with the dog; the 'very poor but scrupulously honest' mendicants who perambulate them, singing some of their mournful hymns, or yet more lugubrious comic songs. There are so many of these streets; they are so long, so monotonous, so dingily hot in summer; so hopelessly bleak and grey in winter; every little house in every long row is so inevitably inhabited, and brimming over with children; the greengrocer's cart passes through them with such mechanical regularity, one wonders how the inhabitants can bear it.

It is into a street of the second order that I would lead you—a street in whose homes one would think there ought to be happiness, since in it live, to quote from the geographical primer of youth, 'no *very* rich, and no *extremely* poor'; but chiefly those who are neither one nor the other—it is strictly a middle-class street. Lawrence Street was its name; it was rather long, and possessed