

Brief summary of Ch. 13, bk. 1 (Rachael)

Rachael is discovered by Stephen, nursing his sick, bedridden wife. Urged to rest, his sleep is tormented, to cause a person to suffer or worry, by nightmares.

Commentary:

Privately, *Hard Times* has been described as vast, extremely big, panorama of mid-Victorian England. During the Victorian Era, the home was widely regarded as a place of relaxation and pleasure and as an escape from the moral corruption of the business world and from the grinding monotony of factory life as a refuge from the working world.

Edmund Wilson says that between his wife and his friend, Stephen finds himself so hopeless and unable to assert himself that he becomes an indecisive martyr. As same as Wilson, **Humphrey House** claims that Stephen Blackpool finding himself in an environment where everything is organized against him (workplace, home and society). In *Hard Times*, **House** claims, Dickens's aim is to reduce the abuse of 'the principle of individual right' and to develop 'individualistic political ideas towards some kind of collectivism. **House** says that Dickens is using *Hard Times* 'as a vehicle of more concentrated sociological argument' and indeed, throughout 'all his writings' Dickens engaged much more in thinking through 'social problems'.

Stephen frequently refers to Rachael as his angel because she has feminine traits of Victorian Era: she is compassionate, honest, morally pure, and emotional sensitive.

'**Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone at her!**': in this context Dickens points out that the relationship between Stephen and Rachael is non-sexual one or Platonic love. It seems to me that it is as same as the relationship between children.

Brief summary of Ch. 14, bk. 1 (the great manufacturer)

Time leaps,move suddenly, forward. Tom, Louisa, and Sissy are grown, and Gradgrind becomes a MP. Tom, now working at the bank, hints to Louisa that their father is conspiring, planning secretly, with Bounderby over some matter.

Brief summary of Ch. 15, bk. 1 (Father and daughter)

Gradgrind gains Louisa's impassive consent to be married to Bounderby.

Commentary:

Here the father-daughter plot is discovered. **Anne Humpherys** deals with issues of the novel from a feminist perspective. She sets up an interesting panorama of the theme of mismatched marriages and divorces with the connection to the father-daughter plot. In the father-daughter plot there is a conflict between the father's private desires and the daughter's social needs, particularly in the case of the daughter's marriage. So the father frequently tries to convince his daughter that it would be a rational desire for her to marry a special man, the daughter's story is the conflict between her social needs and her desire to redeem or please her father.

Brief summary of Ch. 16, bk. 1 (husband and wife)

Mrs Sparsit complies too readily with Bounderby's desire to wed Louisa. After a very brief courtship, the pair are married leave for a honeymoon at Lyons.

Commentary:

Lyons: second only to Paris as the major city in France, Lyons has been for centuries an important commercial centre, perhaps most famously in the production of silk.

Generally speaking, during Victorian Era, a woman's job was to confine her attentions to domestic tasks about the house, looking after the welfare of her family. But in case of Louisa the matter is different: arguably, Gradgrind's philosophy of fact turns her into machine and the home into a veritable factory.

Through the scenes of this chapter we learned that there is a lack of Bounderby-Louisa relationship since Bounderby wants to observe the operations of some factories there. So through this mismatched couple, Dickens suggests that a happy marriage must be founded upon mutual love and respect.