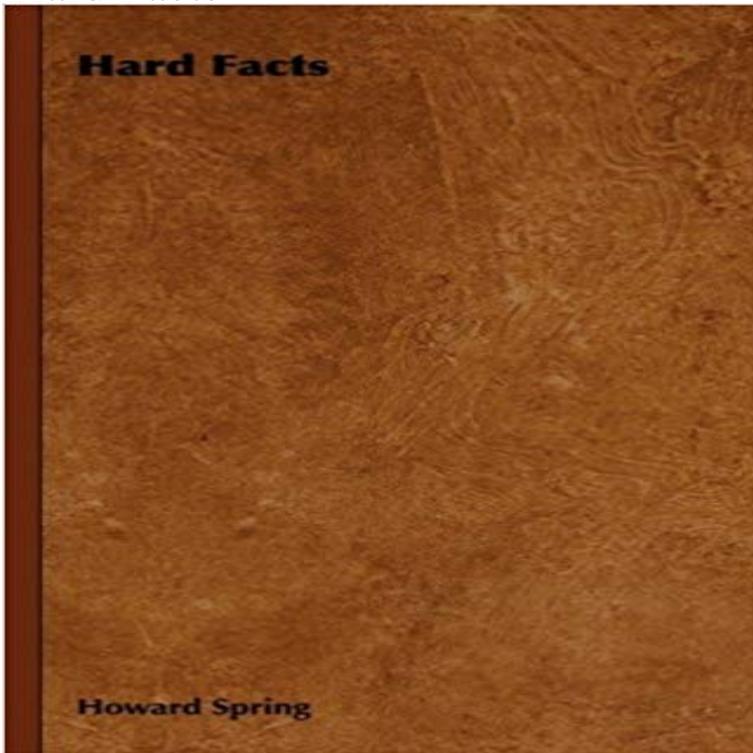


Hard Facts



HARD FACTS BY HOWARD SPRING
AUTHORS FOREWORD IN a celebrated essay, Jfacaulay sums up Bacons career as a chequered spectacle of so much glory and so much shame. The words may fitly enough be applied not only to Bacons life but to most mens lives and to most large experiments of human action. In 1942 I began to write a novel whose purpose was to trace the course of one such experiment from its beginnings In the eighties of last century up to our present time. I intended to call this novel, which would, have been very long, So Much Glory : So Much Shame. It seemed to me as time went on that the war years, with the paper shortage, were not the best for the publication of so long a book as I had in mind. And, too, my writing during the war is so sporadic and occasional that progress was slow, and it might be years before the book as I conceived it or at any rate as my conception worked out in practice was finished. Things being thus, I decided that it would be better to publish the book piecemeal. In my plan, it was divided into three parts called Hard Fads, Dunkerleys and The Banner. The first of these is the present volume, which makes, I think, a rounded and selfsufficient story. I hope that, in due course, the other volumes will do so, too and that finally it may be possible to publish the three as one book bearing the title originally chosen for it. H. S.

CHAPTER ONE AT FIVE OCLOCK on a Wednesday afternoon in March, 1885, Theodore Chrystal was walking to his lodgings in Hardiman Street, in the Levenshulme district of Manchester. He was happy enough, though no physical reason for happiness was apparent. It was a vile day the darkness had come down on the breath of a thin fog, and the street lamps had not yet been lit. Even had the full light of a summers day fallen upon the scene, it would have been hideous. Theo knew this, although Manchester was a

strange town to him, for there had been light enough when he set out to take tea with Mr. Burnside, the Vicar of St. Ninians. He had seen then the little houses standing in rows, with their bare sooty patches of earth railed off from the streets as though they were precious he had seen the sky low upon the grey slate roofs, an immense and everlasting frown that seemed to lie over the whole city he had seen something of the pale artisan population, depressing and respectable, appearing now and then from behind doors whose front steps were yellowed with the daily rubbing of stone, or glancing through windows hung with lace curtains looped back to reveal ferns in pots of fantastic shapes, A swan with outspread wings was the most popular, he noted. The fern fitted neatly down on to the swans backan improbability alike in botany and ornithology. He crossed the main road which runs from Manchester to Stockport, and was impressed by its granitic and uncom promising hideousness. A stony waste, a weary wilderness, an abomination of desolation: these were the sort of phrases that crossed his young mindhe was twentyfourbut he murmured them almost gaily.

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