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A micro-ebook from *Master Narratives*

Negotiating
Mary Barton

Richard Gravil

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Chapter 8

Negotiating *Mary Barton*

Richard Gravil

Slaves, toil no more! Why delve, and moil, and pine,
To glut the tyrant-forgers of your chain?
Shout, as one man, — ‘Toil we no more renew,
Until the Many cease their slavery to the Few!’
—Thomas Cooper, ‘The Purgatory of Suicides’, 1845

Such gentlemen as Feargus O’Connor, ...together with the terrific population of Manchester, require a sort of check in awe.... The present excellent military arrangements under the surveillance of Colonel Wemyss, ...will frustrate any mad anti-peaceful idea the Chartists may be urged to embrace.

—‘Whitewood’, *A Few Days at Manchester*, 1839

Capital, ... is but an instrument in the hands of certain classes, by virtue of which, these classes contrive to appropriate to themselves the real capital of the country at the expense of those who produce it. The nominal capitalist is ... a purloiner of real capital. He is a self-licensed plunderer.

—*Poor Man’s Guardian*, 1835

The higher classes, not being obliged to labour for a maintenance, have abundance of leisure time, which they employ in learning, and thus form a class of educated people whose faculties are more developed, and who understand better than the labouring classes, how to promote the welfare of mankind.

—Jane Marcet, *Rich and Poor*, 1851

We’re their slaves as long as we can work; we pile up their fortunes with the sweat of our brows, and yet we are to live as separate as if we were in two worlds; ay, as separate as Dives and Lazarus, with a great gulf betwixt us...

— ‘John Barton’, *Mary Barton*, 1848

The polarization of rich and poor, these epigraphs suggest, was at its maximum when Elizabeth Gaskell set out to depict the abyss of present misery in which