

## **Book the second: ‘Reaping**

### **Brief summary of Ch. 1, bk. 2 (effects in the bank)**

One year later, Bitzer is now a virtual spy, for Mrs Sparsit, on the activities of Bounderby and Louisa. James Harthouse is introduced under the name of strange visitor. He, a wealthy young sophisticate from London, arrives in Coketown to begin a political career as a disciple of Gradgrind.

### **Commentary:**

In this chapter we have noticed an imagery of satire especially when Dickens called the mill-owners ‘millers’: it is a pun on mill-owners who are also millers in the sense suggested by the title of the article ‘Ground in the Mill’ published in Dickens’s weekly magazine. The article is a well-documented and soberly written account of the nightmarish accident that occurred with machinery unfenced through employers’ avoidance of safety regulations.

It has been observed that the novel’s use of binaries is highly creative: ‘father and daughter’, ‘husband and wife’, ‘men and masters’, ‘men and brothers’ . . . etc.

Also in this chapter, Sparsit describes Harthouse ‘**like the Sultan who put his head in the pail of water**’: This is a story in which Sultan seems to experience a great deal of his future life in the moment of dipping his head in water. The story clearly relates to the popular believe in the intense mental activities said to be experienced by those who are drowning, when someone dies because he is under water and cannot breathe.

### **Brief summary of Ch. 2, bk. 2 (Mr James Harthouse)**

Mr James Harthouse is introduced to Bounderby and Louisa. He is attracted to the young bride.

### **Commentary:**

One of the critics of this novel says that James Harthouse is caricature. In the same context unconsciously Sylvia Manning answers him and she says that ‘Hard Times is despite caricature because caricature portrays essence and the novel is true to class confrontation between capital and proletariat’.

**‘And the honourable member had so tickled the House (which has a delicate sense of humour) by putting the cap on the cow’:** this frivolous way response to the loss of human life may seem like a satire exaggeration. In his speech, Dickens attacked the House of Commons and the Prime Minister of the day in delicate sense of humour that they are responsible for the plight of the country, Dickens said, ‘the PM did officially and habitually joke at a time when this country was plunged in deep disgrace and distress’. The next two chapters will advance one issue created by Mrs Sparsit and her spy, Bitzer, who will pave the way to Harthouse to seduce Louisa.

### **Brief summary of Ch. 3, bk. 2 (the whelp)**

Harthouse ingratiate himself with, to discover more about the Bounderby’s marriage. When Tom told Harthouse that Louisa only married Bounderby for Tom’s sake, Harthouse infers that Louisa does not love her husband. So he privately resolves to seduce her.

### **Commentary:**

**‘You are a piece of caustic, Tom,’ retorted Mr. James Harthouse:** that is biting or sarcastic from a substance that burns and corrodes, often used for cleaning purpose.

It has been noticed in this chapter that the lack of imagination and sentiment in Louisa's childhood makes it impossible for her to respond appropriately in the scene of James Harthouse's attempted seduction.