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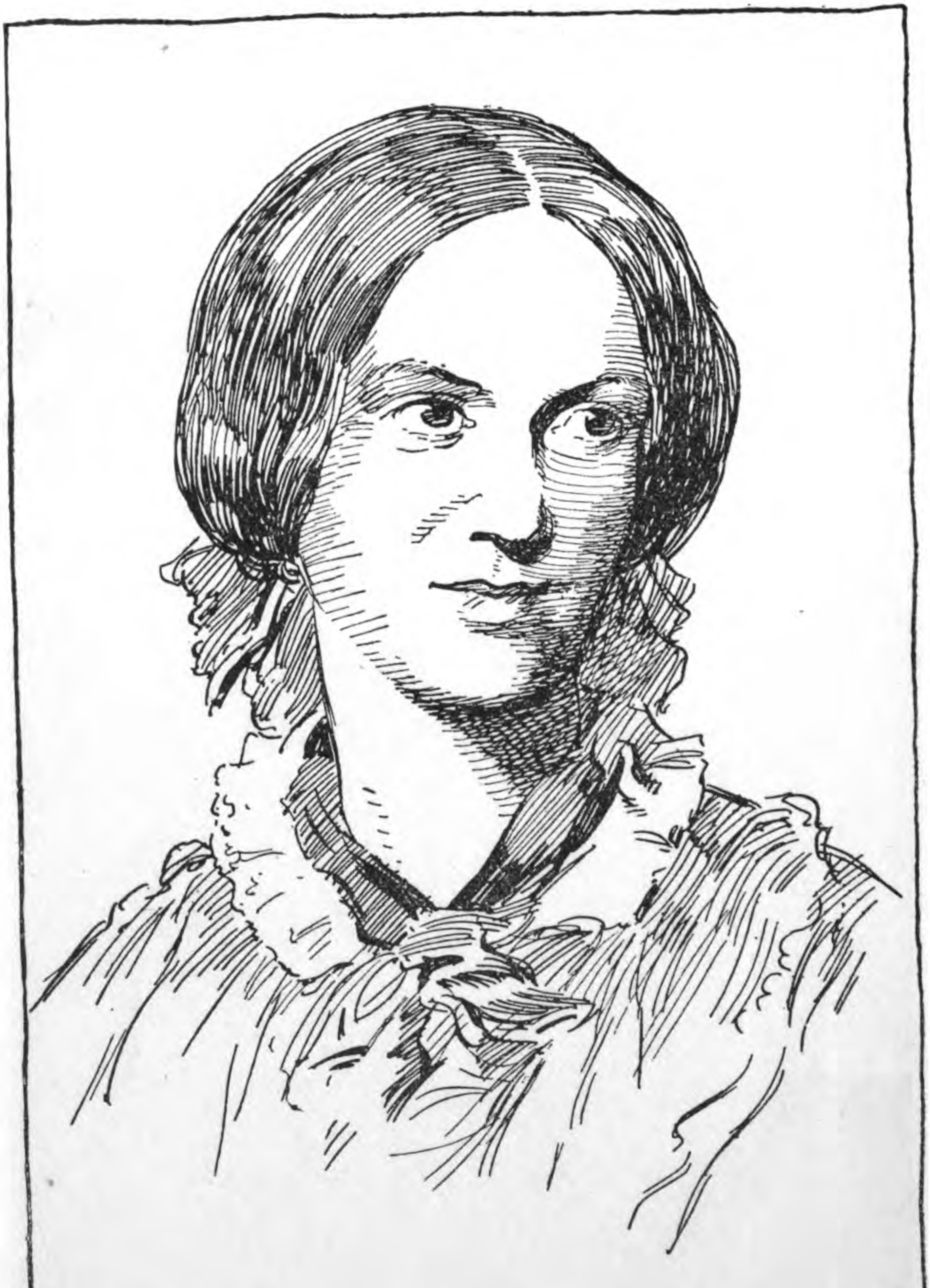
AGNES GREY
BRONTË POEMS



CHARLOTTE BRONTË

From a chalk drawing by George Richmond, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

AGNES GREY *by* ANNE BRONTË

POEMS *by* CHARLOTTE EMILY & ANNE BRONTË

with

THE BRONTËS *by* FLORA MASSON

Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.
London Edinburgh New York
Toronto and Paris

The Brontë sisters were born at Thornton, Yorkshire, Charlotte on April 21, 1816, Emily on July 30, 1818, and Anne on January 17, 1820. They spent a great part of their lives at Haworth, Yorkshire, of which their father was perpetual curate. Their earlier poems and novels were published under the pseudonyms of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Emily died at Haworth on December 19, 1848, Anne at Scarborough on May 28, 1849, and Charlotte (who married Rev. A. Nicholls in 1854) at Haworth on March 31, 1855.

Charlotte Brontë's novels are "Jane Eyre" (1847), "Shirley" (1849), "Villette" (1853), and "The Professor" (1857).

Emily Brontë's one novel is "Wuthering Heights" (1847).

Anne Brontë's novels are "Agnes Grey" (1847) and "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall" (1848).

"Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell" appeared in 1846.

A number of stories, poems, etc., were published posthumously.

All the works named above are included in these Classics.

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CHARLOTTE BRONTË

From a chalk drawing by George Richmond, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

ANNE BRONTË

From a pen drawing by Edgar Holloway after a miniature in the Brontë Museum.

EMILY BRONTË

From a pen drawing by Edgar Holloway after the painting by Patrick Branwell Brontë in the National Portrait Gallery.

THE BRONTËS

THE BRONTËS

THEIR LIFE AND WORK

By

FLORA MASSON

Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.
London Edinburgh New York
Toronto and Paris

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THE BRONTËS

I.

THE PARSON AND HIS WIFE.

THERE is no doubt that the Brontës were a very eccentric family. " Do not underrate her oddity," was the advice given by a friend of Charlotte Brontë to Sir Wemyss Reid when he was writing his *Monograph* of the novelist. With all the changes in our literary taste and standards, neither the Brontë oddity nor the Brontë genius seems likely to be underrated to-day. Though there is no one living now to remember the " rush for copies " of *Jane Eyre*, or the intensity of feeling produced by *Villette*, the Brontë novels keep their place high among English classics; new editions are still appearing, and within the last year or two not only biographies, literary essays, and psychological studies, but plays and novels, have been published about the Brontës, their lives and work. There seems to be a vital fascination about the Brontë family—their genius, their crudities, their strong affections, their sufferings and triumphs—all the human emotions that were pent up in a bleak home on the Yorkshire moors nearly a century ago.

Genius, eccentricity, and disease too often, as we know, dwell together; but surely never did they keep closer company than under the roof of that old stone parsonage at Haworth, on the windswept Yorkshire moors. The genius and the eccentricity seem to have come from the Irish, peasant-born father and the line of wild-blooded, rhapsodic Celts behind him. The disease—for the Brontë family was to be riddled by consumption, to live out its days in its generation and become extinct under that same parsonage roof—was the sadder heritage from the gentle little Cornish mother, who never saw Penzance and her own people again after she met and married her handsome Irish curate in the summer of 1812, when she was on a visit to her " uncle, aunt, and Cousin Jane " in Yorkshire.

It is so easy to be wise after the event, to shake one's head over a marriage that took place so many years ago, and proved to be not a particularly happy one. If Miss Maria Branwell of Penzance, in that summer of 1812, had said " No " to the Reverend Patrick Brontë, B.A., curate of Hartshead-cum-Clifton, those six little delicate Brontës would not have been brought into the world at the rate of one a year, and left motherless, to toddle hand-in-hand about the Haworth moors. But then, neither would there have been any " Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell " ; there would have been no Brontë novels to be discovered by Messrs. Smith & Elder, no Brontë story to tell, no " Brontë cult."

But Miss Maria Branwell said " Yes "—a demure little yes, but quite audible and firmly spoken ; a pathetic little packet of love-letters survives to tell the tale. And in saying that word she sealed her own fate, and earned her own little niche, by contributing one of its most passionately human chapters to the history of our literature.

When the Reverend Patrick Brontë made love to Miss Maria Branwell, he was thirty-five, a B.A. of Cambridge, handsome, clever, eloquent, and very ambitious. Like his famous compatriot, Father O'Flynn, Mr. Brontë had " a way wid 'im," which had already materially smoothed his path in life. One wonders how much he told his Maria about those united parishes of Drumballyroney and Drumgooland, in County Down, and the poor little thatched Irish cabin where he was born, which his parents rented for something like sixpence a week. For Patrick Brontë's parents were very poor people indeed, and Patrick was the eldest of their ten sturdy children. His mother, Alice McClory, a village beauty and a Roman Catholic, had made a runaway Protestant marriage; and Hugh Brunty or Brontee, her husband, was a forceful character, robust and illiterate, a genius in his way, and a kind of celebrity among his neighbours. When he met Alice McClory, Hugh Brontë was working at a lime-kiln; but after their marriage he seems to have set up a corn-kiln in the kitchen of their cabin, where his beautiful wife also plied her spinning-wheel. Alice McClory's smile, it is said, "would have tamed a mad bull." It was to "Brontë's kiln" the neighbours brought their oats to be roasted, and there also they would gather of nights to listen, by the red glow of the furnace, while Hugh Brontë told his wonderful stories—some of them so weird and blood-curdling that the simple villagers were afraid to go home in the dark.*

Patrick Brontë, red-headed, and the eldest of ten, had been brought up a hand-loom weaver; but he was a very clever boy, a staunch young Ulster Protestant, under the village-ban of a "mixed marriage." With the help of Andrew Harshaw, a Presbyterian schoolmaster in the neighbourhood, he had managed to learn some Latin and Greek and a little Euclid. He bought and borrowed books—Milton's *Paradise Lost* among them—and at sixteen "Master Brontë" found himself in the proud position of teacher in the Presbyterian village school at Glascar Hill. On the advice of his Presbyterian friend, he joined the Episcopalians; and a year or two later Mr. Tighe, the rector of Drumgooland, appointed him teacher in his parish school. Not only that—he was engaged to give private lessons to the little Tighes and the children of "another local magnate" in the drawing-room of the Drumgooland rectory; and from the rectory drawing-room it was but a step to the gates of St. John's College, Cambridge.

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* Dr. Wright's *The Brontës in Ireland*.

And so in 1802, at five-and-twenty, Patrick Brontë had said good-bye to Ireland. He did very well at St. John's—gained three exhibitions, and took his B.A. in 1806. And when all England was making ready for Bonaparte and a French invasion, and a university volunteer corps was hurriedly raised at Cambridge, the young Irishman found himself drilling in congenial company, shoulder to shoulder with Lord Palmerston. No sooner was he ordained than a curacy was found for him in the little village of Wethersfield, in Essex, his vicar being no less a person than the Cambridge Regius Professor of Civil Law. And at Wethersfield the young Irishman fell in love.

Mary Burder, Patrick Brontë's first love, was the pretty daughter of a well-to-do Essex farmer, lately dead; and she was the niece of the old lady in whose house, just opposite the Norman church with its green copper spire, the new curate had taken up his abode. For a brief space the two young people were in paradise; and then Mary Burder's uncle and guardian, an angry man, came down on them, and carried Mary Burder off, virtually a prisoner, to his own house. The curate's messages and letters were intercepted, and when after a time the girl was allowed to return to Wethersfield, the curate was gone. A little packet of her letters to him was returned to her, from which, when she opened it, there dropped out " a small card, with her lover's face in profile," and—Oh, Patrick, Patrick! —the words beneath it, " Mary, you have torn the heart,—spare the face ! " *

It is not known whether, when he left Essex in 1809, Patrick Brontë carried his torn heart and handsome face back to Drumballyroney, in County Down. By general report, he never went back to Ireland after he left it in 1802; but there is a local tradition that he

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* Augustine Birrell's *Charlotte Brontë.*

did go home, and that he preached at least one sermon in Drumballyroney Church before a full congregation of admiring friends and neighbours—"a gran' sermon, and never had anything in his han' the whole time." However this may be, Patrick Brontë was not a bad son or brother. His first letter from Cambridge had carried with it a half-sovereign under the seal, and so long as his mother lived he managed to send her £20 a year. He kept up occasional correspondence—a little formal and dignified, as befitted his cloth—with his numerous brothers and sisters in County Down. More than once he helped them, and in his solitary old age, when he was making his modest will, he remembered them all.

The rejected suitor found other curacies. In 1811 he was curate of Hartshead-cum-Clifton—"a very handsome fellow, full of Irish enthusiasm, and with something of an Irishman's capability of falling easily in love." * He had always been fond of books, especially of poetry. Some of his own verses had been recited by his little pupils in the village school at Drumballyroney. At Hartshead he made a collection of his poems, and the volume, *Cottage Poems*, bound in vellum, was published at Halifax in 1811. But Hartshead knew him not only as a good-looking Irish curate who wrote poetry. Those were troublous times in the West Riding; "industrial unrest" was abroad then, with a vengeance. Patrick Brontë, living in the very midst of the Luddite risings—Cartwright's Mill was only three miles from Hartshead—was soon known as one of the Tory clergy of the neighbourhood, who fearlessly stood for the authority of the law when the local magistrates were afraid to interfere. It was in this year, 1812, that Mr. Brontë began to carry about with him a loaded pistol, for self-preservation in his long, solitary walks—a habit that was continued all his life. "It lay on his dressing-table with his watch," says Mrs. Gaskell; "with his watch it was put on in the morning; with his watch it was taken off at night." As Mr. Brontë lived to a good old age, and is not known to have killed any one, he must have been a careful man.

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë.*

This, then, was the curate of Hartshead-cum-Clifton, who in the summer of 1812 met and fell in love with Miss Maria Branwell of Penzance.

She was twenty-nine—several years older than Mary Burder—" extremely small in person, not pretty, but very elegant." Her father, a much-respected merchant in Penzance, was dead ; but her home was in Penzance, and when she met Mr. Brontë she was on a visit to an uncle, Mr. Fennell, a clergyman who then kept a boys' school in the neighbourhood of Hartshead.

It was a very happy summer. " Cousin Jane " was already engaged to Mr. Morgan, another young curate ; and there was at least one romantic picnic at Kirkstall Abbey, with Mr. Morgan and Mr. Brontë in admiring attendance. Maria Branwell was a demure little person, but she was not wanting in spirit. She was, in fact, remarkably well educated for her day, and, as her letters show, had quite a literary gift of her own. " For some years," she explained to her lover in one of her letters, " I have been perfectly my own mistress, subject to no control whatever " ; and she makes her shy little boast that at home, in Penzance, she had always been the small pivot on which her family had habitually turned. And for this very reason, she assures him, she had often herself felt the need of a " guide and instructor." Charming, old-world letters are those of Maria Branwell to Patrick Brontë in the summer of 1812.* Long years after, when Charlotte Brontë had become famous as the author of *Jane Eyre*, her father put them into her hands, " telling me they were mamma's, and that I might read them." And she did read them, " in a frame of mind I cannot describe. . . . There is a rectitude," she wrote, " a refinement, a constancy, a modesty, a sense, a gentleness about them indescribable."

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* Clement Shorter's *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle.*

It cost Maria Branwell something, as may be seen in these little love-letters, to give up the home and the people she loved so much. But she does give them up; the prospect of being the companion of this brilliant Irishman's pilgrimage seems to her more delightful than anything this world can present. After a brief courtship, she and Cousin Jane are to be married on the same day; the wedding-cake is being made at home. Uncle Fennell, unlike Uncle Burder, gave his daughter and his niece away. The Rev. Mr. Morgan married Brontë to Maria, and then the Rev. Mr. Brontë "performed the same kind office" for Morgan and Cousin Jane.

Did the gentle little woman ever know that there had been another romance in an Essex village, where the church had a green copper spire that glittered in the sun? Did she ever realize that she had caught her brilliant lover, the "Guide and Instructor," the "Beloved Friend," the "*Dear, Saucy Pat*" of those faded love-letters—on the rebound?

II.

HAWORTH.

MR. AND MRS. BRONTË remained at Hartshead for three years after their marriage, and from there they moved to Thornton, near Bradford, where the Morgans were already settled. The two eldest children, Maria and Elizabeth, were born at Hartshead, and the other four, Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne, at Thornton. Anne was a baby in 1820, when once more the little family was on the move—this time to the old stone parsonage at Haworth, that was afterwards to be so famous as the home of the Brontës.

Haworth may not have been exactly the parish of Patrick Brontë's dreams. In his stirring college days this ardent young Ulster Protestant, an excellent shot, and drilling shoulder to shoulder with the flower of British aristocracy, had perhaps conjured up his own fair vision of a Church militant; and Haworth was a straggling parish of hamlets, high up on the Yorkshire moors, four miles from Keighley and ten miles from Bradford; and in those days, when there were no railways and no motors, when there was not even a bicycle for a poor perpetual curate with a large family, Haworth must have seemed pretty well cut off from the world. The village was a single irregular street, bleak and stony, built on the side of a hill, with the moors stretching away behind it—a village " embedded in the moors." Its inhabitants were mostly woollen weavers, and of a very different type from the easy-going, rural population of Drumballyroney in County Down: strong-headed, independent, rough-spoken men and women these, who could hold their own with any parson that came among them. In fact, Haworth bade fair to be a stormy parish. The appointment was in the hands of the vicar of Bradford and trustees; and Mr. Brontë's immediate predecessor, Mr. Redhead, who had been appointed without the sanction of the trustees, had been very warmly received. For three successive Sundays there had been uproarious rioting in Haworth Church, till on his third, and last, appearance Mr. Redhead had been forced to escape from the pulpit to the Black Bull Inn, and thence, by the back-door, on horseback along the Keighley road, the turnpike gates being shut behind him to keep back an infuriated mob.

This was the pleasant parish to which Mr. Brontë—a good fighting parson, as we know—had been appointed; but this time vicar and trustees were agreed, and order had been miraculously restored in Haworth Church. " A lawless, yet not unkindly, population," Mrs. Gaskell calls them; and Mr. Brontë seems, from the time he came among them, to have commanded their respect, if he did not succeed in awaking their religious fervour.

The eighteenth-century church, once famous as the scene of Grimshaw's fanaticism and Wesley's eloquence, was now hard pressed by the Baptist and Methodist chapels grown up about it; and they were all more or less dominated by the Black Bull Inn in their midst. Drinking, cock-fighting, "arvills," and other rough, north-country practices still prevailed among the people of Haworth.

But Mr. Brontë was a man of forty-three, with six young children—five of them girls—and a delicate wife. If he had thought to add a little to his income by literature, he had been disappointed. His little literary ventures in poetry and prose—*The Rural Ministry; The Cottage in the Wood, or the Art of becoming Rich and Happy; The Maid of Killarney, or Albion and Flora*—had all fallen rather flat; they were probably all back on his hands as "remainders" before he accepted the living of Haworth. Mrs. Brontë, poor little woman, had done her best to encourage his literary efforts; she had even written something herself—a paper called "The Advantages of Poverty in Religious Concerns"—intended "for insertion in one of the periodical publications." But this was apparently never "placed"; and the neat little manuscript, carefully preserved among her husband's papers, came into Charlotte Brontë's hands with the faded packet of her mother's love-letters.

And so the living of Haworth was not to be despised. It offered security of tenure, a parsonage-house, and an income of nearly £200 a year; and, with his wife's annuity of £50, this was enough to live upon. One day in February 1820 seven heavily laden carts bearing the new parson's worldly goods lumbered through Haworth village towards the church and parsonage—the "long, low, oblong, stone parsonage," with its flagged roof, its garden, treeless and bleak, and its background of moors. The churchyard, full of upright gravestones, came ominously close up against two sides of the house.

Anne, the month-old baby, was christened soon after their arrival at Haworth. Mr. Morgan came from

Bradford to officiate—probably accompanied by Cousin Jane. If so, Anne's christening was one of the last of those demure little clerical festivities—reminder of the picnic at Kirkstall Abbey and all the other pleasant incidents of their double courtship in the summer of 1812. For soon afterwards Mrs. Brontë was very ill, and her illness—an internal cancer—made it impossible for her to have the children much with her in the sick-room; and so it was that the little things were sent out, the seven-year-old Maria in charge, hand-in-hand on to the fresh, wild moors. And the parson tramped his parish, returning to his solitary meal, or to his wife's sick-room, and to the window from which he could watch for the little fledgling brood coming deviously homeward in the sunset. A woman from the village came to help their one little servant, Nancy Garrs, and Mr. Brontë "would allow nobody to take the night-nursing except himself."

"The companion of his pilgrimage," she had called herself! Perhaps their married life had not been altogether happy. Perhaps the quiet little woman, who had been "perfectly her own mistress," and "subject to no control whatever," had found her brilliant Irishman a difficult man to live with. For Patrick Brontë was a man of contradictions. He was a son of the soil, with the tastes and habits of a scholar, a self-made man, stoically independent, and a Tory to the backbone. He was a man of laudable ambitions, violent prejudices, and some rather petty foibles. Nature had not intended him for a parson; he was far more fitted to be a soldier, or a fighting politician. At forty-three he was beginning to feel that the world was not giving him the recognition he deserved; and, perhaps all the more because of this, he was a man who liked to be "master in his own house"—which usually means having his own way in little things.

But, such as he was, he was her brilliant Irishman, her lord and master, to the end. It is not fair to suppose that Maria Branwell ever regretted marrying Mr.

Brontë. Many stories have been told of his tempestuous ways, his tyrannical temper—how, on one occasion, he burnt the children's shoes; how, on another, he cut up his wife's new gown. Most of these stories are allowed to have been the gossip of the kitchen and the village, and a good deal exaggerated in the telling; but, even so, how human they are after all! Those little domestic broils—who does not remember Mrs. Carlyle's anger and obstinacy when her poor mother filled the candlesticks with wax-candles on the occasion of some little Carlylean festivity? And who does not remember her lifelong remorse? Perhaps Mr. Brontë did lose his temper when the worthy Morgans, from the affluence of their Bradford living, sent those little shoes to the children, so much too smart for the children of a poor country clergyman to wear! And as for the story about Mrs. Brontë's buff print dress, which her husband cut up because he disliked "balloon" sleeves—does not that type of man always interfere about his wife's dress? There was another devoted autocrat who insisted on accompanying his wife to her dressmaker's, and when he got there, waved his hand majestically and explained, "This lady wishes to be measured for a suit of clothes." By Nancy Garr's account, Mr. Brontë made his amends by trudging all the way to Keighley and bringing home under his arm a piece of silk for another, better gown. In those eight years during which she had accompanied his pilgrimage, his wife must have learnt that Patrick Brontë's pace was not quite suited to her own: she must have been well accustomed to his little ways. "Look, Nancy, what master has done!" she cried, carrying into the kitchen her buff print gown, from which the balloon sleeves had been so ruthlessly cut away. "Never mind; this falls to your share, Nancy."

And so to the last. "Ought I not to be thankful," she would say, "that he never gave me an angry word?" And perhaps, when she said it, she believed she was speaking the truth. Blessed are the meek. Towards the end of her life she liked to be raised up in bed to watch the nurse clean her bedroom grate, " because she did it as it was done in Cornwall."

III.

THE TRAGEDY OF COWAN BRIDGE.

EVERYBODY is agreed that the little Brontës were extraordinarily precocious children, and that after their mother's death they clung together in a wonderful fashion. Maria, at seven years old, was quite capable of mothering the other children. She was " grave, thoughtful, and quiet, to a degree far beyond her years." There was no nursery at the parsonage, but a little extra room upstairs had even then come to be known as " the children's study." Here little Maria would sit and read the newspaper, and afterwards ladle out to the others all sorts of information about politics, home and foreign, and the public characters of the day. The little Brontës—five girls and one boy—had few toys and no children's books, but they read the books in Mr. Brontë's study, and anything else that came in their way ; and they acted little plays of their own, taking for their characters their various heroes in politics and history. They would dispute as to the " comparative merits " of Wellington, Bonaparte, Hannibal, and Cæsar. When their arguments became too hot, the parson would stalk in among them as " arbitrator " ; and " in the management of these concerns " the widower would tell himself that his children were surely more precocious and cleverer than any children he had ever known before.

It was possibly the sight of Maria, at eight years old, reading the *Leeds Intelligencer*, with her little legs crossed, and the baby Anne " picking out the politicians of the day," that induced Mr. Brontë to write the letter—if, indeed, he ever did write that letter—to his old flame

Mary Burder, at Wethersfield in Essex. For Mary Burder, who afterwards married Mr. Sibree, minister of the Wethersfield meeting-house, was still unmarried when Mrs. Brontë died in September 1821. The twelve years that had gone by since her flirtation with the Irish curate had passed lightly over Mary Burder's pretty head. She had had other suitors—among them Mr. Sibree. When she was quite an old lady, she told her daughter that, after Mrs. Brontë's death, Mr. Brontë wrote her a letter asking her if she would marry him and be the mother of his children. But Mary Burder had no mind to marry a widower with six little ones, and about a year after she received Mr. Brontë's letter she married Mr. Sibree.* It must have been about this time that Miss Elizabeth Branwell, Mrs. Brontë's elder sister, went to Haworth to take charge of Mr. Brontë's household and her dead sister's children.

Miss Branwell was a dignified little lady of the olden school, who had lived all her life at Penzance. Like her sister, she had her own little annuity of £50 a year. She was rather prim in manner, dressed always in silk gowns, with a large cap, and a " front " of light auburn curls on her forehead. She used a gold eyeglass attached to a long gold chain, and she took snuff out of a pretty little gold snuffbox, which she liked to hand to her friends, with a little laugh of enjoyment at their look of momentary discomfiture. She, too, was a great reader. On summer afternoons and in the long winter evenings she used to read aloud to her brother-in-law. At tea-time they would discuss what they had been reading, and on these occasions it was noticed that Miss Branwell " tilted argument without fear against Mr. Brontë." Poor little lady, she did her best. She missed the charms of Penzance society ; in her time she had been one of its belles. At Haworth there was no society at all, from one year's end to the other. The moorland roads were rough, and the clergymen who occasionally came to the parsonage on clerical business did not bring the ladies of their family with them. The climate of the north did not suit Miss Branwell; she felt the parsonage cold and damp, and went clicking about the house on pattens, afraid of taking chills on the stone-flagged floors. In summer the heathery moors, so passionately loved by the Brontë children, were pleasant enough walking, even for a prim little maiden lady in a silk gown; but in winter, when storms swept over the moors and howled about the parsonage, Miss Branwell would shiver, and talk affectionately of Penzance.

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* Augustine Birrell's *Charlotte Brontë.*

About three years after his wife's death, Mr. Brontë decided on sending his daughters to Cowan Bridge School. It was an inexpensive school, recently started, for the daughters of poor clergymen, in a village on the coach-road between Leeds and Kendal—the Leeds and Kendal coach stopped at Keighley, which was only four miles from Haworth. The terms were manageable—only £14 a year for each child, with a small additional sum for books and clothing. The little girls wore a uniform dress and cloak, and plain straw cottage bonnets. As may be imagined, the school was not entirely self-supporting. An annual sum, to be raised by subscription, was to pay for the education, while the fees were to cover board and lodging. The treasurer, secretary, and originator of the whole scheme was the Rev. Carus Wilson of Casterton Hall, near Kirby Lonsdale. Such a school was greatly needed, and, almost before it was opened, many children's names had been put down for vacancies as they should occur. Little wonder that Mr. Brontë and his sister-in-law, poring together over the "Regulations" of a school that promised "a solid and sufficient English education," should think it the very place for the little girls who, unless they married curates, must all earn their own livelihood some day; and, clever as they were, the children had as yet learnt nothing "systematically."

And so in July 1824, the infant prodigies being just recovered from measles and whooping-cough, Mr. Brontë himself took the two eldest, Maria and Elizabeth, to Cowan Bridge, and a month or two later he went again, taking with him Charlotte and Emily.

Cowan Bridge must have been a pretty place in summer. The school was an enlarged cottage, long and bow-windowed, standing in its own garden, and the little hamlet on the roadside was built about a bridge over the Leck—a stream overgrown with alders, willows, and hazel-nuts. The school itself was run on economical lines, for in those first months of its existence the " subscriptions " were scarcely as yet forthcoming. The dietary looked, on paper, plentiful and wholesome enough. The breakfast of porridge, the supper of bread-and-milk, the joints, baked and boiled, the " potato pie " and plain, wholesome puddings—what could be better ? Mr. Carus Wilson ordered in the food, engaged the teachers and the servants, inspected the school, interviewed the cook—in fact, did all that a " mere man " could do to ensure that this school for little girls was properly managed. Alas ! the cook was dirty, careless, and extravagant ; the house was damp, the dormitories were ill-ventilated. The church (where Mr. Carus Wilson himself preached) was more than two miles' walk from the school, and was unwarmed in winter. The children were afraid to complain to the teachers ; the teachers were afraid to complain to Mr. Carus Wilson. It was hard enough discipline for robust children ; for Maria Brontë, the little, delicate, old-fashioned girl who had mothered the other children ever since she was seven years old, it was positive martyrdom. In the eight months she spent at Cowan Bridge, Maria Brontë pined and drooped. Her cough became so bad that her little side was blistered, and she could scarcely drag herself out of her dormitory bed and dress herself in the cold winter mornings.

Early in 1825 an epidemic of low fever broke out in the school. The little Brontës did not have the fever, but Maria was anyhow so ill that the school authorities became frightened, and Mr. Brontë—who had known nothing of his child's condition—was suddenly sent for to take her home. Her school companions—her three little sisters among them—stood out on the roadside by the bridge over the Leck, an awestruck little band, to watch the Leeds coach carry the parson and his dying child away. Maria Brontë died at home on May 6th; a fortnight later, Elizabeth was sent home ill, and the very next day, June 1st, Mr. Brontë sent for, or fetched, the other two children, Charlotte and Emily. Elizabeth died on June 15th. Maria and Elizabeth died of what was in those days vaguely diagnosed as "rapid decline." They were both buried with their mother in Haworth Church.

IV.

THE BRONTË CHILDREN AT HOME.

ONCE more the Brontë children—the four that were left—found themselves together in the "children's study." Nancy Garrs had been succeeded by "Tabby," a woman belonging to Haworth village, who was to be an inmate of the parson's family for thirty years. Tabby was a strong character, a typical Yorkshire woman, and during her long and faithful service she came to be regarded as one of the Brontë family. She ruled in the parsonage kitchen, and looked after the children too, in her rough and kindly fashion. Aunt Branwell, as time went on, lived more and more in her own room upstairs, where she was surrounded by her little possessions—her "Indian work-box," her "japanned dressing-box," and the other souvenirs of her Cornish home. There Charlotte, Emily, and Anne came for their regular morning lessons. Miss Branwell was an accomplished needlewoman; hers were the days of the sampler and the fine muslin tuck. She mapped out methodically the children's "plan of the day"; and the girls grew up good needlewomen, and were all taught to take their share in the housework, especially the ironing and bread-baking that seem to have been always going on at the parsonage. The one boy—Branwell, as he was called in the family, though his name was Patrick Branwell—was his aunt's favourite; and from all accounts Branwell Brontë was a very clever and "taking" child, with the handsome face and the red head and the same ebullient, winning ways that his Irish father had before him. In fact, father, aunt, and sisters—everybody at Haworth parsonage—combined to adore Branwell Brontë. Their hopes were centred on him, the one boy among so many girls; while among the rough Haworth folk "t' vicar's Patrick" was trotted out for his cleverness and his wonderful and pretty ways, from the time when he was first big enough to run off and make friends for himself in Haworth village.

The parson was strongly advised to send his son to school; but his own boyhood was still fresh in his memory. For all his dignified bearing, with his chin wrapped in his voluminous clerical cravat, he had not forgotten those evenings, after his day's work at the hand-loom, spent among the books in Andrew Harshaw's little cottage study. He had been a village schoolmaster himself before he worked his way to Cambridge and was ordained a parson. Perhaps, too, he had had enough of "inexpensive schools for the children of poor clergymen." Anyhow, Mr. Brontë thought that, with a little assistance from the Haworth grammar school, he could educate his boy himself. He little knew what he was laying up for his old age!

Life at the parsonage was curiously uneventful. The parson breakfasted with his children, and the meal was conversational, if not hilarious. The breakfast itself was of the simplest—oatmeal porridge, of which the dogs had a generous share. The girls learnt their lessons in their aunt's room, the boy his in his father's study. The parson was punctual in the performance of his parochial duties; but he knew too much of the Yorkshire character to attempt to "mell" with his parishioners, and his sermons were extempore and always short. He had plenty of time for long, solitary tramps on the moors; and the moors were so wild in his day that he told Mrs. Gaskell he had seen "eagles stooping low in search of food for their young." Mr. Brontë always dined alone in his study, and Miss Branwell usually presided over the family dinner—another very simple meal, consisting always of a joint, baked or boiled, and a milk pudding. Tea-time at the parsonage was another conversational meal. It was a strongly political household, Tory and anti-Catholic, and there was never any lack of talk where Mr. Brontë was. "Papa" and Branwell used to walk to Keighley for the newspaper, the *Leeds Intelligencer*, "a most excellent Tory newspaper," and a family friend. But the parson took also the Whig *Leeds Mercury*, and they saw *John Bull*—described as "high Tory, very violent." *Blackwood's Magazine* was lent them by a neighbour, and the children had been taught to regard it with veneration as "the most able periodical there is." Sometimes, in this remote village, the parson's family was literally absorbed in politics. There were times when they could think and talk of nothing but "the great Catholic question"; the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel; the culminating scene in the House of Lords, with the royal dukes in their robes; the "Great Duke," in green sash and waistcoat, standing up to read his speech, and all the peeresses fluttering up like doves. Aunt thought Mr. Peel's terms excellent—the Catholics "could do no harm with such good security"—and papa said the Duke of Wellington's words were "like precious gold." * Who shall say that little girls are not born politicians?

But at other times the Brontë children would gather, in the dusk of cold winter afternoons, round the kitchen fire—that dear old stone-flagged kitchen where Tabby reigned supreme, and little Anne was allowed to kneel upon a chair to watch the hot cakes lifted from the oven. Here, in the firelight—for Tabby was sparing of candles—they planned out their "Play of the Islanders." Each child chose an island, and peopled it with the great men of literature and history; and gradually "Tales of the Islanders" grew to be quite a lengthy work, filling four volumes, and becoming a part of their strange young lives; for by this time all four children were inveterate little scribblers in prose and verse. Their "Little Magazines" were written, booklet after booklet, in a handwriting so small that it cannot be read without the help of a magnifying glass. They included dramas, poems, and romances, as many as 35,000 words being written in eighteen pages—"an immense amount of manuscript," says Mrs. Gaskell, "in an incredibly small space."

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

It is perhaps worth while remembering here that those were the days of the Annuals. Popular literature was at rather a low ebb, and many devices were resorted to to make one Annual outshine another. The *Bijou Almanac* for 1837—dedicated to Queen Adelaide—was bound in gilt vellum, enclosed in a purple velvet case, and *sold with a magnifying glass;* so the Brontë children were only a year or two in advance of their time when they invented their "little writing," and filled their booklets with manuscript that cannot be deciphered by the naked eye. They had, however, no gilt vellum bindings. They wrote usually in little penny or twopenny books; but now and then the parson would bring them home a present of a sixpenny book, and inside the cover of this they would find inscribed, "*All that is written in this book must be in a good, plain, legible hand.—P. B.*"

They were all hero-worshippers, and their heroes for the most part were Toriest of the Tory. The Duke of Wellington was a kind of hereditary hero-in-chief. He permeated almost everything that Charlotte Brontë wrote; and not he only, but his sons—Lord Charles

Albert Florian Wellesley and the Marquis of Douro—were always cropping up all through the "Little Magazines," as either heroes of romance, or as the imaginary authors of the manuscripts themselves; while their father, the Iron Duke, lounged at his ease in an arm-chair in Downing Street, "smoking a homely tobacco-pipe, for he disdained all the modern frippery of cigars." And it was so with their toys and games; the Duke was always of the company.

The parson had come home late one night from Leeds, bringing a box of soldiers for Branwell; and before breakfast the next morning each child had selected one particular soldier, named it, and surrounded it with romance. "This is the Duke of Wellington! This shall be the Duke!" cried Charlotte. She had chosen "the prettiest of the whole, and the tallest, and the most perfect in every part."

These children may have led very simple lives; they were only the children of a poor country clergyman—but who shall say that the childhood of the Brontës was unhappy?

V.

MISS WOOLER'S SCHOOL.

Miss Wooler's school, to which Charlotte Brontë was sent in January 1831, was one of those happy and well-managed "boarding-schools for young ladies" that really did exist in the days before the university education of women. "Roehead," as it was called, was a country house, standing in a large field, with lawn and trees about it, off the Leeds and Huddersfield highroad, about twenty miles from Haworth. Miss Wooler's pupils—some eight or nine girls—were most of them daughters of well-to-do families in the neighbourhood. Among them were Ellen Nussey of "the Rydings," Birstall, and Mary and Martha Taylor, whose family lived at the Red House, Gomersal. Miss Wooler, a plump, dignified little woman, has been described as in appearance "like a lady abbess." She wore well-fitting white embroidered gowns, exquisitely neat at throat and wrists, and her hair was plaited to form a coronet, from which long ringlets fell to her shoulders. She was a kind-hearted, sensible woman, and motherly to her girls, and she seems to have been a born teacher. On Saturday half-holidays she herself took her pupils for long walks. She knew her neighbourhood thoroughly, and many were the "true stories" she could tell the girls, as they trooped with her along the lanes, of the romantic old houses of the West Riding gentry, with their duels and their ghosts, and the not less romantic woollen factories—Cartwright's famous mill among them—rich in more recent memories. From Miss Wooler the girls heard all about the Luddite riots, the mill-workers' hatred of machinery, the secret nightly drilling of desperate men on those Yorkshire moors. Miss Wooler was a very benevolent person—life governor, in her time, of several charitable institutions, though her income was never a large one. Her personal sympathies were with Church and State, but the neighbourhood was strongly Nonconformist. At Roehead, the one or two pupils who were true-blue Tories and Churchwomen were more than held in check by the brilliant little red-hot Nonconformist Radicals. Among the former was Ellen Nussey of "the Rydings," while Mary and Martha Taylor, from Gomersal, were fiery little Radicals. "We used to be furious politicians," says Mary Taylor, writing of those school-days, "as one could hardly help being in 1832." *

It was to this school that Charlotte Brontë came on a cold day in January 1831, when Mary Taylor, watching from the window, first saw her future friend "coming out of a covered cart, in very old-fashioned clothes, and looking very cold and miserable."

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*.

"When she appeared in the schoolroom her dress was changed, but just as old. She looked a little old woman, so short-sighted that she always appeared to be seeking something, and moving her head from side to side to catch a sight of it. She was very shy and nervous, and spoke with a strong Irish accent. When a book was given her, she dropped her head over it till her nose nearly touched it; and when she was told to hold her head up, up went the book after it, still close to her nose, so that it was not possible to help laughing." *

But Ellen Nussey, the quiet, gentle-mannered English girl, stole up behind the little new-comer on that first day of her arrival among them, when she was "standing by the schoolroom window, looking out on the snowy landscape and crying, while all the rest were at play." Ellen Nussey, also, thought her an odd-looking little creature; but somehow the two girls were drawn together. There, in that bow-window, looking out on the snow, Ellen Nussey was "allowed to give sympathy." It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship.

Of course Charlotte Brontë was found to be "not well grounded." It was an awful moment when Miss Wooler proposed putting her into the junior class till she could "overtake the girls of her own age." Charlotte Brontë cried so bitterly that the schoolmistress saw she had made a mistake, and put her into the first class, trusting to the girl's own ambition to push her into line with the others. And, if she were not "well grounded," Charlotte Brontë was able to teach her schoolfellows things hitherto undreamed of in Roehead philosophy. They found she already knew all the poetry they "had to learn by heart," and could give them short biographies of all the poets. She drew better than they did, and knew all about the great painters and their pictures. She "picked up every scrap of information concerning painting, sculpture, poetry, music, etc.," says Mary Taylor, "as if it were gold."

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*.

She knew all about the "Ministries" of the day. She explained to the other girls that she had "taken an interest in politics since she was five years old." And of course she trotted out the Duke of Wellington, and shook her head over Sir Robert Peel; and, when they accused her of "always talking about clever people," such as Johnson and Sheridan, she fired up. She was a fiery little mortal when she liked. "Now, you don't know the meaning of *clever*. Sheridan might be clever; yes, Sheridan *was* clever—scamps, often are; but Johnson hadn't a spark of *cleverality* in him." And the girls who had been "well grounded" knew that there was no such word as *cleverality*, and laughed; but they did not follow her distinction.

They left her out of their games of ball—she was too short-sighted and too puny. She used to stand about, or sit in some corner—always with a book under her nose—while they played together. But when they were tired of games, and wanted to listen to "a story," when they wanted to be carried away on the wings of romance—up on the rose-tipped clouds, or down into the dark, mysterious depths of things—then there was nobody like little Charlotte Brontë. So it had been with another, a greater novelist than she, whose infirmity kept him aloof while his companions played lustily in the yard of the old Edinburgh High School, but whose genius, like a magnet, drew them all about him, to listen, breathless, muddy, and open-mouthed, while he strung for them his wonderful romances—the little lame boy, who was to be "the author of *Waverley*," the Wizard of the North. There was nobody like Charlotte Brontë when the girls at Miss Wooler's school were in a mood for romance; for they had discovered that Charlotte Brontë could "make out." What a gift in a girls' boarding-school!

"*Make it out!*" cried Mary Taylor eagerly—even Radicals like a little romance now and then—"*Make it out! I know you can!*"

At night, in the dormitory, the girls would gather about her in the dark, trembling with excitement ; and so powerful was the effect on her dimity-curtained audience that once, at least, poor Miss Wooler, enjoying a quiet hour after the fatigues of the day, was alarmed by a "piercing scream," and hurried upstairs to find that "Charlotte Brontë had been telling them a story," and that one of her enthralled listeners had been "seized with violent palpitations."

And so the odd-looking, painstaking little girl did "overtake" her companions—nay, she became a small authority amongst them ; and so curiously popular was she that on one occasion, when Miss Wooler gave her a bad mark for not knowing her lesson in Blair's *Belles Lettres*, the other pupils—instigated, of course, by the little arch-militant Mary Taylor—actually rebelled on her behalf, and organized a strike. It was unjust to punish Charlotte Brontë, the most studious and dutiful among them. Arbitration failed, and the girls could only be induced to return to work by the unqualified withdrawal of that bad mark.

Thus a year and a half passed, and the day came for Charlotte Brontë to leave Roehead. She had made good progress in French and drawing, and no doubt she had been "well grounded" in everything else. Ellen Nussey's school-days, and Mary and Martha Taylor's also, were coming to a close. The friends were to be separated, to meet again now and then, and to correspond affectionately with each other. Ellen Nussey and Charlotte Brontë were to remain firm friends till death parted them. Ellen Nussey was to keep all her friend's letters—about five hundred—without which no biographer could have understood Charlotte Brontë's character, and no real biography of her could ever have been written. Miss Wooler did not lose sight of her pupils : the day was to come when Charlotte Brontë returned to Roehead as one of Miss Wooler's assistant-teachers. But in the early summer of 1832 there was no thought of this.

VI.

THE PRIDE OF THE FAMILY.

THE chief event at the parsonage, on Charlotte Brontë's home-coming, seems to have been that Aunt Branwell had consented to take in *Fraser's Magazine.* Otherwise, the little family were going on much as usual. The parson was not quite so strong as he used to be ; the aunt was, as usual, indulging in " pleasant reminiscences about the salubrious climate of Penzance." Charlotte, now that she had been " well grounded," was to " instruct " Emily and Anne ; and Mr. Brontë had arranged for a teacher of drawing—one William Robinson, of Leeds, who had been for a somewhat indefinite period a pupil of Sir Thomas Lawrence—to come and give drawing lessons at the parsonage. Charlotte Brontë writes to Ellen Nussey—already her " *dear, dear, dear* Ellen " :—

" An account of one day is an account of all. In the morning, from nine o'clock till half-past twelve, I instruct my sisters and draw ; then we walk till dinner-time. After dinner, I sew till tea-time, and after tea I either write, read, or do a little fancy-work, or draw, as I please. Thus, in one delightful, though somewhat monotonous, course my life is passed. I have been out only twice to tea since I came home. We are expecting company this afternoon, and on Tuesday next we shall have all the female teachers of the Sunday-school to tea."

Evidently the parson and Aunt Branwell were doing their best to provide the young people with a little " social thrill." But the girls were intensely shy and reserved. As " t' vicar's daughters " they taught regularly in the Sunday-school, and a certain amount of visiting fell to their share. But they did not care to knock uninvited at cottage doors ; and it was perhaps as well that tea-parties were few and far between, for " company," as they knew it at Haworth, had few charms for them. They had a positive aversion to strangers; in fact, to quote Mrs. Gaskell's phrase, the Miss Brontës "never faced their kind voluntarily." Charlotte, shy and retiring as she was, had a good deal of spirit. She could be combative on occasion; and, perhaps because she was the eldest, and had been at school, she talked better than the others. Anne, the youngest, was still a queer-looking, timid little thing, promising to be rather pretty; and Emily, with her lank figure and fine eyes, and her passionate love of all dumb creatures, was the least sociable and most taciturn of the three. Augustine Birrell says of Emily Brontë that "her most obvious gift was silence."

But, whatever they were in "company," they found plenty to talk about when they were together. Never were sisters so attached. All their lives they were to be company enough for each other; and so, in their daily walks, they avoided Haworth village, with the opportunities it afforded of "facing their kind," and turned instead towards the fresh, wild moors—their beloved, breezy moors, the nursery of their childhood.

But they had something else to face. No bigger than a man's hand as yet, but already visible on the horizon, must have been the cloud that was to gather over the household, and darken all their lives. "When it has been once written," says Augustine Birrell, "that the Brontës had a brother who was their dream, their delusion, their despair, the rest may be forgotten, or, better still, never known." But Branwell Brontë cannot be forgotten: he played too important a part in the family story for that. A great deal has been written about him, from the time of Charlotte Brontë's death, when the literary world was mourning her as a little russet martyr, down to the uncensorious present day, when men and women are finding too much good in everything. He has been handled too severely, and he has been handled too leniently, for, after all, he is not the first black sheep of a fold, nor the only son of the manse who has taken to evil courses. It is not a very unusual thing to find the boy of a family weaker, morally and mentally, than its daughters. Has nobody ever heard a careworn parent say with a sigh, pointing to a stalwart little girl with a cropped head and far-apart eyes, "*She ought to have been the boy*"? It was so with the Brontë family: the girls—though none of the Brontës were to be called stalwart—were all of stronger mettle than the boy. If it had not been for the place that, in spite of all their handicaps, they made for themselves in our literary history, nobody would have taken any notice of this particular boy's peccadilloes, except the employers who, one after another, were obliged to dismiss him, and the unhappy father and sisters who as often were obliged to take him back under the parsonage roof. He must be classed among the decadents—those creatures on the borderland who, as they develop, or fail to develop, show themselves unstable, unmoral, but who cannot be called insane. The characters of the sisters, who loved Branwell Brontë and bore with him and suffered for him, and especially the indomitable character and genius of little Charlotte Brontë, the eldest—a year older than he—have deflected literary interest on the son of this family. It is as their brother, as a factor in the story of their lives, that the unhappy boy must be remembered—for better, for worse.

If he had had brothers, it has been often asked; if he had been "licked into shape" at a public school; if he had emigrated, or enlisted, or run away to sea, or done anything except grow up at Haworth parsonage, where the parson, and Aunt Branwell, and his sisters, and everybody in Haworth village thought he was going to be a genius, would it have been otherwise with Branwell Brontë? For it must be demoralizing not to be a genius and to be thought one—far more demoralizing than to be a genius and not to be thought one. Branwell Brontë was not a genius, and he was certainly not a manly boy. In his weak, exuberant way he pictured to himself a literary career such as a genius might make for himself, and he wrote a good deal—chiefly verse—after he had outgrown the period of those " Little Magazines," in which Charlotte and he were the chief contributors ; but there was no spark of real genius in his writings, and much of it is morbid, foolish, and hypocritical. He pictured for himself also the career of a great painter, and he talked about art and the Royal Academy, and he took lessons with Mr. Robinson, and painted portraits that are said to have " caught the likeness," but which otherwise were mere daubs. He pursued dreams and bucked at realities ; and the parson and Aunt Branwell and his sisters dreamed with him and for him, and tried one thing after another, doing their very utmost ; for, whatever their mistakes, they loved the boy. All their hopes were set upon him ; he was the pride of the family.

" Sad as remembered kisses after death " is the story of this little red-headed idol of Haworth parsonage. Charlotte Brontë could dimly recall the picture of her mother playing with little Branwell in the evening dusk in the parlour at the parsonage. He must have been three years old then. And he must have been about ten years old when Aunt Branwell gave the children the three volumes of Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather*, recently published, with the little inscription in her own handwriting : " These volumes were written by Sir Walter Scott, and the Hugh Little John mentioned in them is Master Lockhart, grandson to Sir Walter. . . . A New Year's gift by Miss E. B. to her dear little nephew and nieces, Patrick, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë, 1828." *

He could not have been much older when Mr. Brontë came home from Leeds late at night with that box of wooden soldiers for Branwell in his pocket, and Branwell ran across to his sisters' door, before breakfast, to share the toys with them. And he was fifteen when the parson sent him as his sister Charlotte's " escort " on her first visit to Ellen Nussey at " the Rydings." It was a long drive, and the boy and girl drove together in the two-wheeled gig—the only vehicle to be had in Haworth except the " covered cart " that took Charlotte to Roehead. The boy was in a " wild ecstasy with everything." He walked about " in unrestrained boyish enjoyment," making sketches of the turret-roofed house, the rookery behind it, and the old chestnuts on the lawn. " He told his sister he was leaving her in Paradise, and if she were not intensely happy, she never would be." *

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life.*

He was not without boy friends in Haworth, and with one of them especially he used often to go for long rambles on the moors. With him, about this time, he spent a day at Keighley Fair. It was the annual " feast " at Keighley, with the usual gingerbread stalls and spangled shows, the " Pandean pipes " and merry-go-rounds, and all the rest.

" As the evening advanced, and the shows were lighted up, Branwell's excitement, hilarity, and extravagance knew no bounds : he would see everything and try everything. Into a rocking-boat he and his friend gaily stepped. The rise of the boat when it reached its full height gave Branwell a pleasant view of the fair beneath ; but, when it descended, he screamed out at the top of his voice, ' Oh, my nerves ! my nerves ! Oh, my nerves ! ' On each descent, every nerve thrilled, tingled, and vibrated . . ." †

And as the boys walked home that night along the Keighley road, Branwell, still excited, insisted on a wrestling match with his companion, and was promptly overthrown.

One more glimpse of a boy of twenty, when Mary and Martha Taylor are staying at the parsonage. Martha had kept up a " continual flow of good-humour " during her stay, and had " consequently been very fascinating."

" They are making such a noise about me," writes

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* Leyland's *The Brontë Family*.

† *Ibid.*

Charlotte to Ellen Nussey, " I cannot write any more. . . . Mary is playing on the piano, Martha is chattering as fast as her little tongue can run, and Branwell is standing before her, laughing at her vivacity." *

But this is anticipating, for this was in the summer of 1838, and by this time Charlotte Brontë must have been getting vaguely anxious about him. Branwell, though the family at the parsonage did not know it, was already on the downward path.

VII.

THE PEN, THE PALETTE, AND THE POET LAUREATE.

For a year or two after Charlotte Brontë left Miss Wooler's school, the sisters and brother lived happily enough under the parsonage roof. Charlotte told Mary Taylor, about this time, that she had been reading Cobbett. *She did not like him ; but all was fish that came to her net.* One of the most remarkable things about this remarkable family is the amount of reading they got through, and the number of books they got hold of, on their very modest income, in a remote moorland village, before the days of cheap literature and cheap postage, and when public libraries were still undreamed of. Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Goldsmith, Scott, Byron, Wordsworth, Southey—it would astonish a modern schoolgirl to learn what large and heavy fish came into Charlotte Brontë's net. Politics were part of the daily fare, but in the days following the passing of the Reform Bill politics were served up hot with every meal at the parsonage.

Mary Taylor and Charlotte Brontë were always at daggers drawn about their politics and creeds. The Red House at Gomersal was a centre of " violent dissent and Radicalism." Mr. Taylor had brought up his sons and daughters "on republican principles," and from the Taylors Charlotte heard plenty of hard things about a "mercenary priesthood" and "a despotic aristocracy." She listened without saying much; she would even sometimes allow that there was "a *little* truth" in what they said. But she never budged from her own position. No doubt in her heart of hearts she was hugging the childish memory of that tall wooden soldier, "the most perfect in every part," that had always been her embodiment of all the virtues of the Great Duke, and all the political principles of the party to which he belonged. This it is to be a hero-worshipper!

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life.*

In the intervals of literature and politics, the drawing lessons at the parsonage were great events. Branwell showed a talent for drawing, and said he would like to be a painter; so the parson did his best in providing the drawing-master from Leeds, at a charge of "two guineas a visit." Charlotte, in spite of her short-sightedness, was so fond of drawing that at first she too thought she might make a living by it, and she nearly ruined her eyesight by making minute and laborious copies of line-engravings, after the fashion of that day. Branwell, under Mr. Robinson's guidance, seems to have progressed so far as to paint, very badly, in oils. He painted an elaborate group-portrait of his sisters, and the painting, poor as it was, hung for years on the staircase at Haworth parsonage, opposite to the door of the "children's study." The family thought that Branwell wanted only opportunity to make a great painter; and the question was, could they afford to send him to London, as a pupil of the Royal Academy? Some of Mr. Robinson's friends were plying their art in the Great Babylon, and a good deal of talk about the Elgin Marbles, and Chantrey, and Haydon had filtered through to Haworth parsonage during those lessons of the drawing-master, at a charge of two guineas a visit. Branwell, at eighteen, rather liked the idea of going to London, and went so far as to write a letter to the secretary of the Royal Academy, asking for information. He had long dreamed of the Metropolis. He possessed a map of London, which he had studied till he seemed to know its very byways. He would astonish the London "bagmen" who put up at the "Black Bull" by knowing more about the "short-cuts" across London than they did. This, and the rather ominous faculty he had of writing with both hands at once—he is said to have been able to write two separate letters at the same time—earned for him a pleasant notoriety in Haworth circles. The landlord of the Black Bull rather counted upon "t' vicar's Patrick" to amuse his guests, and on these occasions the boy was "treated" rather more potently than was good for him. And so, in 1835, Charlotte writes to her friend Ellen, "We are all about to divide, break up, separate." Branwell was to go to London, Charlotte had been offered the post of teacher in Miss Wooler's school, and Emily was to go with her as a pupil.

L'homme propose. Emily stayed only three months at Miss Wooler's school; it was found that she could not live away from Haworth and the moorland air. After three months of school routine, Emily was so ill that Charlotte grew frightened, remembering the fate of Maria and Elizabeth. "Papa" was written to; Emily was dispatched home, and Anne came as pupil in her place. The gentle Anne made out her two years at Roehead, and Charlotte remained there as teacher, with a salary, till early in 1838. It was not on the whole an unhappy time. Charlotte's friends, the Nusseys and the Taylors, lived in the neighbourhood, and Miss Wooler was exceedingly kind. However hard the day's work, Charlotte looked forward to her evenings when she and Miss Wooler sat together chatting, "sometimes late into the night." But she did not like "governessing"; it was "nothing but teach, teach, teach from morning till night." And Charlotte confessed to Mary Taylor that, after she had clothed herself and Anne, nothing was left of her salary. She grew tired, depressed, over-wrought; she was troubled by religious scruples; and her letters to Ellen Nussey reflect her moods.

The parson's expenses at this time were evidently a little beyond his means, and poor Emily had plucked up her courage and left home again to earn some money. She took a situation as teacher in a school near Halifax, where the duties were "hard labour from six in the morning till eleven at night"; and meantime Miss Wooler—to make matters worse for Charlotte and Anne—had, early in 1837, removed her school to Dewsbury Moor, not nearly so bracing a locality as Roehead.

The whole family had met under the parsonage roof for the Christmas holidays of 1836, and it was during those holidays that the famous letters were written—the letter from Charlotte to the poet Southey, and the letter from Branwell to the poet Wordsworth. These young people were nothing if they were not ambitious!

In the evenings the girls sat over the fire in the parlour. The parson read prayers at eight o'clock. Miss Branwell retired very early, and so did "Tabby," and Mr. Brontë, who spent the evenings in his own study, always went upstairs to bed punctually at nine. Every night, on the way to bed, he wound up the grandfather's clock that stood half-way up the staircase; and every night, as he passed the sitting-room door, he called out, "in stentorian tones," his little paternal formula, "*Don't be up late, children!*" And every night, just about this time, the girls folded and put away their sewing, and began to walk up and down the room. In the firelight—the candles put out—they walked and talked till late into the night—talked over their troubles, past and present, and over their future plans. It was during these Christmas holidays that they first talked of literature as a means of livelihood. They were all inveterate little "makers out." They had written prose, and they had written verse. But how to know what was the literary value of it all—whether there were any chance for it, and for them, in the great literary market? And so one day during these Christmas holidays, Charlotte Brontë plucked up courage to write a letter, enclosing some specimens of her verses, to Southey, the Poet Laureate. The sisters waited anxiously; but the Christmas holidays came to an end, and Charlotte and Anne returned to Miss Wooler's school, and Emily went back to Miss Patchett's school, and no answer had come from the Poet Laureate.

Nobody knows exactly what Branwell Brontë did in London, or why he came home again so very soon. Two things he certainly did—he saw Westminster Abbey (whether inside as well as outside is a matter of speculation), and he visited the Castle Tavern, Holborn, kept by the "veteran prize-fighter, Tom Spring," and "frequented by the principal sporting characters of the time." * There the boy's brilliant talk attracted some notice; and when the company became rather noisy in dispute over the dates of certain great battles, they asked him to be umpire. It was his one little social triumph, the last of his London dream; and to the bitter disappointment of his family—borne by them, however, with "Christian resignation"—Branwell Brontë returned to the parsonage, and to the lesser charms of the Black Bull Inn.

To do it justice, Haworth village seems to have welcomed the return of the prodigal. The landlord of the Black Bull and John Brown, the sexton, listened open-eyed to the young gentleman's account of Tom Spring; and perhaps the parson heard about the visit to Westminster Abbey. His Haworth friends persuaded Branwell to become a freemason, and he was proposed as a brother of the new Haworth lodge, the "Lodge of the Three Graces," of which John Brown, the sexton, was to be "worshipful master." And he was also elected—but perhaps this was the parson's proviso—secretary of the Haworth Temperance Society. The parson allowed him some more drawing lessons with Mr. Robinson; and while Emily was at Miss Patchett's

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* Leyland.

school, Branwell was for a few months usher in another school near Halifax; and after that he took lodgings in Bradford, where Mr. Morgan—who had married "Cousin Jane"—did his best to find him employment as a portrait-painter. He painted portraits of Mr. Morgan, and of the vicar of Bradford, and also of his landlady and her children. This last commission seems to have been undertaken as part-payment of his landlady's bill—or, at least, his landlady thought so, for she made a great fuss when he left Bradford without having finished the portrait; and it is said that Mr. Thompson, who was also a portrait-painter in Bradford, kindly "put the finishing touches" to some of Branwell Brontë's unfinished work. But it was evident by this time—even to his own family—that Branwell Brontë was not going to be a great painter.

And apparently Charlotte was not to be a poet either. She had given up all hopes of hearing from Southey, when, in March 1837, his letter came. He had been away, and since his return had been struggling with arrears of correspondence; and he had left her letter to the very last, because it was a difficult one to answer. He did not like to "cast a damp over the high spirits and the generous desires of youth." He recognizes her sincerity, though he suspects that the signature, "C. Brontë," is fictitious. She has asked for his opinion; but "the opinion may be worth little and the advice much." And he proceeds to offer it.

Southey's letter is long and carefully written. He admits that she possesses what Wordsworth called "the faculty of verse"; but so many people possess it also that he warns her of disappointment if she hopes to achieve distinction. Though he has never regretted having taken to it himself, he considers it his duty to warn all young men against literature as a perilous profession. As for women, "Literature," he says, "cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation." And then there follows an assurance that she is not to "disparage" her gift, but to "write poetry for its own sake." *

Charlotte's answer to Southey is too long to quote; but it should be read, for it is honest, modest, and brave. She accepts his advice gratefully, though it hurts her. She is not altogether the "idle, dreaming being" he seems to think her. She explains to him that she is the daughter of a poor clergyman, the eldest of the family, and a governess; that all day long her head and hands too are busy, and that though in the evenings she does think, she never troubles anybody with her thoughts. "I have endeavoured not only attentively to observe all the duties a woman ought to fulfil, but to feel deeply interested in them. I don't always succeed, for sometimes when I'm teaching or sewing I would rather be reading or writing; but I try to deny myself, and my father's approbation amply rewarded me for the privation." She trusts she shall never again feel ambitious to see her name in print; but "if the wish should rise, I'll look at Southey's letter, and suppress it."

Southey wrote again—a kind little note—asking her, if ever she is at the Lakes, to "let me see you." He adds a word of caution: "Take care of over-excitement, and endeavour to keep a quiet mind," and the correspondence ends with a "God bless you!"

Poor Charlotte Brontë! Long years after, she said to Mrs. Gaskell, "Mr. Southey's letter was kind and admirable, a little stringent, but it did me good." She had said practically the same thing to the contrite Mary Taylor, who once told her, when they were at school together, that she was "very ugly." "You did me a great deal of good, Polly, so don't repent of it."

The brave little woman was never to see Southey at the Lakes. When she was a celebrated novelist—after Southey was dead—and she and Mrs. Gaskell were stay-

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life.*

ing at the Lakes with the Kaye-Shuttleworths, she told Mrs. Gaskell of his invitation. "But there was no money to spare," she explained, "nor any prospect of my ever earning money enough to have the chance of so great a pleasure, so I gave up thinking of it."

She had folded away her literary dreams with her letters from the Laureate, and she set before herself the stern realities of life. "*Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be.*" She went on teaching at Miss Wooler's school, till her health broke down; and when, in 1838, Miss Wooler insisted on her seeing a doctor, he ordered her, "as she valued her life," to go home at once.

Branwell, meantime, not to be behind his sister, had written to Wordsworth. He enclosed some verses, "the prefatory scene," as he explained, "to a much longer subject." It was not a pleasant poem; it was the kind of excursion that Wordsworth himself would not voluntarily have undertaken. It endeavoured to "develop strong passions and weak principles struggling with a high imagination and acute feelings till, as youth hardens towards age, evil deeds and short enjoyments end in mental misery and bodily ruin." The "prefatory scene," however, did not go beyond the innocent infancy of the unhappy traveller into these lurid vistas, about whom Wordsworth was asked to believe that

"... often has my mother said,
While on her lap I laid my head,
She feared for Time I was not made
But for Eternity."

Wordsworth may not have recognized the "faculty of verse" or the ring of sincerity in Branwell's work that Southey found in Charlotte's. It is possible he looked rather glum over part of Branwell's letter. "Surely in this day," the young man had rashly written, "when there is not a *writing* poet worth a sixpence, the field must be open, if a better man can step forward."

It is not known what answer Wordsworth sent to Branwell Brontë; but he kept the poem and the letter, and after the Brontës had become famous, he gave them to his son-in-law, Edward Quilinan.

VIII.

"QUALIFIED TO TEACH."

It is rather pathetic to see how anxiously the parson cultivated the friendships his daughter Charlotte had made at school. In the summer of 1838, when Charlotte was two-and-twenty, she was sent home from Miss Wooler's school "a wreck." But as soon as the moorland air and "utter quiet" of home had revived her, Mr. Brontë arranged for Mary and Martha Taylor to come and stay at the parsonage. It was during this visit that Martha—Little Miss Boisterous, as she was called at school—made herself so fascinating. Charlotte always said that the society of the Taylor family was "one of the most rousing pleasures" she knew; and, indeed, their go-ahead Radicalism could not have been altogether in accord with the parsonage life. Once, at school, Mary told Charlotte that she and her family at the parsonage were "like potatoes, growing in the dark," and Charlotte had assented sadly, "Yes, I know we are." But Miss Branwell—who had moved in the "best society" in Penzance—had her reservations about the Misses Taylor. She did not approve of that freedom of speech that comes from being educated on republican principles, and on one occasion she felt it incumbent on her to correct Mary and Martha for their too liberal use of the verb "to spit." On the other hand, the gentle-mannered Ellen Nussey was admired by everybody at the parsonage. She came and went, in her placid way, upsetting nobody's feelings, and taking all the little eccentricities of the family for granted—the " calm, steady girl, not brilliant, but good and true."

It is to Ellen we owe the glimpses of Haworth parsonage at its best, of the parson, cravatted up to the chin, with his little whims and oddities, and his old-fashioned courtesy to a guest. It is Ellen who has described Aunt Branwell, in silk gown and mob-cap, dispensing the favours of her little gold snuffbox, reading aloud to the parson, and at tea-time " tilting argument without fear against Mr. Brontë." It was Ellen who wandered with the sisters on their beloved moors, who paced with them up and down the dining-room at night, after Mr. Brontë had wound up the clock and gone to bed, and all the parsonage was asleep. And when the girls sat together on the hearthrug in the firelight, even the dogs took possession of Ellen. Keeper, the bulldog, clambered awkwardly on to Emily's lap, and, finding it too small, stretched out his big body till it rested on Ellen's knees. Emily and Anne had " never seen anybody they liked so well." It is recorded of Ellen's first visit to the parsonage that the inscrutable Emily actually invited her to go for a walk ; and Charlotte, waiting anxiously for their return, waylaid her friend at the front-door to whisper, "*How did she behave?*"—for Emily had never been known to do such a thing before. In after visits, Emily constituted herself a sort of silent bodyguard to Ellen Nussey, and it was in that capacity she warded off the attentions of the curate during an evening walk. Emily's nickname in the family, " the Major," dated from this incident. Shy and silent as Emily was, Ellen found her " intensely lovable." Her look and smile spoke more than words. One of those " rare, expressive looks " from the wonderful eyes of this enigmatic girl was to Ellen Nussey " something to remember through life." *

It was not till 1839 that the curates appeared on the

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* Clement Shorter's *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle.*

Haworth horizon. When Mr. Brontë was well over sixty, and had been nearly twenty years at Haworth, his bishop allowed him the assistance of a curate, the Church Pastoral Aid Society supplying the necessary funds. The advent of this young man was not only a help to the parson, but it brought to the village and the parsonage just that "social thrill" of which they had hitherto been so much in need. For Mr. William Weightman was handsome, cheery, and good-tempered; and no sooner was he settled in his lodgings in the village than he found himself on more or less friendly terms with all the other curates in all the other parishes round about. They were all militant young Churchmen, in a veritable hotbed of dissent, and "the fighting gentry"—or "the Holyes," as Charlotte irreverently dubbed them—soon wakened up the neighbourhood with sermons on dissent, lectures at the Mechanics' Institute in Keighley, and a lively discussion about the payment of the Church rates. "Papa," who had hitherto lived on the most amicable terms with the Baptists and Methodists round about him, was put into the chair at a meeting in the schoolroom, supported by a curate on either side of him, and "Papa" was also made to deliver a lecture at the Mechanics' Institute, which was highly praised in the newspapers. Not only so: the fighting gentry came down on the parsonage. They came for tea and toast and theology, and they tilted High Church argument till even Charlotte, who thought them bigoted and intolerable, waxed eloquent behind the teapot. And they waylaid the young ladies in their hitherto solitary walks on the moors; and when Mr. Weightman discovered that not one of the three Miss Brontës had ever received a valentine, he walked off to Keighley and posted—with an enviable impartiality—three of the prettiest and most romantic valentines he could select; so that each young lady might feel she had seen the folly at least of one. Mr. Weightman had a pretty turn for pen-and-ink sketching. Charlotte was obliged to own that he possessed " something of the artist's eye." He wrote poetry, and he was a generous soul withal. When he was on holiday he did not forget his friends. " A prodigious quantity of game "—wild-ducks, grouse, partridges, snipes, curlews, and even a large salmon—arrived at the parsonage during Mr. Weightman's holidays. But alas! the curate was as fickle as he was good-natured. It was impossible to tell with whom he was in love. At one time Miss Nussey appeared to be the object of his affections; at another, it was the gentle Anne. He sat opposite to Anne in church, and " sighed softly," looking at her " out of the corners of his eyes." It was certainly Anne. And then—it was another young lady altogether, of whom he came and talked to Charlotte; and Charlotte owned herself baffled. She began to think that Mr. Weightman was not really in love with anybody at all.

But by this time Charlotte Brontë had a lover of her own. The Rev. Henry Nussey—Ellen's brother—had met her at the Rydings. In 1839, when she was three-and-twenty, he was " comfortably settled " in a curacy at Donnington, in Sussex, and was " intending to take pupils." He wrote her a letter, explaining that in these circumstances he should want a wife to take care of the pupils, and he asked her to be that wife. In spite of a " kindly leaning " towards this unexceptionable young Churchman, Charlotte Brontë refused Henry Nussey, and so closed for herself this little chapter of somewhat prosaic romance. " Ten to one I shall never have the chance again; but *n'importe.*"

They were not suited to each other. Something of Charlotte's Irish heritage cries out in her words to the faithful Ellen: " Why, it would startle him to see me in my natural home character; he would think I was a wild, romantic enthusiast indeed. I could not sit all day long making a grave face before my husband. I would laugh, and satirize, and say whatever came into my head first."

And then, in the next sentence, the gentle little dead mother seems to speak, more softly: "And if he were a clever man, and loved me, the whole world, weighed in the balance against his smallest wish, should be light as air."

Charlotte was right, and Henry Nussey saw it; and six months later he became engaged to somebody else. Not very long afterwards Charlotte was to receive, and refuse, another offer of marriage—an offer of a more romantic nature. Mr. Bryce, a young Irish curate in the neighbourhood, "witty, lively, ardent, and clever too," had accompanied his vicar on a visit to the parsonage. He "tilted argument" with Charlotte during the whole of one long happy afternoon, and a day or two afterwards he sent her "an ardent declaration and a proposal of matrimony." "Well," writes Charlotte to Ellen Nussey, "I have heard of love at first sight, but this beats all!"

Not even curates could banish from Haworth parsonage the stern realities of life. Charlotte had no inclination to marry Mr. Bryce, and, this being so, she must earn her own living, and earn it in the only way that seemed open to her—by "governessing." And so she turned to business with a "Let me have no more of your humbug about Cupid." *

Meanwhile, it could only have been during the holidays that Anne enjoyed the privilege of sitting with downcast eyes in the family pew. Early in 1839, not long after she left school, she went as governess to the children of Mrs. Ingham, at Blake Hall, Mirfield, not far from Roehead. At nineteen, Anne Brontë was still so shy and timid that Charlotte was afraid Mrs. Ingham would fancy she had "a natural impediment in her speech." But the girl insisted on going by herself to Mirfield, saying she could manage better if she were "thrown entirely on her own resources." She was not so unhappy with the Inghams, and stayed with them for some time. The gentlest and least intellectual

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* Clement Shorter's *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle.*

of the sisters, she seems on the whole to have been the most successful as a governess.

Charlotte, in the same year, took a temporary situation with another Yorkshire family—the Sidgwicks, at Stonegappe—and there she seems to have been very unhappy indeed. The tradition in the Sidgwick family is that Charlotte Brontë was " in a very morbid condition the whole time." One of the sons remembers having thrown a Bible at her, and another of the family remembers that if she were asked to walk with them to church, she thought she was being " ordered about like a slave," and if she were not asked, she imagined she was being " excluded from the family circle." Her own letters to Emily at home—" Mine dear Love," and " Mine bonny Love," as she calls her —give the other side of the picture—a dreary picture indeed.

One does not like to think of little Charlotte Brontë—even now that she has been dead for so many long years—" excluded from the family circle " ; walking " a little behind " the master of the house, when he strolled through his fields with his children and his Newfoundland dog ; sitting in the schoolroom, after the children were asleep in bed, making muslin night-caps and dressing dolls. One does not like to think that she was ever " taken to task " by any woman happier than herself for looking " depressed." And yet, it had to be. Southey would have thought it all right. She was only attaining " that degree of self-government " which Southey had recommended as " essential to our own happiness, and contributing greatly to that of those around us." *Literature could not be, and ought not to be, the business of a woman's life.* Even as late as 1855, when Mrs. Gaskell, herself a brilliant and successful authoress, was writing her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, she could say : " Teaching seemed to her at this time, *as it does to most women at all times*, the only way of earning an independent livelihood." So much for the days that are no more !

On Charlotte's return home, "Tabby" was ill. Charlotte undertook the housework and the ironing, and Emily baked the bread and attended to the kitchen. Charlotte declared that she was happier black-leading the stoves, sweeping the floors, and making the beds at home than she would be "living like a fine lady" anywhere else.

During that winter she wrote a novelette, and in the summer of 1840 she was reading a bundle of French books, forty volumes, sent her by the Taylors—"clever, sophistical, immoral." Early in 1841 she was in another situation, this time as nursery governess with the Whites, at Upperwood House, Rawdon—only a few miles from Ellen Nussey and the Rydings. They were kindly people, and evidently liked and trusted their little governess. "By dint of nursing the fat baby," wrote Charlotte, "it has got to know me, and to be fond of me. I suspect myself of growing rather fond of it."

Anne had left Mirfield, and was governess with the Robinsons, at Thorp Green. She was not happy there, and Charlotte was very anxious about Anne's health. A scheme was on foot for the girls to set up a school of their own. Miss Wooler had proposed their taking over her old school at Dewsbury Moor, but there were reasons against this. It was not so prosperous as it had been, and would require "working up"; and the sisters began to realize that they did not know enough themselves. What did they know of foreign languages and music? And how, without them, could they hope to keep a school, or to command high salaries as governesses in private families? They were very undecided what to do, when a long letter from Mary Taylor, and a packet enclosing "a very handsome black silk scarf and a pair of very beautiful kid gloves, bought at Brussels," changed the whole course of Charlotte Brontë's life. They came to her while she was still with the Whites, at Rawdon. Her mind was in a ferment. Mary's letter had brought with it visions of "pictures the most exquisite, and cathedrals the most venerable, . . . all the excitements of one of the most splendid capitals of Europe."

It had also pointed out a possible path for Charlotte and her sisters. She took her courage in her two hands, and wrote to the only person in the world who was able to help them—to Aunt Branwell.

Charlotte's letter set before her aunt in very vigorous language the advantages to be gained if she and Emily were given a half-year at a school in Brussels. It would cost £50 or £100, but it would be the making of them for life. " Papa will perhaps think it a wild and ambitious scheme ; but who ever rose in the world without ambition ? When he left Ireland to go to Cambridge University, he was as ambitious as I am now. I want us *all* to get on. I know we have talents, and I want them to be turned to account. I look to you, aunt, to help us. I think you will not refuse. I know if you consent, it shall not be my fault if you ever repent your kindness." *

After some hesitation and a good deal of talk, the dear old lady gave her consent, and she did it handsomely too, for she not only advanced the £50, but she said she would like to pay extra, so that the girls might have a separate bedroom for themselves. The parson and Aunt Branwell were at first inclined to Lille, in preference to Brussels ; but at last a school was found in Brussels—the *pensionnat* of Madame Héger, in the Rue d'Isabelle, recommended by the chaplain to the British Embassy. And so, at Christmas 1841, Charlotte bade good-bye to her kind employers, and to the fat baby whom she had grown to love. The Brontë family were once more together for Christmas. Charlotte and Emily were busy preparing their simple wardrobes for the Brussels visit ; Anne was to stay at home and take care of " papa and aunt."

Early in 1840, Branwell Brontë had gone as private tutor to a family at Broughton-in-Furness. " How he will like to settle remains yet to be seen," wrote Charlotte to Ellen Nussey; " at present he is full of hope and resolution. I, who know his variable nature and his strong turn for active life, dare not be too sanguine. We are as busy as possible in preparing for his departure, and shirt-making and collar-stitching fully occupy our time." *

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*.

How Branwell Brontë " settled " in Mr. Postlethwaite's household, and how much Charlotte Brontë knew about her brother's " variable " nature, may be learned from a long letter, often quoted, which he wrote from Broughton-in-Furness to John Brown, the sexton at home. It is certainly a silly letter, full of pose and swagger, but it is vicious, hypocritical, and unutterably selfish. It was thought a wonderful production by " Old Knave of Trumps " (the sexton), and " Little Nosey " (the landlord of the Black Bull), and the rest of the fraternity. They read it so often that they came to know it by heart.

Branwell did not keep Mr. Postlethwaite's situation very long. He obtained the post of railway clerk, at first at Sowerby Bridge, and then at Luddenden Foot, on the new Leeds and Manchester Railway; and when Charlotte and Emily were starting for Brussels he had not been at home for some months, and it was hoped he was getting on pretty well.

IX.

PENSIONNAT HÉGER.

A QUAINT-LOOKING little trio they must have been, setting out from the parsonage, on a February day in 1842—little Charlotte, and the lank Emily, and the parson cravatted up to the chin. For the parson had

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* Sir Wemyss Reid's *Monograph.*

expressed his intention of taking his two daughters to Brussels. Somewhere on the way to London they were joined by Mary Taylor and one of her brothers, both of whom were accustomed to travelling, which the parson was not. As for the Brontë sisters, they had never been out of Yorkshire before, except to go to Cowan Bridge School, though Charlotte had certainly " seen the sea " when Ellen Nussey had taken her for a fortnight to Easton.

The travellers put up at the old Chapter Coffee-house in Paternoster Row, and during the day or two they spent in London before sailing in the Ostend packet from London Bridge wharf, they visited St. Paul's, and saw " all the pictures and statues " they could in London.

It was dark when they arrived in Brussels, and the girls were separated, Mary to go to her more expensive school at the Château de Koekelberg, and Charlotte and Emily to be handed over by the parson to the care of Madame Héger in the Rue d'Isabelle. Mr. Brontë stayed one night with the English chaplain, and then travelled straight back to Haworth.

The sisters—Charlotte nearly twenty-six, and Emily only two years younger—found themselves schoolgirls again. " All the excitements of one of the most splendid capitals of Europe " lay outside the walled garden of that old house in the Rue d'Isabelle, but the girls could have seen and heard but little of them all. They were there for work, hard work. They found themselves almost the only Protestants in a large school of boarders and day-pupils—about ninety all told. Masters came and went, to teach all sorts of subjects. Mademoiselle This and Mademoiselle That flitted about the school with light feet, looking after the young ladies, and doing Madame's bidding. M. and Madame Héger, with their children, lived in the school. Madame was head of the school, and Monsieur was professor of rhetoric. He taught also at the boys' school hard by—the Athénée Royal de Bruxelles. Charlotte and Emily soon found that the difference of nationality and religion made "a broad line of demarcation" between them and the rest of the school. "We are completely isolated in the midst of numbers," wrote Charlotte. They clung together—in the classroom they sat side by side, absorbed in their work; in the garden they paced silently up and down together, Emily leaning on her smaller elder sister. Everything was new and strange to them—the *refectoire*, with its foreign cookery; the *oratoire*, with its crucifix; the shady garden, with its *allée défendue*; the *lecture pieuse* at night, which the little ultra-Protestants hated; the foreign names and voices in the streets; the bell of S. Gudule. They were learning, learning, from morning till night; but both were quite well. Emily worked like a horse.

Madame was an admirable head of a school—calm, cool, and self-possessed. She struck Charlotte as being rather like Miss Wooler, only married. They saw more of M. Héger, because he was their teacher. "A man of power, as to mind," wrote Charlotte, "but of a very choleric and irritable temperament." She was not sure at first if she liked him; and as for Emily, "Emily and he don't draw well together at all." M. Héger, however, was an enthusiast in his subject, and Charlotte and Emily—enthusiasts too—were soon deep in their *devoirs* for him. Mrs. Gaskell has preserved some of these, with the marginal comments of the professor. And surely never did a pupil's *devoirs* show more care and thought and effort than do these little French prose-essays of Charlotte Brontë's; and never did professorial marginal notes stand out more vehemently characteristic of the man who made them.

The silent Emily was headstrong, prejudiced, and often homesick; her English Protestantism recoiled from the "gentle Jesuitry" about her. Charlotte was more docile: she was, in fact, very happy. "It felt very strange at first," she wrote home, "to submit to authority instead of exercising it, to obey orders instead of giving them; but I like that state of things."

It was true that the professor's face, in moments of academic wrath, could suddenly take on the expression of " an insane tom-cat " or " a delirious-hyæna " ; but he could be also mild, and of a great courtesy towards his two English pupils, whom he recognized as women of strong character and extraordinary ability—women whom he could teach as he would not have dreamed of teaching the ordinary Belgian girls of the Pensionnat Héger. Charlotte began to like and admire the little choleric professor of rhetoric. For the first time in her secluded life she found herself in the society of a man between whom and herself there was a strong intellectual sympathy. Her whole ambition in coming to Brussels had been to learn to teach : she now began to understand what might be the meaning of the words master and pupil.

When their six months came to an end, Madame Héger proposed that Charlotte and Emily should stay on for another half-year as pupil-teachers, without paying, but without salary. They accepted the proposal, but they were not to make out their year. That autumn, Martha Taylor—" Little Miss Boisterous "—was taken suddenly ill at the Château de Koekelberg, and died in a few days. She was buried in the English cemetery outside Brussels ; and even while, shocked and saddened, the girls were making their first pilgrimages to Martha's new grave in the " heretic " cemetery, word came from Haworth that Aunt Branwell was ill. Charlotte and Emily immediately packed up to go home, and, just as they were starting, a second letter came to say that she was dead. Travelling day and night, they could not reach home in time for the funeral, and when they did arrive, it was all over, and " Mr. Brontë and Anne were sitting together in quiet grief." *

Aunt Branwell had been buried, by her own wish, as near as possible to her sister. Her little fortune, about

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*.

£1500, had been left between her three nieces and a fourth niece in Penzance. In her will—made so long before as 1833—she had left her " Indian workbox " to Charlotte, her ivory fan and her " workbox with the china lid " to Emily, her " japan dressing-box " to Branwell, and to Anne, whom she had reared from a baby, her gold watch, and " all that belonged to it." The little gold snuffbox was not mentioned; but the eyeglass that had played so dear a part in the literary life of the family, with its chain, and her rings, and books, and silver spoons, were all to be divided among her three nieces, " as their father shall think proper." And now she was gone—the little figure in the silk gown and the mob-cap, with the auburn curls on the forehead; the little figure that for nearly twenty years had clicked about in her pattens on the stone-flagged floors of the parsonage, and longed for the sunshine and society of Penzance.

And somebody else was gone too. Poor Mr. Weightman, the curate, was dead, after a very short illness. The parson had preached the funeral sermon on October 2nd—the first sermon he had read for more than twenty years. For " the ordinary run of hearers," Mr. Brontë preferred extempore preaching, but on this occasion he wrote his sermon with some care; and it was printed, by request, and sold for sixpence a copy—the profits, " if any," to go to the Sunday-school. So poor Anne's little romance—if a romance it ever was—was over. There would be no more valentines, no more verses beginning, " Away, fond Love ! " and " Soul Divine ! " Aunt, Martha Taylor, and Mr. Weightman were all gone, and the world seemed " dreary and void."

After Christmas—a snowy Christmas up on the moors—Anne returned to Thorp Green; and it was arranged that Branwell, who was back on their hands again, should go with her, as tutor to the son of the family. Branwell had left his post of railway clerk at Luddenden Foot; he had also left the company's accounts in a state of muddle, and Mr. Brontë had, as usual, to make good his son's defalcations. It is difficult to understand how, even then, the family could think of saddling poor Anne with the ne'er-do-weel.

M. Héger wrote to Mr. Brontë a letter full of praises of "*nos deux chères élèves*"—pupils such as Madame and he had had very little experience of before, and whom they were very sorry to lose. He pressed the parson to allow at least one of the young ladies to return, and he set before him the advantages offered by a second year at the *pensionnat.* They would study German. Emily would have lessons from the best music-master in Belgium; Charlotte, as English teacher, would be learning to teach *in French.* Both would be put in the way of gaining "*cette douce indépendance si difficile a trouver pour une jeune personne.*"

But Emily, once at home again, had no wish to go back to the Pensionnat Héger; and it was arranged that, as Anne and Branwell were to be at Thorp Green, Emily should keep house for the parson, and Charlotte should be the one to return to Brussels. She was to have a salary of £16, out of which she was to pay for her German lessons.

It was January when Charlotte started alone on her journey. From Euston, she drove straight down to London Bridge wharf, hired a waterman to row her out to the Ostend packet, slept on board, and sailed next morning. After three days' travelling she found herself once more in the Rue d'Isabelle, where Madame Héger received her "with great kindness."

She was soon initiated into her new duties. She was now "Mademoiselle Charlotte," teacher of English; and a very unruly and boisterous set of Belgian girls she had to teach. But she rose to the occasion. "A slight increase of colour, a momentary sparkling of the eye, and more decided energy of manner were the only outward tokens she gave." She declined all offers of help from Monsieur and Madame, and set about the task of managing her pupils in her own quiet way. And

—the rôles of pupil and teacher being reversed—she gave lessons in English to M. Héger and M. Chapelle, his brother-in-law.

Why was it that Charlotte Brontë was so unhappy during this second year at Brussels? What happened to make it such a failure?

"I returned to Brussels after aunt's death," she said at a later period, "against my conscience, prompted by what then seemed an irresistible impulse. I was punished for my selfish folly by a total withdrawal, for more than two years, of happiness and peace of mind."

People at home, at the time, had a theory that there was an attachment in Brussels. Her biographers have put forth various theories on the subject of her return to Brussels and her unhappiness during this second year there. It was her ultra-Protestantism that estranged her from Madame, a devout Catholic; her habitual aloofness, which prevented her from making friends with the other governesses in the house. She missed the presence of Emily, and Mary, and poor little Martha; her intellectual solitude preyed on her nerves, and made her emotional and morbid; ugly accounts of Branwell's misdoings were always filtering through the home-letters, and there were other anxieties at the parsonage—anxieties that exaggerated themselves in the long, sleepless nights of the summer *vacances* in the big empty *pensionnat*.

Some of these theories Charlotte herself has dealt with. She smiled, at first, at the people who could not understand that she crossed the sea merely to return as teacher to Madame Héger's school, "out of respect for my master and mistress, and gratitude for their kindness." If only people knew how secluded was her life at the school—how she never exchanged a word with any other man than M. Héger, and seldom, now that she was no longer a pupil, even with him! And then, as the months go on, she is convinced that Madame Héger no longer likes her—why, she cannot tell, and she does not believe that Madame has any definite reason. M. Héger is much influenced by Madame, and he reads Mademoiselle Charlotte a lecture on her want of *bienveillance.* She comes to think Madame Héger politic, plausible, and interested; she no longer trusts her. Except the loss of M. Héger's goodwill—if, indeed, she has lost that—she cares for nothing. He has always been kind to her, "loading her with books," so that she has owed to him all the pleasures she has in her life.*

Sir Wemyss Reid says that Charlotte Brontë went back to Brussels because "her spirit, if not her heart," had been "captured and held captive in the Belgian city." According to him, this second visit to Brussels changed her whole life's current, and gave it "a new purpose and a new meaning." *Shirley,* he says, might have been written if Charlotte Brontë had never gone back to Brussels, but *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* never. And the lesson she learnt there, which made it possible for her to write these books that gripped at the heartstrings of the whole reading world, was the self-knowledge that is as bitter in the mouth as it is wholesome to the life. That is Sir Wemyss Reid's theory; and it must, in addition, be remembered that this lesson of self-knowledge which Charlotte Brontë learnt was also the only lesson which circumstances obliged her to learn without the services of a master. And those who knew her in her lifetime, and those who have studied her character in her writings and her own intimate letters, are absolutely agreed that little Charlotte Brontë—romantic enthusiast as she was, liable to moods of deepest depression and of strong emotional exaltation—was also a small warrior of indomitable courage, who, in her own slender hands, held the standard of truth and honour very high.

In the autumn of 1843, during the *grandes vacances,* when the school was emptied, the Hégers and their children were away on holiday, and only the French governess, whom she detested, was left to keep her company in the Rue d'Isabelle, Charlotte Brontë had certainly worked herself into a state of great nervous tension. She had little to occupy her. It was a fine hot September; for hours together she "tramped about" the boulevards and streets of Brussels.

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* Clement Shorter's *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle.*

One long September day she went on a solitary pilgrimage to little Martha's grave in the Protestant cemetery; and from there she walked on, far beyond it, till she reached the top of a hill, from which she could look down on a landscape of green fields stretching away to the horizon. It was a long walk back into the town again, and it was evening when she found herself, tired and faint, in the busy streets of Brussels. Still she felt a nervous dread of returning to the Rue d'Isabelle and to the big empty school. The bell of S. Gudule was tolling for vespers; she slipped in under the big doorway, and found herself in the silent, incense-sweetened gloom of the cathedral aisles, where only a few old women were kneeling in prayer. She stayed through vespers, and when they were over she still lingered on. A few people were kneeling at the confessionals, and an "odd whim" came into her head: she did not care what she did, so long as it was not really wrong. She watched the penitents confessing, and after a few minutes she too knelt down on the steps before one of the gratings of a confessional. When the grating opened, and the priest turned his ear towards her, she did not know how to begin. She did not know the formula of a confession, and was obliged to say that she was a Protestant. The priest was at first unwilling to grant her the privilege of confession, but after a moment or two of parleying he did allow her to confess; and in her letter to Emily, describing this whole day, she says that she did actually confess—"a real confession." He asked her to come next day to his own house, that he might try by reasoning to convert her; and she promised at the moment. But there her little adventure stopped; she never saw the priest again. After all, it was only "a freak." *

Whim, or freak, or whatever it was, this long day, ending at the little wooden grating in the dusk of the confessional in S. Gudule, may have formulated the troubled thoughts and feelings of the solitary little woman. The penitent hears the confession as well as the priest. That was in September. In October, when the school was reopened, she gave Madame Héger notice, and "if it had depended on her" she would have gone then; but M. Héger sent for her, and "pronounced with vehemence his decision that I should not leave," and she promised to stay on a little longer. Through November, home affairs were filling her heart. Her father's eyesight was failing; more of the work of the parish was devolving on the curate; and, Mr. Weightman being dead, the curate was new. There was no longer Aunt Branwell at hand, with her little gold eyeglass, to read to Mr. Brontë out of the *Leeds Intelligencer* and *Blackwood's Magazine.* The "fighting gentry" had come about him, the more convivial of them with their late hours, their talk, and their whisky-toddy; and the poor old parson, so long almost a stoic in the simplicity of his life, was drinking a great deal more whisky than was good for him.

Charlotte could not tell the Hégers all that was on her mind, but her father's growing blindness was reason enough. In December she gave up her post; and on January 2, 1844, armed with "a kind of diploma," signed by M. Héger, and sealed with the seal of the Athénée Royal de Bruxelles, of which he was professor, she arrived at the parsonage.

"I suffered much before I left Brussels. I think, however long I live, I shall not forget what the parting with M. Héger cost me; it grieved me so much to grieve him, who has been so true, kind, and disinterested a friend. . . . There are times now when it appears to me as if all my ideas and feelings, except a few friendships and affections, are changed from what they used to be: something in me, which used to be enthusiasm, is tamed down and broken. I have fewer illusions; what I wish for now is active exertion—a stake in life." *

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* Clement Shorter's *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle.*

X.

CURRER, ELLIS, AND ACTON BELL.

CHARLOTTE took Aunt Branwell's place in the grey old parsonage, and with his eldest daughter's home-coming the parson resumed, once for all, his old abstemious habits of life.

Charlotte and Emily, with Emily's big bulldog at her heels, tramped the moors, and laid their plans for setting up a school of their own under the parsonage roof. They actually printed a circular, announcing the existence of "The Misses Brontë's Establishment for the Board and Education of a Limited Number of Young Ladies." The pupils were to be charged £35 a year; the "extras" were to consist of the hard-won French and German, with Latin (was "papa" to teach that ?), music, and drawing. Each young lady was to bring with her sheets, pillow-cases, towels, and two spoons—nobody knows why not also a knife and fork. The sisters even talked of the alterations that would be needed at the parsonage; but month after month passed, and not one single pupil applied.

Mr. Brontë was now so nearly blind that he was led up the steps into his pulpit. His congregation found the old man's extempore sermons as forcible as ever, and they noticed that from old habit he ended exactly at the half-hour, though he could no longer see the clock in front of his pulpit. He was often in very low

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*.

spirits, for he was afraid that as his blindness increased he should become "nothing in his parish." But this was no longer the turbulent Irishman of youthful days; he was never impatient, "only anxious and dejected."

The Taylor family had lost money, and Mary Taylor had gone out to New Zealand, with one of her brothers, and set up there on her own account, in "a small drapery business." Ellen Nussey was keeping house for her brother Henry; but in the summer of 1845 Charlotte's old admirer, Henry Nussey, was married, and while he was on his honeymoon Charlotte stayed with Ellen at his Derbyshire vicarage. There might have been a more exhilarating holiday than a visit to the house of an old admirer while he was away being married to somebody else; but it was a very happy time—the last happy time that Charlotte was to spend for many a long day. When she returned home, Branwell was at the parsonage, "very ill."

This time Branwell had positively excelled himself. It was evident that he had been drinking again; but his latest achievement had been to make love to the wife of his employer. The lady had told her husband, the tutor was "sternly dismissed," and of course poor Anne, the most deserving of governesses, was obliged to pack her box and follow her brother.

The interior of the parsonage may be imagined. "He will do nothing but drink, and make us all wretched," wrote poor Charlotte. They tried to prevent his drinking by keeping him without money, but he found opium "more portable and more effectual" than whisky or gin. His plausibility and his eloquence of self-pity played upon their feelings, and, with a dipsomaniac's low cunning, he managed to trick them all. To the very end his sisters more than half believed his whining story. He wrote weak poetry; he wrote letters—profusely illustrated with sketches of himself undergoing various forms of bodily and mental torture—to the one or two companions of his portrait-painting railway-clerking days; he talked grandiosely at the

Black Bull, and he babbled, "in confidence," to every one who would listen to him; but it was all one long tissue of lies—the lies of the opium-eater.

In one of Charlotte Brontë's letters to M. Héger, written * with all the care of one of her old *devoirs*, she tells him that if she could write a book, she would dedicate it to "*Mon maître de litterature, au seul maître que j'aie jamais eu—à vous, Monsieur!*" But she is afraid that will never be: "*Il ne faut pas y penser. La carrière des lettres m'est fermée.*"

But the darkest hour comes before the dawn. Charlotte Brontë came accidentlly one day on a little manuscript volume of poetry in Emily's handwriting. Anne thereupon brought her poems to be looked at; and the three sisters—for Charlotte also had been guilty of writing poetry—agreed to publish a volume of their collected verses. They decided to assume the names of "Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell." They did not wish to claim "positively masculine" names; but they had noticed that reviewers had a sort of prejudice against women's work, an objectionable manner both of criticizing and of praising women. So they kept their own initials, and chose names that might belong to either men or women. They wrote to several publishers without getting any answer at all; but at last, in the spring of 1846, "Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell" had placed their little volume with Messrs. Aylott & Jones of Paternoster Row. It was to be published at the authors' expense, and cost them £31, 10s. Aylott & Jones were by no means well-known publishers—in fact they had scarcely published anything at all—but that mattered little so long as they were going to publish the works of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Great was the satisfaction of the sisters in all the preliminary details of type and paper. The publishers knew them only as "three persons, relatives," and the £31, 10s. was duly received at Paternoster Row. In April, the little volume—a much thinner volume than they had expected—appeared. The editor of *Blackwood's Magazine,* of course, received a presentation copy, and so did eight or ten other magazines and newspapers of the day—most of them now extinct. The *Dublin University Magazine* gave the book such a good review that " Currer Bell " was moved to write and thank that periodical; and the *Athenæum* also gave them a notice under " Poetry for the Million." The *Athenæum* praised Emily's poems most, Charlotte's came next, and Anne's followed meekly in the wake. By July, Messrs. Aylott & Jones reported *two copies* sold; and one of these must have been read by somebody, for a gentleman in Warwick had actually written, through the publishers, to ask for the autographs of the "Messrs. Bell." The sisters began to feel the thrill of excitement that comes with writing books. Already each was engaged on a prose work—a work of fiction. They had fallen back on their old habit of sitting up late, and pacing up and down the parsonage dining-room. Each had worked out a plot, and talked it into shape; and now the three novels were nearly finished. The great difficulty was to find any publisher who would undertake, at his own expense, to publish three works of fiction by three unknown authors—always supposing, of course, that he liked the works of fiction after he had seen them. Messrs. Aylott & Jones politely refused; it was not exactly in their way.

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*; Clement Shorter's *The Brontës and their Circle*; Charlotte Brontë's *Letters to M. Héger* (British Museum).

For months the manuscripts were sent about, at first together, and then separately. Charlotte had called hers *The Professor,* Emily's was *Wuthering Heights,* and Anne's was *Agnes Grey.*

Charlotte Brontë used to tell afterwards how *The Professor* had come back from one of its journeys by post just as she and her father were starting for Manchester, where Mr. Brontë was to be operated on for cataract. Charlotte and Emily had already been to Manchester to see the oculist, Mr. Wilson; and in August 1846 Charlotte and her father were settled in their Manchester lodgings. The old parson proved a real Spartan, and the operation was very successful. All went well, and in September father and daughter were back at the parsonage again. Mr. Brontë was not allowed to use his eyes much. Branwell had behaved pretty well during their absence.

The winter set in very cold at Haworth, and—the three novels were still going the round of the publishers—the sisters were feeling nipped and dull. "Nothing happens at Haworth," wrote Charlotte; and then she remembered that something had happened "to sting us to life." A sheriff's officer had arrived for Branwell. Branwell must either pay his debts or "take a trip to York." And, of course, the debts were paid.

While Charlotte was in the lodgings at Manchester she had begun another novel. On one of those evenings at the parsonage, when the sisters walked up and down the dining-room, they had discussed their heroines. Charlotte maintained that the other two were "morally wrong" in making heroines always beautiful. Emily and Anne thought heroines could not be interesting unless they were beautiful; and then Charlotte had broken out, with some passion:

"I will prove to you that you are wrong. I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours." And so, in that Manchester lodging, while the parson lay in his darkened room, Charlotte Brontë, with a pencil and loose sheets of paper, as was her wont, writing on her knee, against a piece of board or broken book-cover, had begun to write *Jane Eyre.*

The story of the publication of *Jane Eyre* is one of the gold nuggets of literary history. *The Professor* had been sent, "as a forlorn hope," to Messrs. Smith & Elder, in Cornhill. It was characteristic of Charlotte Brontë that she had sent it in the same old paper wrapping in which it had made its journeys to and from all the other publishers who had rejected it. Their names were merely scored out, but were quite legible.

Messrs. Smith & Elder returned the manuscript,* but with it came a letter so courteous and so kind, a letter containing such wise criticism and advice, that it in itself made up for the disappointment of a refusal. And the letter held out a hope. If the writer of *The Professor* would send them a three-volumed novel, Messrs. Smith & Elder would give it their careful consideration.

And *Jane Eyre* was already half finished! On August 24, 1847, the precious manuscript was sent off by rail. Everybody knows how Mr. Williams—Messrs. Smith & Elder's literary adviser—read it first; and how Mr. Smith was "much amused" by Mr. Williams's unbounded enthusiasm; and how Mr. James Taylor—who, being a Scotsman, was not supposed to be of an enthusiastic temperament at all—read it next, and sat up half the night to finish it; and how at last Mr. Smith read it himself, and agreed with them both that it was a wonderful book.

After some correspondence and much proof-correcting—for "C. Bell" had apparently not punctuated his manuscript at all correctly—in October Smith & Elder published *Jane Eyre, an Autobiography, edited by "Currer Bell."* A day or two later six presentation copies arrived at the parsonage, and "C. Bell" wrote off to 65 Cornhill: "You have given the work every advantage which good paper, clear type, and a seemly outside can supply. If it fails, the fault will lie with the author; you are exempt. I now await the judgment of the press and the public."

And everybody knows what that judgment was. From that day there was a constant coming and going of letters and literary notices between the house in Cornhill and the parsonage at Haworth. Charlotte Brontë was triumphantly launched on that "*carrière des lettres*" which, so short a time before, had seemed so impossible to her. But all the time nobody, in Cornhill or anywhere else—not even Ellen Nussey—knew who "C. Bell" was—whether man or woman; and when the Haworth postman asked Mr. Brontë who the "Currer Bell" could be for whom so many letters came, the parson assured him there was no person of that name in the parish. For some time Mr. Brontë had been "silently cognisant" that his daughters were doing something in the literary line. It could scarcely have been otherwise, with three daughters and four novels, and pen and ink and paper all over the parsonage. But Charlotte's moment of triumph came on the day when, just after "papa" had finished his early dinner, she walked into his study with the three volumes of *Jane Eyre* in her hand, and one or two carefully selected reviews of the book, some good and one bad. Mrs. Gaskell heard the story from Charlotte Brontë's own lips, and wrote it down at the time: *

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* *The Professor* was not published till after Charlotte Brontë's death.

"Papa, I've been writing a book."

"Have you, my dear?"

"Yes; and I want you to read it."

"I am afraid it will try my eyes too much."

"But it is not in manuscript; it is printed."

And then, of course, the poor old parson's first thought was the expense. Had Charlotte thought of that? It would be almost sure to be a loss. But little Charlotte quietly unfolded some of the reviews.

"But, papa, I don't think it will be a loss; no more will you, if you will just let me read you a review or two and tell you more about it."

Then she left him alone with *Jane Eyre*; and when he came out of his study at tea-time, he uttered the memorable paternal benediction, so often quoted, "Girls, do you know Charlotte has been writing a book, and *it is much better than likely*?"

The "girls" shared their sister's triumph. Their novels too had been accepted some little time before this by a Mr. Newby of Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square, and were to be published together, in three volumes—Emily's in the first two, and Anne's in the third volume. Mr. Newby, however, was not like Messrs. Smith & Elder, and it was only after much vexatious delay that *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* appeared, in December 1847. Unlike *Jane Eyre,* they made no sensation in the literary world.

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*.

And what of Branwell Brontë all this time? It is difficult to understand, but Charlotte Brontë has left it on record that Branwell knew nothing of the publication of these novels. His condition had been going from bad to worse. His story—long ago proved to have been the hallucination of a disordered brain—was that when his "enemy"* died he was to marry the widow; and he wrote and talked largely of the day when he should come into possession of "herself and estate." But in May 1846 his "enemy" did die, and then his story changed: the marriage was impossible because the "estate" had been left in such a way that the whole of it would be forfeited by a second marriage. A horseman was said to have brought this unwelcome news to Branwell at the Black Bull. Exactly what did happen inside the parlour of the Black Bull Inn was never divulged; but the Haworth villagers said that, when the horseman rode away, he left Branwell Brontë "bleating like a calf."

At times the parsonage must have been like a lunatic asylum. Branwell slept in his father's room, and in his fits of delirium he more than once threatened to kill the brave old man, who, half blind as he was, would allow no one else to wrestle with his son. The sisters, lying awake, would listen in terror for the report of a pistol, or a dull, heavy thud on the floor. And in the morning Branwell would come down to breakfast with his, "The poor old man and I have had a terrible night of it. He does his best, but it's all over with me!"

Charlotte warned Ellen Nussey, when she came to stay at the parsonage in August 1847, that she must expect to find Branwell changed in appearance, that he was " broken in mind." And to somewhere about this time belongs the description from the pen of Mr. Grundy, his friend of the railway-station days. Mr. Grundy had come to Haworth to see Branwell. He had ordered dinner for two at the Black Bull, and had sent up a message to the parsonage.

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* His late employer.

" Whilst I waited his appearance, his father was shown in. Much of the Rector's old stiffness of manner was gone. He spoke of Branwell with more affection than I had ever heretofore heard him express ; but he also spoke almost hopelessly."

The parson had only come to explain that his son was in bed ill, but that he had insisted on dressing and coming, and would be there immediately.

" Presently the door opened cautiously, and a head appeared. It was a mass of red, unkempt, uncut hair, wildly floating round a great gaunt forehead, the cheeks yellow and hollow, the mouth fallen, the thin white lips not trembling but shaking, the sunken eyes, once small, now glaring with the light of madness. . . ." *

This was the handsome boy, the pride of the family. Almost in despair, Charlotte writes, in January 1848 : " Papa is harassed day and night ; we have little peace ; he is always sick ; has two or three times fallen down in fits. What will be the ultimate end, God knows."

XI.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

In April 1848 *Jane Eyre* was in a third edition, and was having " a great run " in America. More often than ever did the Haworth postman bring letters for " Mr. Currer Bell, care of Miss Brontë." There were welcome

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* Leyland.

"remittances," too, of £100 at a time, from Messrs. Smith & Elder; and Mr. Williams, their literary adviser, who was the first to read *Jane Eyre*, wrote regularly to "Mr. Currer Bell." With his delightful letters came the newspaper and magazine notices as they appeared, and all sorts of new books—gifts from the firm in Cornhill. And all the time nobody at Cornhill knew whether "Currer Bell," the author of *Jane Eyre*, was man or woman.

Meantime, *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, so awkwardly linked together, were by no means setting the Thames on fire. Emily and Anne had advanced £50 on their venture, and were not getting anything back from Mr. Newby. But Anne had written another novel, and in June 1848 Mr. Newby, apparently on the chance of a popularity reflected from *Jane Eyre*, published *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, by Acton Bell*, in three volumes. For this, Anne received £25 on the day of publication, and was to receive another £25 when 250 copies should be sold. Poor Emily, therefore, whose strange, wild genius was to raise her afterwards on a pedestal of her very own, was so far the only one of the trio whose work had met with no recognition.

It was a week or two after the appearance of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*—one Friday early in July 1848—that the letter arrived from Messrs. Smith & Elder which caused such consternation at the parsonage. The American publisher of *Jane Eyre* had bargained for early sheets of the next novel by Currer Bell; but it now appeared that a rival American firm was advertising an edition of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* as being by the author of *Jane Eyre*, and that Mr. Newby was assuring people that Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell were really one and the same person, and that Acton Bell's new novel was likely to eclipse *Jane Eyre*. Here was a situation for the sisters! Charlotte and Anne decided that they must go up to London at once, to "prove their separate identity"; and thus did the famous week-end in London come about, so graphically described by Mrs.

Gaskell. Mr. Clement Shorter has preserved Charlotte Brontë's letter to Mary Taylor in New Zealand, from which Mrs. Gaskell took her account.*

That very Friday, after tea, Charlotte and Anne set off on foot to Keighley, were overtaken by a thunderstorm—with snow, in July!—just managed to catch the train to Leeds, and from Leeds were "whirled up to London by the night train." Of course they put up at the Chapter Coffee-house—"our old place, Polly," wrote Charlotte to Mary Taylor. No ladies ever went to the Chapter Coffee-house; it was an inn frequented by booksellers, and now and then by a clergyman, like their father, from the country. But the old waiter made them as comfortable as he could, and after breakfast they sallied forth on foot to find No. 65 Cornhill.

The two little women, "in queer inward excitement," entered the big bookseller's shop and asked to speak to Mr. Smith. There was some hesitation, for the ladies had withheld their names; but at last they were "shown up," and Mr. Smith, a tall young man, standing in a small room, lighted by a great skylight, saw approaching him two demure-looking little women, one of whom, looking up at him through her spectacles, placed in his hands his own letter to "Mr. Currer Bell" —the letter that had arrived at the parsonage the day before.

The tall young man looked at the letter, and then again at the two little women.

"*Where did you get this?*" he asked, in evident perplexity, and Charlotte Brontë, still looking up at him through her spectacles, could not help laughing.

"A recognition took place." This, then, was Currer Bell? *this* was the author of *Jane Eyre*!

Mr. Williams was fetched immediately, and Charlotte saw, in the "pale, mild, stooping man of fifty," the man who had first read her, and discovered her, and made her fame and fortune, with whom she had ever since been corresponding so delightfully. Little wonder that there was more recognition, and a " long, nervous shaking of hands." It was a good thing that they all had the enormities of Mr. Newby to fall back upon.

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* **Clement Shorter's *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*.**

The days that followed seemed like a dream. Nothing could have been more kind and hospitable than Mr. George Smith and his mother and sisters. There was the visit to the opera, to hear Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, when Charlotte and Anne, in their homely, high-necked gowns, found themselves on the great crimson staircase of the Opera House, amid the " gracefully supercilious " wealth and fashion of a London season ; and Charlotte could not help slightly pressing Mr. Williams's arm and whispering, "*You know I am not accustomed to this sort of thing*." There was the Sunday morning service in a London city church, with Mr. Williams as escort, and the rather nervous dinner at Mr. Smith's " splendid " house in Bayswater ; and on Monday there were the pictures at the National Gallery and the Royal Academy, and dinner again in Bayswater, and an evening visit to Mr. Williams's house, to see his " fine family of eight."

On Tuesday, " laden with books," they were whirled away again, and, very tired, very excited and happy, found themselves once more at home, in the old parsonage, embedded in the moors. Only the kindly publishers were in their secret ; to the world at large the sisters were still " Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell " ; and during the London visit Charlotte and Anne had passed as " the Miss Browns."

That summer Branwell Brontë was very ill. His conduct was much the same, but his constitution was shattered. August and September passed miserably. Nobody at the parsonage—not even the doctors who had been called in—realized how near the end was. Branwell was in the village on September 22nd, and he died on the 24th.

" We have hurried our dead out of our sight," wrote

Charlotte to the sympathetic Mr. Williams. The old parson, now that it was all over, was "acutely distressed"; and the sisters, after three years of a life that was like a nightmare to look back upon, told each other that Branwell had been more his old innocent self during those last two days of his life.

At the time of Branwell's death, Emily and Anne were both ill—both were, in fact, victims of the disease that had carried off the two little sisters nearly twenty years before. Emily Brontë sank rapidly. She never left the parsonage after the Sunday following her brother's death, and in less than three months—before the year was out—she too was dead.

"The spirit was inexorable to the flesh," says Charlotte of this sister. She had inherited the parson's physical courage and his obduracy. In the old days, when they had dubbed her "the Major," it was Emily who, in her eccentric fashion, had stood between them and the little disagreeables of life, on whom the household duties had fallen heaviest as "Tabby" grew old and infirm. It was Emily who cared for the animals—the dogs, the geese, and the tame hawk, "Hero." Many are the stories of Emily's Spartan self-discipline. Once, when a strange dog bit her hand, she went into the parsonage kitchen and, without alarming any one, seared her own wound with a red-hot iron. When the sisters, going upstairs one night, saw flames coming out of Branwell's room, it was Emily who had the presence of mind to extinguish the fire with pails of water, without waking the parson. It was Emily who quelled her bulldog into obedience with her own bare fist, and then herself tenderly fomented his poor old swollen head. During those last dark years it had always been Emily who was "strong enough" to sit up for Branwell when he was out late at night, and receive him in his terrible condition. It was she who was most often in Branwell's company. It has often been said that her novel, *Wuthering Heights*, reads like the dream of an opium-eater; and there is little doubt that, while the atmosphere of the book was her very own—the pure, wild, rain-swept atmosphere of her beloved, purple-black moors—the ugly human drama—the story of Heathcliff and Catherine—was Emily Brontë's weird and powerful interpretation of the ravings of her drug-sodden brother.

And there can be no doubt, though little has ever been said about it, that the reception of *Wuthering Heights* was a keen disappointment in those last months of Emily Brontë's life. She and Anne had been generously sympathetic with Charlotte's successes—Thackeray's praise, the letters and books and reviews that were always coming from 65 Cornhill, the drafts of £100 that followed each new edition. Even Anne's *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* was in a second edition—that very commonplace and orthodox presentment of the evils of drink and profligacy, as the poor little sister had seen them daily before her eyes. And Emily's book—a work of immature but extraordinary genius, written with a woman's very heart-blood, a work "surcharged with a sort of moral electricity"—had been a failure. The people who had read it were shocked by it—that was all.

When Emily was ill, Charlotte read aloud a notice in the *North America Review*, very uncomplimentary to all three of "the Bells." Emily smiled, "half amused and half in scorn," as she listened. It must have been at this very time she wrote her last passionate lines, beginning:

> "No coward soul is mine,
> No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere
> I see Heaven's glories shine,
> And faith shines equal, arming me from fear." *

To the outside world Emily Brontë has always been an enigma. It is difficult to explain the silent obstinacy which prevented her from acknowledging that she was ill. She would see no "poisoning doctor"; she would accept no help. Slowly and painfully she would dress herself, and even doggedly take up her sewing, to the very last hours of her life. Yet, " I think Emily seems the nearest thing to my heart in this world," wrote Charlotte when her sister was dying. In her own home Emily was passionately loved.

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* *Selections from the Literary Remains of Ellis and Acton Bell.*

" Day by day, when I saw with what a front she met suffering, I looked on her with an anguish of wonder and love. I have seen nothing like it ; but, indeed, I have never seen her parallel in anything. Stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone."

They buried her in the church aisle, with her mother and sisters and the " hapless brother." One of the group of mourners at the grave was the bulldog, Keeper. He had joined the little procession, and " walked alongside of the mourners " and into the church, and with them he had stayed quietly till the last words of the burial service had been read. Then he had gone home, to lie disconsolate outside Emily's bedroom door. He would never lie on the hearthrug again with Emily and her German books, Emily's thin arm about his bulldoggy neck.

In that very December 1848, the famous article on *Vanity Fair* and *Jane Eyre* appeared in the *Quarterly*. The writer—anonymous at the time, but afterwards known to be Miss Rigby, who became Lady Eastlake—hazarded the unpleasant suggestion that if *Jane Eyre* were by a woman, it must be a woman who " for some sufficient reason has long forfeited the society of her sex." For some time her publishers kept back the *Quarterly*, but at last they were obliged to let Charlotte Brontë see it. She took it very quietly. " The lash of the *Quarterly*," she wrote back, " however severely applied, cannot sting. Currer Bell feels a sorrowful independence of reviews and reviewers." She kept the *Quarterly* to herself, knowing that it would only " worry papa." She was always very careful to tell the parson just enough of her literary successes to please, without exciting him. She was at work on another novel, to be called *Shirley*; but she never talked much about her writing, and father and daughter were at this time thinking only about Anne.

Anne was as docile and reasonable as Emily had been unflinching—"the patientest, gentlest invalid that could be." * The winter and spring passed wearily. Ellen Nussey and their old schoolmistress, Miss Wooler, did what they could. Far-away doctors were consulted, remedies suggested and tried, respirators and warm soles for little shoes were sent by post, and plans were made for change of air when the weather should be warmer. "I long to do some good in the world before I leave it," Anne wrote to Ellen Nussey. "I have many schemes in my head for future practice—humble and limited, indeed, but still I should not like them all to come to nothing . . . but God's will be done." And in this mood she wrote the pathetic lines that were to be her last, beginning:

> "I hoped that with the brave and strong
> My portioned task might lie,
> To toil amid the busy throng
> With purpose pure and high." †

In May, Charlotte took luxurious lodgings at Scarborough, and on May 24th a sad little cavalcade left the parsonage, the "little sister" carried downstairs to the open chaise by Charlotte and Ellen Nussey. They spent a night at York, and Anne was carried into the Minster, to look and listen her last. At Scarborough they hired a donkey-chair, and drove her on the sands, and she held the reins herself, afraid lest the donkey should be over-driven. On Sunday, the 27th of May, they dissuaded her from going to church; but in the evening the three women, from the windows of that Scarborough lodging, watched in silence a most glorious sunset over the sea, the castle and cliff standing out against the crimson of the setting sun, "the distant ships glittering like burnished gold."

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*.

† *Selections from the Literary Remains of Ellis and Acton Bell.*

And next day Anne Brontë died in their arms. "Give Charlotte as much of your company as you can," she whispered to Ellen Nussey, and to Charlotte herself, "Take courage, Charlotte! take courage!"

Anne Brontë was buried at Scarborough. A week or ten days later Charlotte returned home alone. The parson, old Tabby, and Martha met her at the door. The dogs—Emily's "Keeper" and Anne's little "Flossy"—seemed "in strange ecstasy." In their doggy minds her return only heralded the others.

And Charlotte? She went into the old dining-room, where they had walked up and down so many times, with arms about each other's waists. The dear old partnership was dissolved. She shut herself in; all by herself she faced "*the agony that was to be undergone.*"

"Solitude, remembrance, and longing" were to be her companions, night and day.

XII.

THE ZENITH.

WITH an almost superhuman effort Charlotte Brontë finished writing *Shirley*. About two-thirds of the novel had been written before Branwell died; then, while Emily and Anne were ill, the manuscript had been laid aside. Now, sitting alone in the parsonage, Charlotte took it up, and began writing at the chapter that she has called "The Valley of the Shadow of Death."

The novel was finished by the end of August. Early in September the manuscript was sent off to Messrs. Smith & Elder in London, and *Shirley*, in three volumes, was published on October 26th.

Jane Eyre had contained much that was autobiographic, but the plot of *Shirley* is laid among the scenes, and peopled with the men and women, known to Charlotte Brontë from her childhood up. The local colour and atmosphere are exact. The Yorke family are "almost daguerreotypes" of her old friends the Taylors of Gomersal; the "fighting gentry" are there to the life, exactly as they used to gather round the parsonage tea-table. And Shirley herself is Emily Brontë—Emily, as she might have been.

Charlotte hoped, since the incidents of the story were imaginative, that she might escape detection; but in this she was mistaken. A Haworth man in Liverpool read the novel, and guessed its authorship. He was quite sure it must have been written by somebody belonging to Haworth, and who in that village could have written it if not the parson's daughter, Charlotte? The Haworth man wrote to the Liverpool papers, and the secret was out.

And so "Currer Bell," the sole survivor of the little trio "Bell & Co.," was at last discovered; and the London literary world was all agog when, in November, Charlotte was in London again, not this time at the old Chapter Coffee-house, but with the Smiths, who duly lionized her, and took her to see the sights of London—to her an "exciting whirl." She was very shy and nervous, and easily overtired. She said all the wrong things to Thackeray when he was asked to meet her at dinner, and she had an uncomfortable sensation that he must think her "fearfully stupid." The fact was, he puzzled her; she could never tell if he were in jest or earnest. She was more comfortable in Miss Martineau's society; and it is to Miss Martineau and Mrs. Gaskell that we owe the descriptions of this little literary lioness of 1849. In her deep mourning gown, Quakerlike in its simplicity, Charlotte Brontë looked an almost childlike figure among the Londoners. Her beautiful hair was smooth and brown, her face sensible and self-controlled, her wonderful eyes "blazing with meaning."

"I never saw the like," says Mrs. Gaskell about those eyes, "in any human creature." They made you, she says, forget that the face was plain; they arrested the attention; they attracted all those whom Charlotte Brontë herself would have cared to attract. And Mrs. Gaskell has paid a pretty tribute to the dainty fit of the shoes and gloves, the extreme smallness of the foot and hand—that little hand that lay in the palm of a friend "like the soft touch of a bird."

Shirley was well reviewed, and "went off" well, though the *Times* notice was so severe that hot tears fell on Charlotte's lap as she read it. And G. H. Lewes, who had been such a friendly critic to the unknown "Mr. Currer Bell," hurt Charlotte Brontë's sensibilities, now that he knew she was a woman, by his article with all its banalities about the duties of womanhood in the *Edinburgh Review*.

After all, her real triumph was at home, in Haworth. She confessed to Mary Taylor—out in New Zealand—that she had lived too long in seclusion to enjoy London society. She felt herself disqualified for it; she had become "unready, nervous, excitable"; she found herself either incapable of speech, or else given to talking vapidly. But at home she was the daughter of the venerable incumbent, the little châtelaine of the oblong stone parsonage, as well as a real live literary lady. "The Haworth people have been making great fools of themselves about *Shirley*," she wrote to Ellen Nussey; "they have taken it in an enthusiastic light." *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley* had been added to the library of the Mechanics' Institute at Keighley, and, of course, all the members wanted to read *Shirley* immediately. The villagers were delighted, and Martha, the parsonage maid, came home greatly excited. "Please, ma'am, I've heard such news! You've been and written two books, the grandest books that ever was seen!"

People began to come to Haworth from a distance for the chance of a glimpse of the author of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*; and John Brown, the sexton, pocketed half-crowns for pointing her out at church on Sundays.

The Kaye-Shuttleworths drove over to call at the parsonage, to persuade her to visit them at the Lakes; and Lord John Manners and a brilliant house-party arrived at the parsonage, Lord John carrying a brace of grouse for the parson's table. Even the three curates—Mr. Smith, Mr. Grant, and Mr. Bradley—magnanimously forgave her for her treatment of them in *Shirley*. They seem, indeed, to have been rather flattered, and they certainly did not leave off coming to tea.

It must not be supposed that poor Mr. Weightman, of pleasant memory, will be found among the "Holyes" in any of Charlotte Brontë's novels. His successor, Mr. Smith—the Mr. Malone of *Shirley*—was no longer curate of Haworth when *Shirley* appeared in 1849. He had been promoted to another living shortly after Charlotte's return from Brussels, and since that time Mr. Brontë's coadjutor in the parish had been Mr. Arthur Bell Nicholls. Mr. Nicholls was delighted with *Shirley*; for it may be remembered that, at the end of the novel, a Mr. Macarthey—the curate who succeeds Mr. Malone—is spoken of as one who "did as much credit to his country as Malone had done it discredit. . . . He laboured faithfully in the parish; the schools, both Sunday and day schools, flourished under his sway like green bay-trees. Being human, of course, he had his faults. These, however, were proper, steadygoing, clerical faults. The circumstance of finding himself invited to tea with a dissenter would unhinge him for a week; the spectacle of a Quaker wearing his hat in the church, the thought of an unbaptized fellow-creature being interred with Christian rites—these things could make strange havoc in Mr. Macarthey's physical and mental economy; otherwise he was sane and rational, diligent, and charitable." *

Mr. Macarthey was avowedly drawn from the character of Mr. Nicholls; and when Mr. Nicholls sat himself down in his lodgings in Haworth village to read

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* *Shirley*, Chapter xxxvii.

Shirley, his landlady "seriously thought he had gone wrong in his head, as she heard him giving vent to roars of laughter, and even clapping his hands and stamping on the floor."

It had been more than once rumoured that there was, or might well be, an attachment between the parson's clever daughter and the "Christian gentleman" who had laboured faithfully for so many years as curate of Haworth, and who seemed to have no ambition to move on elsewhere. But Charlotte Brontë had always laughed at the rumour, and denied it. "Who gravely asked you whether Miss Brontë was not going to be married to her papa's curate?" she wrote to Ellen Nussey in 1846. "I scarcely need say that never was rumour more unfounded."

As the years went by, mentions of Mr. Nicholls crop up in her letters—slight, indeed, but always as of one at hand, ready to do any service required of him. It was Mr. Nicholls who was ready to take up his abode at the parsonage and look after the parson when Charlotte was away from home. When she is flaunting demurely in the big Babylon, and writes such dutiful little letters to "papa" at home, there is always a message to Mr. Nicholls, as well as to old Tabby and Martha and the dogs. The years 1850 to 1852 were, in spite of poor health and depressed spirits, "Currer Bell's" most brilliant years; and Mr. Nicholls, by birth a proud and taciturn Scot, was only a poor curate with one hundred a year. Even so late as 1852 Charlotte Brontë was not thinking of marrying her father's curate; and certainly Mr. Brontë was not thinking of it. All the old man's social and intellectual ambitions, so often and so cruelly disappointed, seem at last to have been satisfied in "my daughter"—my daughter's genius, my daughter's novels, and my daughter's publishers. He carefully preserved every literary notice; he accepted, with a pathetic mixture of pride and humility, the little attentions that reached him through her celebrity. He enjoyed Lord John Manners's grouse, and he browsed to his heart's content among the boxes of books that came from Cornhill. With an old man's dread of any interference with his daily habits of life, he was feverishly anxious that Charlotte should see more society. He pressed her to accept invitations, assuring her he should get on nicely with Tabby and Martha and Mr. Nicholls. Mrs. Gaskell thought it sounded very depressing when Charlotte wrote, in autumn: "Papa and I have just had tea; he is sitting quietly in his room, and I in mine. Storms of rain are sweeping over the garden and churchyard. As to the moors, they are hidden in thick fog." And it was still more depressing when she wrote, in winter: "London and summer are many months away. Our moors are all white with snow just now, and little redbreasts come every morning to the window for crumbs."

But it must be remembered that Mrs. Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë were two absolutely different natures. Charlotte Brontë's genius had grown and flowered in a hard and stony soil, under a stormy sky; it had no affinity with the gay window-boxes of a London season. She enjoyed, in a sort of a way, her little fortnights in June—a debate in the Commons; a sight of the Great Duke, at last, face to face; her nervous little wit-combats with the Titan Thackeray; her graver encounters with Lewes, whom she forgave, because he was so like Emily! She enjoyed her visits to the Kaye-Shuttleworths and to Miss Martineau at the Lakes, and to Mrs. Gaskell in Manchester. She looked back with romance on her little tour to Edinburgh and Abbotsford with the Smiths. But she was always glad to get back to her father and the intense silence of the parsonage; to her own little realm of pen and ink, and the boxes of new books sent so regularly from Cornhill.

While she was in London in 1850, she sat to Richmond for her portrait. It was Mr. George Smith's gift to her father; and with it came another portrait, a wonderful head of the Great Duke, Charlotte's lifelong hero. Both portraits gave enormous pleasure at the parsonage. The parson's letter of thanks to Mr. Smith was in itself a work of early Victorian art. Old Tabby was more critical: she did not think the artist had done justice to her young lady; but the other portrait was the living image of "the master"!

Towards the end of 1850, Messrs. Smith & Elder republished *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, with a memoir of her sisters by Charlotte Brontë. She had already begun to write her third novel, *Villette;* but the revision of these stories, and the writing of that most pathetic of memoirs, had been a "sacred duty"—as she calls it—but also a difficult and painful task. It had brought back vividly the days when the sisters were together under the parsonage roof. Sad and restless, Charlotte did not seem able to get on with *Villette*. She was always taking it up, and putting it aside again. "There was no one to whom to read a line, or to whom to ask a counsel. *Jane Eyre* was not written under such circumstances, nor were two-thirds of *Shirley*." *

Early in 1851 another suitor appeared at Haworth parsonage. Mr. James Taylor—a Scotsman, a clever man, managing clerk to Messrs. Smith & Elder, and the man who had sat up half the night to read *Jane Eyre*—came all the way to Haworth to prefer his suit. Mr. Brontë liked Mr. Taylor; it would apparently have satisfied his sense of the fitness of things if Charlotte had become Mrs. James Taylor. The old parson even told his daughter that he had made up his mind, if she married, "to give up housekeeping and go into lodgings." But, alas! "friendship, gratitude, and esteem" were forthcoming; but Charlotte confessed that in the presence of Mr. James Taylor her "veins ran ice." And so Mr. Taylor received his *congé*, and shortly afterwards the firm sent him away to manage a branch of their publishing business in Bombay.

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* Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*.

Perhaps the month in London that followed on this little romance was the most brilliant month in Charlotte Brontë's life. For it was the year of the great Exhibition; and she had provided herself with a white lace cloak to wear over her black satin gown, and a bonnet with a lining of pink drawn silk. And it was the year of Thackeray's lectures in Willis's Rooms; and she found herself at the second of the lectures, in the "cream of London society." And Thackeray himself—with duchesses and countesses all round him—met "Currer Bell" at the door, and took her up to where his mother was sitting—"the fine, handsome, young-looking old lady." And Lord Carlisle and Monckton Milnes introduced themselves in whispers to Miss Brontë, as "Yorkshiremen"; and after the lecture was over, the cream of London society made a pathway for "Currer Bell" as she walked out, "all in a tremble!"

The Crystal Palace in Hyde Park—that "mixture of a genii palace and a mighty bazaar"—fairly bewildered her, though she walked about it on Sir David Brewster's arm. She saw Rachel, the great French actress; and it was "terrible, as if the earth had cracked deep at her feet and revealed a glimpse of hell." Service at the Spanish Ambassador's chapel, with Cardinal Wiseman in his robes and mitre, seemed to her "impiously theatrical"; but d'Aubigné, the French Protestant preacher, had moved her strangely. "It was half sweet, half sad, and strangely suggestive to hear the French language once more." On her way home she stayed with the Gaskells in Manchester, and spent a whole day in choosing a shawl as a present for Tabby. And when Miss Wooler came to pay a visit at the parsonage—the parson had for years carried on a patriarchal flirtation with Miss Wooler—the company of her old schoolmistress seemed to Charlotte, even after all the society of the Babylon, "like good wine."

But the winter of 1851–52 was one of sickness, loneliness, and terrible depression. Such sad little mile-stones marked the road! Poor old "Keeper," quite toothless and fond only of the doorstep in the sun, died in December. "Flossy" missed his drowsy company. *Villette* lagged; Charlotte wanted strength and spirits to write it.

In June Charlotte visited Scarborough and Anne's grave, all alone. That summer the parson was seriously ill, and all the time Messrs. Smith & Elder were pressing her for the new novel. They wanted to advertise "Currer Bell's New Work" for the publishing season. When, in September, the Great Duke died, Charlotte scarcely noticed the passing of her hero; her letters are only a cry of "I don't get on. . . . I feel fretted—incapable—sometimes very low."

It was Mr. Brontë who insisted on a visit from Ellen Nussey; and his prescription acted like magic. "After her friend's departure," says Mrs. Gaskell, "she was well enough to 'fall to business,' and write away, almost incessantly, at her story of *Villette*." It was finished, and in the hands of her publishers, in November 1852. "I said my prayers when I had done it," she wrote.

Charlotte Brontë would have liked *Villette* to be published anonymously; she wanted to have "the sheltering shadow of an incognito." But of course that was impossible. The book was delayed a little while to give Mrs. Gaskell's *Ruth* a start; and Charlotte arranged to go to London in January, on a visit to the Smiths, and to correct the proofs of *Villette* while she was there.

But something happened in that December, between the sending off of the manuscript of *Villette* and the January visit to the Smiths in London, that was to change the whole current of this woman's life—or what remained of it.

XIII.

THE PASSING OF CURRER BELL.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË had suspected for some time that Mr. Nicholls "cared for her." One evening he had come to tea at the parsonage; and after tea in the study Charlotte had, as usual, returned to her own sitting-room. She heard the study-door open, and thought the curate was going away; but instead there came a tap at her own door, and "like lightning it flashed upon me what was coming." This man, ordinarily so statue-like, whom she had known merely as "papa's curate" for so many years, now stood before her trembling with a passion he could no longer control. His words and his manner moved her as she had never in her life been moved before. And yet, a hundred doubts and fears assailed her. She did not love him; his feelings, his tastes, his principles were not congenial to her. There was "a sense of incongruity." At the moment she could only entreat him to go away, and wait till to-morrow for her answer. "I think I half led, half put him out of the room."

The poor old parson was terribly upset when Charlotte told him what had happened. He had been ill, and the veins stood out on the old man's forehead "like whipcord." Charlotte was frightened. She hastened to assure her father that she would not think of marrying Mr. Nicholls. She wrote a refusal, and sent it down to the curate's lodging in the village.

And so Mr. Nicholls sent in his resignation; and Mr. Brontë, very angry, began to look out for another curate; and Charlotte, very ill at ease, went off to correct the proofs of *Villette* in London.

And *Villette*, when it appeared at last, in that February of 1853?

Villette "was received with one burst of acclamation."

The reviews simply poured into Charlotte Brontë's lap as she sat quietly in the house of her kind friends. For the moment all literary London was at the little feet of " Currer Bell."

" I am only just returned to a sense of the real world about me," wrote George Eliot, " for I have been reading *Villette*. . . . There is something almost preternatural in its power. . . . *Villette* . . . *Villette* . . . have you read it ? "

The months that followed the publication of *Villette* were very harassing months to Charlotte and the parson and Mr. Nicholls. The parson was implacable. He saw no reason why Charlotte should marry at all ; but if she did, it ought to be " very differently." The author of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley* and *Villette* would be " throwing herself away " by marrying a curate with £100 a year ; and Charlotte was making £500 for the copyright of each novel ! It was ridiculous. The two men were scarcely on speaking terms ; and, indeed, Mr. Nicholls had grown so morose that nobody in Haworth could make anything out of him. *Villette* appeared in February, and Mr. Nicholls left Haworth in May. In the interval he must have got hold of and read this novel by the woman he loved, of which all the world was talking. With what feelings did he follow the story that it told ? He went about his parochial duties to the last maintaining a stony reserve. It was entirely his own fault, he told the churchwardens, that he was leaving the parish ; he blamed nobody, and he was very sorry to go. Perhaps the thing that most touched Charlotte's heart was the curate's care of Anne's dog, " Flossy." Flossy waddled off regularly to Mr. Nicholl's lodgings in the village, and to the last day of his sojourn among them Mr. Nicholls took Flossy with him on his customary daily walk. Charlotte could not but admit that this was a man whose attachments were few, whose feelings were strong and deep, running like " an underground stream in a narrow channel." When the day came for him to go, their parting was a painful one. And no sooner had Mr. Nicholls gone than " papa " discovered that he could not get on at all with Mr. de Renzi, the new curate.

Towards the end of September Mrs. Gaskell paid that visit to the parsonage of which she has left so wonderful a word picture. The two women, novelists and friends, had much to say to each other ; and Mrs. Gaskell, who was in the secret, did what she could with Mr. Brontë—" a most courteous host "—and with some other people too, Monckton Milnes among them, to further Mr. Nicholls's interests. " The great conqueror Time," she says, was to do the rest. The winter had passed uncomfortably and anxiously, when, one day in April, the old man relented. Another curacy was found for Mr. de Renzi, and Mr. Nicholls was asked to come back. " In fact, dear Nell," wrote Charlotte to her lifelong friend, " I am engaged."

Very quietly they were married, on June 29, 1854. Miss Wooler and Ellen Nussey arrived the day before the wedding. Everything had been arranged for the parson's comfort while they should be away. The honeymoon was to be spent in Ireland, among Mr. Nicholls's people ; and on their return the husband and wife were to take up their life together under the parsonage roof. Mr. Nicholls was quite satisfied to go on being " papa's curate " while the old man lived.

At the last moment the parson did not feel equal to the wedding ceremony. The Prayer-book was hastily consulted ; and Miss Wooler, " ever kind in emergency," on being assured no rubric was being broken, agreed to give her old pupil away.

. . . .

It is allowed that *Villette* is more autobiographical than anything Charlotte Brontë wrote. " Lucy Snowe " is very like the little woman whose life was so near its end when her book of " almost preternatural power " took London by storm. While she was writing her story, alone in the silent parsonage, Charlotte Brontë must have lived over again those two years in the

Brussels *pensionnat*. It is all there, in those pages—the life of the *pensionnat*, the little world of human character around her, the outstanding personality of the "professor," the solitary days, the mental conflict, the bell of S. Gudule, the wooden grating of the confessional. She was determined that Lucy Snowe's life was to have no happy ending; her future was to be obscured.

"The sun passes the equinox; the days shorten, the leaves grow sere; but—he is coming.

"Frosts appear at night; November has sent his fogs in advance; the wind takes its autumn moan; but—he is coming."

And the reader knows that Paul Emanuel will never come.

But almost as Currer Bell was writing these last words of her *Villette,* there had come the tap to her door; the passionate avowal of a love that was close at hand, that would not die. Was it a wise step? Would it be a happy marriage? It was not brilliant, certainly; the literary Londoners would not understand it at all. Charlotte herself must have known that marriage with Mr. Nicholls—if she did her duty as a curate's wife—meant the passing of "Currer Bell."

We must take her own word for it that she was happy in her choice: "I trust I feel thankful to God for having enabled me to make what seems a right choice, and I pray to be enabled to repay as I ought the affectionate devotion of a truthful, honourable man."

Her letters to "dear Nell" speak with a shy tenderness of the new life and the new master; but with the new year (1855) the little wife, always so delicate, fell ill. The doctor "assigned a natural cause." Martha tried to put heart into her mistress by talking of the baby that was coming; but it was too late. "I dare say I shall be glad some time," she would say, "but I am so ill—so weary."

Her last pencil notes were to her "own dear Nell." Her last words were to the husband who bent over her with murmured prayer. "Oh," she whispered, "I am not going to die, am I? He will not separate us; we have been so happy!"

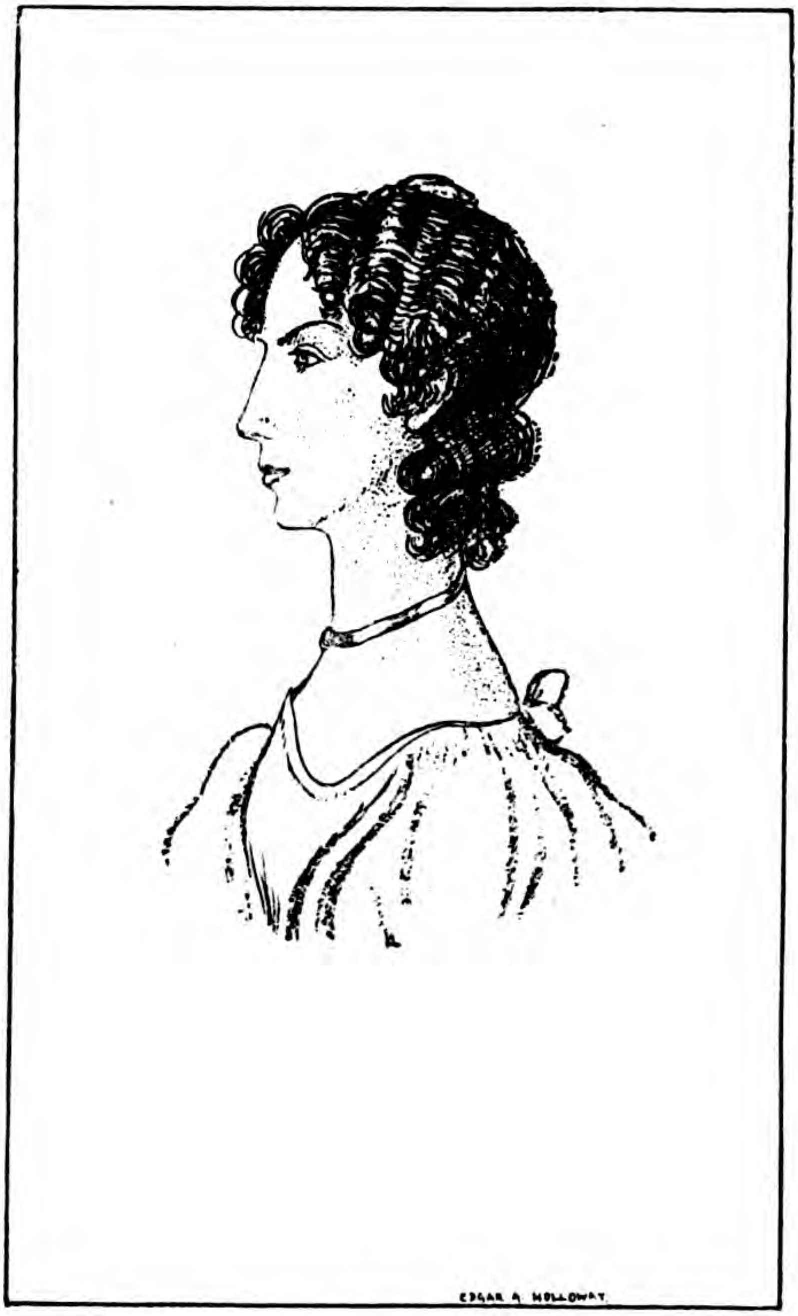
. . . .

Mr. Brontë and his son-in-law lived together in the parsonage for six years longer, till Mr. Brontë died in 1861. Then Mr. Nicholls returned to Ireland, and the living of Haworth passed into other hands.

The railway long ago reached Haworth; the church has been rebuilt; electricity, motors, and wireless have further changed the village "embedded in the moors"—the very moors are not what they were when Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell walked on them with their arms about each other's waists. But the Brontë "cult" continues. There is to-day a Brontë Society, with its transactions and publications. The old parsonage is now a Brontë museum, and is visited by literary pilgrims from all parts of the world. Haworth will always be known as the home of the Brontës.

FLORA MASSON.

AGNES GREY


EDGAR A HOLLOWAY

ANNE BRONTË

From a pen drawing by Edgar Holloway, after a miniature in the Brontë Museum.

AGNES GREY

By

ANNE BRONTË

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AGNES GREY.

CHAPTER I.

THE PARSONAGE.

ALL true histories contain instruction, though in some the treasure may be hard to find, and when found so trivial in quantity that the dry, shrivelled kernel scarcely compensates for the trouble of cracking the nut. Whether this be the case with my history or not, I am hardly competent to judge. I sometimes think it might prove useful to some, and entertaining to others; but the world may judge for itself. Shielded by my own obscurity, and by the lapse of years, and a few fictitious names, I do not fear to venture, and will candidly lay before the public what I would not disclose to the most intimate friend.

My father was a clergyman of the north of England, who was deservedly respected by all who knew him, and in his younger days lived pretty comfortably on the joint income of a small incumbency and a snug little property of his own. My mother, who married him against the wishes of her friends, was a squire's daughter and a woman of spirit. In vain it was represented to her that, if she became the poor parson's wife, she must relinquish her carriage and her lady's-maid, and all the luxuries and elegances of affluence, which to her were little less than the necessaries of life. A carriage and a lady's-maid were great conveniences, but, thank Heaven, she had feet to carry her, and hands to minister to her own necessities. An elegant house and spacious grounds were not to be despised, but she would rather live in a cottage with Richard Grey than in a palace with any other man in the world.

Finding arguments of no avail, her father at length told the lovers they might marry if they pleased, but in so doing his daughter would forfeit every fraction of her fortune. He expected this would cool the ardour of both, but he was mistaken. My father knew too well my mother's superior worth not to be sensible that she was a valuable fortune in herself, and if she would but consent to embellish his humble hearth, he should be happy to take her on any terms; while she, on her part, would rather labour with her own hands than be divided from the man she loved, whose happiness it would be her joy to make, and who was already one with her in heart and soul. So her fortune went to swell the purse of a wiser sister, who had married a rich nabob; and she, to the wonder and compassionate regret of all who knew her, went to bury herself in the homely village parsonage among the hills of ——. And yet, in spite of all this, and in spite of my mother's high spirit and my father's whims, I believe you might search all England through, and fail to find a happier couple.

Of six children, my sister Mary and myself were the only two that survived the perils of infancy and early childhood. I, being the younger by five or six years, was always regarded as the *child*, and the pet of the family. Father, mother, and sister all combined to spoil me—not by foolish indulgence to render me fractious and ungovernable, but by ceaseless kindness to make me too helpless and dependent, too unfit for buffeting with the cares and turmoils of life.

Mary and I were brought up in the strictest seclusion. My mother, being at once highly accomplished, well informed, and fond of employment, took the whole charge of our education on herself, with the exception of Latin—which my father undertook to teach us—so that we never even went to school; and as there was no society in the neighbourhood, our only intercourse with the world consisted in a stately tea-party, now and then, with the principal farmers and tradespeople of the vicinity (just to avoid being stigmatized as too proud to consort with our neighbours), and an annual visit to our paternal grandfather's, where himself, our kind grandmamma, a maiden aunt, and two or three elderly ladies and gentlemen, were the only persons we ever saw. Sometimes our mother would amuse us with stories and anecdotes of her younger days, which, while they entertained us amazingly, frequently awoke—in *me*, at least—a secret wish to see a little more of the world.

I thought she must have been very happy, but she never seemed to regret past times. My father, however, whose temper was neither tranquil nor cheerful by nature, often unduly vexed himself with thinking of the sacrifices his dear wife had made for him, and troubled his head with revolving endless schemes for the augmentation of his little fortune for her sake and ours. In vain my mother assured him she was quite satisfied, and if he would but lay by a little for the children, we should all have plenty, both for time present and to come; but saving was not my father's forte. He would not run in debt (at least, my mother took good care he should not), but while he had money he must spend it. He liked to see his house comfortable, and his wife and daughters well clothed and well attended; and besides, he was charitably disposed, and liked to give to the poor according to his means, or, as some might think, beyond them.

At length, however, a kind friend suggested to him a means of doubling his private property at one stroke, and further increasing it hereafter to an untold amount. This friend was a merchant, a man of enterprizing spirit and undoubted talent, who was somewhat straitened in his mercantile pursuits for want of capital, but generously proposed to give my father a fair share of his profits if he would only entrust him with what he could spare; and he thought he might safely promise that whatever sum the latter chose to put into his hands, it should bring him in cent. per cent. The small patrimony was speedily sold, and the whole of its price was deposited in the hands of the friendly merchant, who as promptly proceeded to ship his cargo and prepare for his voyage.

My father was delighted, so were we all, with our brightening prospects. For the present, it is true, we were reduced to the narrow income of the curacy; but my father seemed to think there was no necessity for scrupulously restricting our expenditure to that; so, with a standing bill at Mr. Jackson's, another at Smith's, and a third at Hobson's, we got along even more comfortably than before, though my mother affirmed we had better keep within bounds, for our prospects of wealth were but precarious after all, and if my father would only trust everything to her management, he should never feel himself stinted; but he, for once, was incorrigible.

What happy hours Mary and I have passed, while sitting at our work by the fire, or wandering on the heath-clad hills, or idling under the weeping birch (the only considerable tree in the garden), talking of future happiness to ourselves and our parents, of what we would do, and see, and possess, with no firmer foundation for our goodly superstructure than the riches that were expected to flow in upon us from the success of the worthy merchant's speculations! Our father was nearly as bad as ourselves, only that he affected not to be so much in earnest, expressing his bright hopes and sanguine expectations in jests and playful sallies that always struck me as being exceedingly witty and pleasant. Our mother laughed with delight to see him so hopeful and happy; but still she feared he was setting his heart too much upon the matter, and once I heard her whisper as she left the room, "God grant he be not disappointed! I know not how he would bear it."

Disappointed he was, and bitterly too. It came like a thunderclap on us all, that the vessel which contained our fortune had been wrecked and gone to the bottom with all its stores, together with several of the crew and the unfortunate merchant himself. I was grieved for him, I was grieved for the overthrow of all our air-built castles; but with the elasticity of youth I soon recovered the shock.

Though riches had charms, poverty had no terrors for an inexperienced girl like me. Indeed, to say the truth, there was something exhilarating in the idea of being driven to straits and thrown upon our own resources. I only wished papa, mamma, and Mary were all of the same mind as myself; and then, instead of lamenting past calamities, we might all cheerfully set to work to remedy them, and the greater the difficulties, the harder our present privations, the greater should be our cheerfulness to endure the latter and our vigour to contend against the former.

Mary did not lament, but she brooded continually over the misfortune, and sank into a state of dejection from which no effort of mine could rouse her. I could not possibly bring her to regard the matter on its bright side as I did; and indeed I was so fearful of being charged with childish frivolity or stupid insensibility that I carefully kept most of my bright ideas and cheering notions to myself, well knowing they could not be appreciated.

My mother thought only of consoling my father, and paying our debts and retrenching our expenditure by every available means; but my father was completely overwhelmed by the calamity—health, strength, and spirits sank beneath the blow, and he never wholly recovered them. In vain my mother strove to cheer him, by appealing to his piety, to his courage, to his affection for herself and us. That very affection was his greatest torment. It was for our sakes he had so ardently longed to increase his fortune; it was our interest that had lent such brightness to his hopes, and that imparted such bitterness to his present distress. He now tormented himself with remorse at having neglected my mother's advice, which would at least have saved him from the additional burden of debt; he vainly reproached himself for having brought her from the dignity, the ease, the luxury of her former station to toil with him through the cares and toils of poverty. It was gall and wormwood to his soul to see that splendid, highly-accomplished woman, once so courted and admired, transformed into an active managing housewife, with hands and head continually occupied with household labours and household economy. The very willingness with which she performed these duties, the cheerfulness with which she bore her reverses, and the kindness which withheld her from imputing the smallest blame to him, were all perverted by this ingenious self-tormentor into further aggravations of his sufferings. And thus the mind preyed upon the body and disordered the system of the nerves, and they in turn increased the troubles of the mind, till by action and reaction his health was seriously impaired; and not one of us could convince him that the aspect of our affairs was not half so gloomy, so utterly hopeless, as his morbid imagination represented it to be.

The useful pony phaeton was sold, together with the stout, well-fed pony—the old favourite that we had fully determined should end its days in peace, and never pass from our hands; the little coach-house and stable were let; the servant boy and the more efficient (being the more expensive) of the two maidservants were dismissed. Our clothes were mended, turned, and darned to the utmost verge of decency; our food, always plain, was now simplified to an unprecedented degree—except my father's favourite dishes; our coals and candles were painfully economized—the pair of candles reduced to one, and that most sparingly used; the coals carefully husbanded in the half-empty grate, especially when my father was out on his parish duties, or confined to bed through illness. Then we sat with our feet on the fender, scraping the perishing embers together from time to time, and occasionally adding a slight scattering of the dust and fragments of coal, just to keep them alive. As for our carpets, they, in time, were worn threadbare, and patched and darned even to a greater extent than our garments. To save the expense of a gardener, Mary and I undertook to keep the garden in order; and all the cooking and household work that could not easily be managed by one servant girl was done by my mother and sister, with a little occasional help from me—only a little, because, though a woman in my own estimation, I was still a child in theirs; and my mother, like most active, managing women, was not gifted with very active daughters, for this reason—that being so clever and diligent herself, she was never tempted to trust her affairs to a deputy, but, on the contrary, was willing to act and think for others as well as for number one; and whatever was the business in hand, she was apt to think that no one could do it so well as herself, so that whenever I offered to assist her I received such an answer as, "No, love, you cannot indeed; there's nothing here you can do. Go and help your sister, or get her to take a walk with you. Tell her she must not sit so much and stay so constantly in the house as she does. She may well look thin and dejected."

"Mary, mamma says I'm to help you, or get you to take a walk with me. She says you may well look thin and dejected if you sit so constantly in the house."

"Help me you cannot, Agnes; and I cannot go out with *you*. I have far too much to do."

"Then let me help you."

"You cannot, indeed, dear child. Go and practise your music, or play with the kitten."

There was always plenty of sewing on hand, but I had not been taught to cut out a single garment, and except plain hemming and seaming there was little I could do, even in that line; for they both asserted that it was far easier to do the work themselves than to prepare it for me, and besides, they liked better to see me prosecuting my studies or amusing myself. It was time enough for me to sit bending over my work, like a grave matron, when my favourite little pussy was become a steady old cat. Under such circumstances, although I was not many degrees more useful than the kitten, my idleness was not entirely without excuse.

Through all our troubles I never but once heard my mother complain of our want of money. As summer was coming on, she observed to Mary and me, " What a desirable thing it would be for your papa to spend a few weeks at a watering-place! I am convinced the sea air and the change of scene would be of incalculable service to him. But then, you see, there's no money," she added, with a sigh. We both wished exceedingly that the thing might be done, and lamented greatly that it could not. " Well, well," said she, " it's no use complaining. Possibly something might be done to further the project after all. Mary, you are a beautiful drawer. What do you say to doing a few more pictures in your best style, and getting them framed, with the water-coloured drawings you have already done, and trying to dispose of them to some liberal picture-dealer who has the sense to discern their merits ? "

" Mamma, I should be delighted if you think they *could* be sold, and for anything worth while."

" It's worth while trying, however, my dear. Do you procure the drawings, and I'll endeavour to find a purchaser."

" I wish *I* could do something," said I.

" You, Agnes ! Well, who knows ? You draw pretty well too. If you choose some simple piece for your subject, I dare say you will be able to produce something we shall all be proud to exhibit."

" But I have another scheme in my head, mamma, and have had long, only I did not like to mention it."

" Indeed ! Pray tell us what it is."

" I should like to be a governess."

My mother uttered an exclamation of surprise, and laughed. My sister dropped her work in astonishment, exclaiming, " *You* a governess, Agnes ! What *can* you be dreaming of ? "

" Well, I don't see anything so *very* extraordinary in it. I do not pretend to be able to instruct great girls, but surely I could teach little ones; and I should like it *so* much—I am so fond of children. Do let me, mamma."

"But, my love, you have not learned to take care of *yourself* yet, and young children require more judgment and experience to manage than elder ones."

"But, mamma, I am above eighteen, and quite able to take care of myself and others too. You do not know half the wisdom and prudence I possess, because I have never been tried."

"Only think," said Mary. "What would you do in a house full of strangers, without me or mamma to speak and act for you, with a parcel of children besides yourself to attend to, and no one to look to for advice? You would not even know what clothes to put on."

"You think, because I always do as you bid me, I have no judgment of my own. But only try me—that is all I ask—and you shall see what I can do."

At that moment my father entered, and the subject of our discussion was explained to him.

"What, my little Agnes a governess!" cried he; and, in spite of his dejection, he laughed at the idea.

"Yes, papa; don't you say anything against it. I should like it *so* much, and I am sure I could manage delightfully."

"But, my darling, we could not spare you." And a tear glistened in his eye as he added, "No, no; afflicted as we are, surely we are not brought to that pass yet."

"Oh no!" said my mother. "There is no necessity whatever for such a step; it is merely a whim of her own.—So you must hold your tongue, you naughty girl; for though you are so ready to leave *us*, you know very well we cannot part with *you*."

I was silenced for that day and for many succeeding ones, but still I did not wholly relinquish my darling scheme. Mary got her drawing materials, and steadily set to work. I got mine too, but while I drew I thought of other things. How delightful it would be to be a governess—to go out into the world; to enter upon a new life; to act for myself; to exercise my unused faculties;

to try my unknown powers; to earn my own maintenance, and something to comfort and help my father, mother, and sister, besides exonerating them from the provision of my food and clothing; to show papa what his little Agnes could do; to convince mamma and Mary that I was not quite the helpless, thoughtless being they supposed! And then, how charming to be entrusted with the care and education of children! Whatever others said, I felt I was fully competent to the task; the clear remembrance of my own thoughts in early childhood would be a surer guide than the instructions of the most mature adviser. I had but to turn from my little pupils to myself at their age, and I should know at once how to win their confidence and affections, how to waken the contrition of the erring, how to embolden the timid and console the afflicted, how to make virtue practicable, instruction desirable, and religion lovely and comprehensible.

> "Delightful task—
> To teach the young idea how to shoot;"

to train the tender plants, and watch their buds unfolding day by day!

Influenced by so many inducements, I determined still to persevere, though the fear of displeasing my mother or distressing my father's feelings prevented me from resuming the subject for several days. At length again I mentioned it to my mother in private, and with some difficulty got her to promise to assist me with her endeavours. My father's reluctant consent was next obtained; and then, though Mary still sighed her disapproval, my dear, kind mother began to look out for a situation for me. She wrote to my father's relations, and consulted the newspaper advertisements. Her own relations she had long dropped all communication with. A formal interchange of occasional letters was all she had ever had since her marriage, and she would not at any time have applied to them in a case of this nature. But so long and so entire had been my parents' seclusion from the world that many weeks elapsed before a suitable situation could be procured. At last, to my great joy, it was decreed that I should take charge of the young family of a certain Mrs. Bloomfield, whom my kind, prim Aunt Grey had known in her youth, and asserted to be a very nice woman. Her husband was a retired tradesman, who had realized a very comfortable fortune, but could not be prevailed upon to give a greater salary than twenty-five pounds to the instructress of his children. I, however, was glad to accept this, rather than refuse the situation, which my parents were inclined to think the better plan.

But some weeks more were yet to be devoted to preparation. How long, how tedious those weeks appeared to me! Yet they were happy ones in the main—full of bright hopes and ardent expectations. With what peculiar pleasure I assisted at the making of my new clothes, and, subsequently, the packing of my trunks! But there was a feeling of bitterness mingling with the latter occupation too; and when it was done—when all was ready for my departure on the morrow, and the last night at home approached—a sudden anguish seemed to swell my heart. My dear friends looked so sad and spoke so very kindly that I could scarcely keep my eyes from overflowing, but I still affected to be gay. I had taken my last ramble with Mary on the moors, my last walk in the garden and round the house; I had fed, with her, our pet pigeons for the last time—the pretty creatures that we had tamed to peck their food from our hands; I had given a farewell stroke to all their silky backs as they crowded in my lap; I had tenderly kissed my own peculiar favourites, the pair of snow-white fantails; I had played my last tune on the old familiar piano, and sung my last song to papa—not the last, I hoped, but the last for what appeared to me a very long time. And, perhaps, when I did these things again it would be with different feelings: circumstances might be changed, and this house might never be my settled home again. My dear little friend the kitten would certainly be changed. She was already growing a fine cat, and when I returned, even for a hasty visit at Christmas, would most likely have forgotten both her playmate and her merry pranks. I had romped with her for the last time; and when I stroked her soft bright fur, while she lay purring herself to sleep in my lap, it was with a feeling of sadness I could not easily disguise. Then, at bedtime, when I retired with Mary to our quiet little chamber, where already my drawers were cleared out and my share of the bookcase was empty, and where, hereafter, she would have to sleep alone, in dreary solitude, as she expressed it, my heart sank more than ever. I felt as if I had been selfish and wrong to persist in leaving her; and when I knelt once more beside our little bed, I prayed for a blessing on her and on my parents more fervently than ever I had done before. To conceal my emotion, I buried my face in my hands, and they were presently bathed in tears. I perceived, on rising, that she had been crying too; but neither of us spoke, and in silence we betook ourselves to our repose, creeping more closely together from the consciousness that we were to part so soon.

But the morning brought a renewal of hope and spirits. I was to depart early, that the conveyance which took me (a gig, hired from Mr. Smith, the draper, grocer, and tea-dealer of the village) might return the same day. I rose, washed, dressed, swallowed a hasty breakfast, received the fond embraces of my father, mother, and sister, kissed the cat, to the great scandal of Sally the maid, shook hands with her, mounted the gig, drew my veil over my face, and then, but not till then, burst into a flood of tears. The gig rolled on. I looked back. My dear mother and sister were still standing at the door looking after me and waving their adieus. I returned their salute, and prayed God to bless them from my heart. We descended the hill, and I could see them no more.

"It's a coldish mornin' for you, Miss Agnes," observed Smith, "and a darksome un too, but we's happen get to yon spot afore there come much rain to signify."

"Yes, I hope so," replied I, as calmly as I could.

"It's comed a good sup last night too."

"Yes."

"But this cold wind will, happen, keep it off."

"Perhaps it will."

Here ended our colloquy. We crossed the valley, and began to ascend the opposite hill. As we were toiling up, I looked back again. There was the village spire, and the old gray parsonage beyond it, basking in a slanting beam of sunshine. It was but a sickly ray, but the village and surrounding hills were all in sombre shade, and I hailed the wandering beam as a propitious omen to my home. With clasped hands I fervently implored a blessing on its inhabitants, and hastily turned away, for I saw the sunshine was departing, and I carefully avoided another glance, lest I should see it in gloomy shadow, like the rest of the landscape.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST LESSONS IN THE ART OF INSTRUCTION.

As we drove along my spirits revived again, and I turned with pleasure to the contemplation of the new life upon which I was entering. But though it was not far past the middle of September, the heavy clouds and strong north-easterly wind combined to render the day extremely cold and dreary; and the journey seemed a very long one, for, as Smith observed, the roads were "very heavy," and certainly his horse was very heavy too. It crawled up the hills, and crept down them, and only condescended to shake its sides in a trot where the road was at a dead level or a very gentle slope, which was rarely the case in those rugged regions; so that it was nearly one o'clock before we reached the place of our destination. Yet after all, when we entered the lofty iron gateway, when we drove softly up the smooth, well-rolled carriage road, with the green lawn on each side, studded with young trees, and approached the new but stately mansion of Wellwood, rising above its mushroom poplar-groves, my heart failed me, and I wished it were a mile or two farther off. For the first time in my life I must stand alone; there was no retreating now. I must enter that house, and introduce myself among its strange inhabitants. But how was it to be done? True, I was near nineteen, but thanks to my retired life and the protecting care of my mother and sister, I well knew that many a girl of fifteen or under was gifted with a more womanly address and greater ease and self-possession than I was. Yet if Mrs. Bloomfield were a kind, motherly matron, I might do very well after all; and the children—of course, I should soon be at ease with them; and Mr. Bloomfield, I hoped, I should have but little to do with.

"Be calm, be calm, whatever happens," I said within myself; and truly I kept this resolution so well, and was so fully occupied in steadying my nerves and stilling the rebellious flutter of my heart, that when I was admitted into the hall, and ushered into the presence of Mrs. Bloomfield, I almost forgot to answer her polite salutation; and it afterwards struck me that the little I did say was spoken in the tone of one half dead or half asleep. The lady, too, was somewhat chilly in her manner, as I discovered when I had time to reflect. She was a tall, spare, stately woman, with thick black hair, cold gray eyes, and extremely sallow complexion.

With due politeness, however, she showed me my bedroom, and left me there to take a little refreshment. I was somewhat dismayed at my appearance on looking in the glass. The cold wind had swelled and reddened my hands, uncurled and entangled my hair, and dyed my face of a pale purple. Add to this my collar was horridly crumpled, my frock splashed with mud, my feet clad in stout new boots, and as the trunks were not brought up there was no remedy; so having smoothed my hair as well as I could, and repeatedly twitched my obdurate collar, I proceeded to clomp down the two flights of stairs, philosophizing as I went, and with some difficulty found my way into the room where Mrs. Bloomfield awaited me.

She led me into the dining-room, where the family luncheon had been laid out. Some beefsteaks and half-cold potatoes were set before me ; and while I dined upon these she sat opposite, watching me (as I thought) and endeavouring to sustain something like a conversation, consisting chiefly of a succession of commonplace remarks, expressed with frigid formality ; but this might be more my fault than hers, for I really could not converse. In fact, my attention was almost wholly absorbed in my dinner—not from ravenous appetite, but from distress at the toughness of the beefsteaks and the numbness of my hands, almost palsied by their five hours' exposure to the bitter wind. I would gladly have eaten the potatoes and let the meat alone, but having got a large piece of the latter on to my plate, I could not be so impolite as to leave it ; so, after many awkward and unsuccessful attempts to cut it with the knife, or tear it with the fork, or pull it asunder between them, sensible that the awful lady was a spectator to the whole transaction, I at last desperately grasped the knife and fork in my fists, like a child of two years old, and fell to work with all the little strength I possessed. But this needed some apology. With a feeble attempt at a laugh, I said, " My hands are so benumbed with the cold that I can scarcely handle my knife and fork."

" I dare say you would find it cold," replied she, with a cool, immutable gravity that did not serve to reassure me.

When the ceremony was concluded, she led me into the sitting-room again, where she rang and sent for the children.

" You will find them not very far advanced in their attainments," said she, " for I have had so little time to attend to their education myself, and we have thought them too young for a governess till now ; but I think they are clever children, and very apt to learn, especially the little boy. He is, I think, the flower of the flock—a generous, noble-spirited boy, one to be led but not driven, and remarkable for always speaking the truth. He seems to scorn deception" (this was good news). "His sister Mary Ann will require watching," continued she, "but she is a very good girl upon the whole, though I wish her to be kept out of the nursery as much as possible, as she is now almost six years old, and might acquire bad habits from the nurses. I have ordered her crib to be placed in your room, and if you will be so kind as to overlook her washing and dressing, and take charge of her clothes, she need have nothing further to do with the nurserymaid."

I replied I was quite willing to do so; and at that moment my young pupils entered the apartment, with their two younger sisters. Master Tom Bloomfield was a well-grown boy of seven, with a somewhat wiry frame, flaxen hair, blue eyes, small turned-up nose, and fair complexion. Mary Ann was a tall girl too, somewhat dark like her mother, but with a round full face and a high colour in her cheeks. The second sister was Fanny, a very pretty little girl. Mrs. Bloomfield assured me she was a remarkably gentle child, and required encouragement. She had not learned anything yet, but in a few days she would be four years old, and then she might take her first lesson in the alphabet, and be promoted to the schoolroom. The remaining one was Harriet, a little broad, fat, merry, playful thing of scarcely two, that I coveted more than all the rest; but with her I had nothing to do.

I talked to my little pupils as well as I could, and tried to render myself agreeable, but with little success, I fear, for their mother's presence kept me under an unpleasant restraint. They, however, were remarkably free from shyness. They seemed bold, lively children, and I hoped I should soon be on friendly terms with them—the little boy especially, of whom I had heard such a favourable character from his mamma. In Mary Ann there was a certain affected simper and a craving for notice that I was sorry to observe. But her brother claimed all my attention to himself. He stood bolt upright between me and the fire, with his hands behind his back, talking away like an orator, occasionally interrupting his discourse with a sharp reproof to his sisters when they made too much noise.

"O Tom, what a darling you are!" exclaimed his mother. "Come and kiss dear mamma; and then won't you show Miss Grey your schoolroom and your nice new books?"

"I won't kiss *you*, mamma, but I *will* show Miss Grey my schoolroom and my new books."

"And *my* schoolroom and *my* new books, Tom," said Mary Ann. "They're mine too."

"They're *mine*," replied he decisively.—"Come along, Miss Grey; I'll escort you."

When the room and books had been shown, with some bickerings between the brother and sister that I did my utmost to appease or mitigate, Mary Ann brought me her doll, and began to be very loquacious on the subject of its fine clothes, its bed, its chest of drawers, and other appurtenances; but Tom told her to hold her clamour, that Miss Grey might see his rocking-horse, which, with a most important bustle, he dragged forth from its corner into the middle of the room, loudly calling on me to attend to it. Then, ordering his sister to hold the reins, he mounted, and made me stand for ten minutes watching how manfully he used his whip and spurs. Meantime, however, I admired Mary Ann's pretty doll and all its possessions, and then told Master Tom he was a capital rider, but I hoped he would not use his whip and spurs so much when he rode a real pony.

"Oh yes, I will," said he, laying on with redoubled ardour. "I'll cut into him like smoke. Eeh! my word, but he shall sweat for it."

This was very shocking, but I hoped in time to be able to work a reformation.

"Now you must put on your bonnet and shawl," said the little hero, "and I'll show you my garden."

"And *mine*," said Mary Ann.

Tom lifted his fist with a menacing gesture. She uttered a loud, shrill scream, ran to the other side of me, and made a face at him.

"Surely, Tom, you would not strike your sister. I hope I shall *never* see you do that."

"You will sometimes. I'm obliged to do it now and then to keep her in order."

"But it is not your business to keep her in order, you know; that is for——"

"Well, now go and put on your bonnet."

"I don't know; it is so very cloudy and cold, it seems likely to rain, and you know I have had a long drive."

"No matter—you *must* come; I shall allow of no excuses," replied the consequential little gentleman. And as it was the first day of our acquaintance, I thought I might as well indulge him. It was too cold for Mary Ann to venture, so she stayed with her mamma, to the great relief of her brother, who liked to have me all to himself.

The garden was a large one, and tastefully laid out. Besides several splendid dahlias there were some other fine flowers still in bloom, but my companion would not give me time to examine them. I must go with him across the wet grass to a remote sequestered corner, the most important place in the grounds, because it contained *his* garden. There were two round beds, stocked with a variety of plants. In one there was a pretty little rose tree. I paused to admire its lovely blossoms.

"Oh, never mind that!" said he contemptuously. "That's only *Mary Ann's* garden. Look, THIS is mine."

After I had observed every flower, and listened to a disquisition on every plant, I was permitted to depart; but first, with great pomp, he plucked a polyanthus and presented it to me, as one conferring a prodigious favour. I observed, on the grass about his garden, certain apparatus of sticks and cord, and asked what they were.

"Traps for birds."

"Why do you catch them."

"Papa says they do harm."

"And what do you do with them when you catch them?"

"Different things. Sometimes I give them to the cat, sometimes I cut them in pieces with my penknife, but the next I mean to roast alive."

"And why do you mean to do such a horrible thing?"

"For two reasons—first, to see how long it will live, and then to see what it will taste like."

"But don't you know it is extremely wicked to do such things? Remember, the birds can feel as well as you; and think, how would you like it yourself?"

"Oh, that's nothing! I'm not a bird, and I can't feel what I do to them."

"But you will have to feel it some time, Tom. You have heard where wicked people go to when they die; and if you don't leave off torturing innocent birds, remember, you will have to go there and suffer just what you have made them suffer."

"Oh, pooh! I shan't. Papa knows how I treat them, and he never blames me for it. He says it is just what *he* used to do when *he* was a boy. Last summer he gave me a nest full of young sparrows, and he saw me pulling off their legs and wings and heads, and never said anything, except that they were nasty things, and I must not let them soil my trousers; and Uncle Robson was there too, and he laughed, and said I was a fine boy."

"But what would your mamma say?"

"Oh, she doesn't care! She says it's a pity to kill the pretty singing birds, but the naughty sparrows and mice and rats I may do what I like with. So now, Miss Grey, you see it is *not* wicked."

"I still think it is, Tom; and perhaps your papa and mamma would think so too if they thought much about it.—However," I internally added, "they may say what they please, but I am determined you shall do nothing of the kind as long as I have power to prevent it."

He next took me across the lawn to see his mole-traps, and then into the stackyard to see his weasel-traps, one of which, to his great joy, contained a dead weasel; and then into the stable to see, not the fine carriage horses, but a little rough colt, which he informed me had been bred on purpose for him, and he was to ride it as soon as it was properly trained. I tried to amuse the little fellow, and listened to all his chatter as complacently as I could, for I thought if he had any affections at all I would endeavour to win them, and then, in time, I might be able to show him the error of his ways; but I looked in vain for that generous, noble spirit his mother talked of, though I could see he was not without a certain degree of quickness and penetration when he chose to exert it.

When we re-entered the house it was nearly tea-time. Master Tom told me that, as papa was from home, he and I and Mary Ann were to have tea with mamma for a treat, for on such occasions she always dined at luncheon time with them instead of at six o'clock. Soon after tea Mary Ann went to bed, but Tom favoured us with his company and conversation till eight. After he was gone, Mrs. Broomfield further enlightened me on the subject of her children's dispositions and acquirements, and on what they were to learn, and how they were to be managed, and cautioned me to mention their defects to no one but herself. My mother had warned me before to mention them as little as possible to *her*, for people did not like to be told of their children's faults, and so I concluded I was to keep silence on them altogether. About half-past nine Mrs. Bloomfield invited me to partake of a frugal supper of cold meat and bread. I was glad when that was over, and she took her bedroom candlestick and retired to rest; for though I wished to be pleased with her, her company was extremely irksome to me, and I could not help feeling that she was cold, grave, and forbidding—the very opposite of the kind, warm-hearted matron my hopes had depicted her to be.

CHAPTER III.

A FEW MORE LESSONS.

I ROSE next morning with a feeling of hopeful exhilaration, in spite of the disappointments already experienced; but I found the dressing of Mary Ann was no light matter, as her abundant hair was to be smeared with pomade, plaited in three long tails, and tied with bows of ribbon—a task my unaccustomed fingers found great difficulty in performing. She told me her nurse could do it in half the time, and, by keeping up a constant fidget of impatience, contrived to render me still longer. When all was done, we went into the schoolroom, where I met my other pupil, and chatted with the two till it was time to go down to breakfast. That meal being concluded, and a few civil words having been exchanged with Mrs. Bloomfield, we repaired to the schoolroom again, and commenced the business of the day. I found my pupils very backward indeed; but Tom, though averse to every species of mental exertion, was not without abilities. Mary Ann could scarcely read a word, and was so careless and inattentive that I could hardly get on with her at all. However, by dint of great labour and patience, I managed to get something done in the course of the morning, and then accompanied my young charge out into the garden and adjacent grounds for a little recreation before dinner. There we got along tolerably together, except that I found they had no notion of going with *me;* I must go with *them* wherever they chose to lead me. I must run, walk, or stand, exactly as it suited their fancy. This, I thought, was reversing the order of things; and I found it doubly disagreeable, as on this as well as subsequent occasions they seemed to prefer the dirtiest places and the most dismal occupations. But there was no remedy: either I must follow them or keep entirely apart from them, and thus appear neglectful of my charge. To-day they manifested a particular attachment to a well at the bottom of the lawn, where they persisted in dabbling with sticks and pebbles for above half an hour. I was in constant fear that their mother would see them from the window, and blame me for allowing them thus to draggle their clothes and wet their feet and hands instead of taking exercise; but no arguments, commands, or entreaties could draw them away. If *she* did not see them some one else did. A gentleman on horseback had entered the gate and was proceeding up the road. At the distance of a few paces from us he paused, and calling to the children in a waspish, penetrating tone, bade them "Keep out of that water."—"Miss Grey," said he, "(I suppose it *is* Miss Grey), I am surprised that you should allow them to dirty their clothes in that manner. Don't you see how Miss Bloomfield has soiled her frock, and that Master Bloomfield's socks are quite wet, and both of them without gloves? Dear, dear! let me *request* that in future you will keep them *decent* at least!" So saying, he turned away, and continued his ride up to the house. This was Mr. Bloomfield. I was surprised that he should nominate his children Master and Miss Bloomfield, and still more so that he should speak so uncivilly to me, their governess, and a perfect stranger to himself. Presently the bell rang to summon us in. I dined with the children at one, while he and his lady took their luncheon at the same table. His conduct there did not greatly raise him in my estimation. He was a man of ordinary stature—rather below than above—and rather thin than stout, apparently between thirty and forty years of age. He had a large mouth, pale, dingy complexion, milky blue eyes, and hair the colour of a hempen cord. There was a roast leg of mutton before him. He helped Mrs. Bloomfield, the children, and me, desiring me to cut up the children's meat; then, after twisting about the mutton in various directions, and eyeing it from different points, he pronounced it not fit to be eaten, and called for the cold beef.

"What is the matter with the mutton, my dear?" asked his mate.

"It is quite overdone. Don't you taste, Mrs. Bloomfield, that all the goodness is roasted out of it? And can't you see that all that nice, red gravy is completely dried away?"

"Well, I think the *beef* will suit you."

The beef was set before him, and he began to carve, but with the most rueful expressions of discontent.

"What is the matter with the *beef*, Mr. Bloomfield? I'm sure I thought it was very nice."

"And so it *was* very nice—a nicer joint could not be; but it is *quite* spoiled," replied he dolefully.

"How so?"

"How so! Why, don't you see how it is cut? Dear, dear! it is quite shocking!"

"They must have cut it wrong in the kitchen, then, for I'm sure I carved it quite properly here yesterday."

"No *doubt* they cut it wrong in the kitchen—the savages! Dear, dear! did ever any one see such a fine piece of beef so completely ruined? But remember that in future, when a decent dish leaves this table, they shall not *touch* it in the kitchen. Remember *that*, Mrs. Bloomfield."

Notwithstanding the ruinous state of the beef, the gentleman managed to cut himself some delicate slices, part of which he ate in silence. When he next spoke, it was in a less querulous tone, to ask what there was for dinner.

"Turkey and grouse," was the concise reply.

"And what besides?"

"Fish."

"What kind of fish?"

"I don't know."

"*You don't know?*" cried he, looking solemnly up from his plate, and suspending his knife and fork in astonishment.

"No. I told the cook to get some fish; I did not particularize what."

"Well, that beats everything! A lady professes to keep house, and doesn't even know what fish is for dinner! professes to order fish, and doesn't specify what!"

"Perhaps, Mr. Bloomfield, you will order dinner yourself in future."

Nothing more was said, and I was very glad to get out of the room with my pupils, for I never felt so ashamed and uncomfortable in my life for anything that was not my own fault.

In the afternoon we applied to lessons again, then went out again, then had tea in the schoolroom, then I dressed Mary Ann for dessert; and when she and her brother had gone down to the dining-room, I took the opportunity of beginning a letter to my dear friends at home, but the children came up before I had half completed it. At seven I had to put Mary Ann to bed; then I played with Tom till eight, when he too went; and I finished my letter and unpacked my clothes, which I had hitherto found no opportunity for doing, and finally went to bed myself.

But this is a very favourable specimen of a day's proceedings.

My task of instruction and surveillance, instead of becoming easier as my charges and I got better accustomed to each other, became more arduous as their characters unfolded. The name of governess, I soon found, was a mere mockery as applied to me; my pupils had no more notion of obedience than a wild, unbroken colt. The habitual fear of their father's peevish temper, and the dread of the punishments he was wont to inflict when irritated, kept them generally within bounds in his immediate presence. The girls, too, had some fear of their mother's anger, and the boy might occasionally be bribed to do as she bade him by the hope of reward; but I had no rewards to offer. And as for punishments, I was given to understand, the parents reserved that privilege to themselves; and yet they expected me to keep my pupils in order. Other children might be guided by the fear of anger and the desire of approbation, but neither the one nor the other had any effect upon these.

Master Tom, not content with refusing to be ruled, must needs set up as a ruler, and manifested a determination to keep not only his sisters but his governess in order, by violent manual and pedal applications; and as he was a tall, strong boy of his years, this occasioned no trifling inconvenience. A few sound boxes on the ear, on such occasions, might have settled the matter easily enough; but as, in that case, he might make up some story to his mother, which she would be sure to believe, as she had such unshaken faith in his veracity—though I had already discovered it to be by no means unimpeachable—I determined to refrain from striking him, even in self-defence; and in his most violent moods my only resource was to throw him on his back, and hold his hands and feet till the frenzy was somewhat abated. To the difficulty of preventing him from doing what he ought not was added that of forcing him to do what he ought. Often he would positively refuse to learn, or to repeat his lessons, or even to look at his book. Here again a good birch rod might have been serviceable, but as my powers were so limited I must make the best use of what I had.

As there were no settled hours for study and play, I resolved to give my pupils a certain task which, with moderate attention, they could perform in a short time; and till this was done, however weary I was, or however perverse they might be, nothing short of parental interference should induce me to suffer them to leave the schoolroom, even if I should sit with my chair against the door to keep them in. Patience, firmness, and perseverance were my only weapons, and these I resolved to use to the utmost. I determined always strictly to fulfil the threats and promises I made, and to that end I must be cautious to threaten and promise nothing that I could not perform. Then I would carefully refrain from all useless irritability and indulgence of my own ill-temper. When they behaved tolerably, I would be as kind and obliging as it was in my power to be, in order to make the widest possible distinction between good and bad conduct ; I would reason with them, too, in the simplest and most effective manner. When I reproved them, or refused to gratify their wishes, after a glaring fault, it should be more in sorrow than in anger. Their little hymns and prayers I would make plain and clear to their understanding. When they said their prayers at night, and asked pardon for their offences, I would remind them of the sins of the past day, solemnly, but in perfect kindness, to avoid raising a spirit of opposition ; penitential hymns should be said by the naughty, cheerful ones by the comparatively good ; and every kind of instruction I would convey to them, as much as possible, by entertaining discourse—apparently with no other object than their present amusement in view.

By these means I hoped, in time, both to benefit the children and to gain the approbation of their parents, and also to convince my friends at home that I was not so wanting in skill and prudence as they supposed. I knew the difficulties I had to contend with were great, but I knew (at least I believed) unremitting patience and perseverance could overcome them ; and night and morning I implored Divine assistance to this end. But either the children were so incorrigible, the parents so unreasonable, or myself so mistaken in my views, or so unable to carry them out, that my best intentions and most strenuous efforts seemed productive of no better result than sport to the children, dissatisfaction to their parents, and torment to myself.

The task of instruction was as arduous for the body as the mind. I had to run after my pupils to catch them, to carry or drag them to the table, and often forcibly to hold them there till the lesson was done. Tom I frequently put into a corner, seating myself before him in a chair, with a book which contained the little task that must be said or read, before he was released, in my hand. He was not strong enough to push both me and the chair away, so he would stand twisting his body and face into the most grotesque and singular contortions—

laughable, no doubt, to an unconcerned spectator, but not to me—and uttering loud yells and doleful outcries, intended to represent weeping, but wholly without the accompaniment of tears. I knew this was done solely for the purpose of annoying me, and therefore, however I might inwardly tremble with impatience and irritation, I manfully strove to suppress all visible signs of molestation, and affected to sit with calm indifference waiting till it should please him to cease this pastime, and prepare for a run in the garden, by casting his eye on the book and reading or repeating the few words he was required to say. Sometimes he was determined to do his writing badly, and I had to hold his hand to prevent him from purposely blotting or disfiguring the paper. Frequently I threatened that, if he did not do better, he should have another line. Then he would stubbornly refuse to write this line, and I, to save my word, had finally to resort to the expedient of holding his fingers upon the pen, and forcibly drawing his hand up and down, till, in spite of his resistance, the line was in some sort completed.

Yet Tom was by no means the most unmanageable of my pupils. Sometimes, to my great joy, he would have the sense to see that his wisest policy was to finish his tasks, and go out and amuse himself till I and his sisters came to join him, which frequently was not at all, for Mary Ann seldom followed his example in this particular. She apparently preferred rolling on the floor to any other amusement. Down she would drop like a leaden weight; and when I, with great difficulty, had succeeded in rooting her thence, I had still to hold her up with one arm, while with the other I held the book from which she was to read or spell her lesson. As the dead weight of the big girl of six became too heavy for one arm to bear, I transferred it to the other; or, if both were weary of the burden, I carried her into a corner, and told her she might come out when she should find the use of her feet, and stand up; but she generally preferred lying there like a log till dinner or tea time, when, as I could not deprive her of her meals, she must be liberated, and would come crawling out with a grin of triumph on her round, red face. Often she would stubbornly refuse to pronounce some particular word in her lesson; and now I regret the lost labour I have had in striving to conquer her obstinacy. If I had passed it over as a matter of no consequence, it would have been better for both parties than vainly striving to overcome it as I did; but I thought it my absolute duty to crush this vicious tendency in the bud—and so it was, if I could have done it. And had my powers been less limited I might have enforced obedience; but as it was, it was a trial of strength between her and me, in which she generally came off victorious, and every victory served to encourage and strengthen her for a future contest. In vain I argued, coaxed, entreated, threatened, scolded; in vain I kept her in from play, or, if obliged to take her out, refused to play with her, or to speak kindly, or have anything to do with her; in vain I tried to set before her the advantages of doing as she was bid, and being loved, and kindly treated in consequence, and the disadvantages of persisting in her absurd perversity. Sometimes, when she would ask me to do something for her, I would answer,—

"Yes, I will, Mary Ann, if you will only say that word. Come! you'd better say it at once, and have no more trouble about it."

"No."

"Then, of course, I can do nothing for you."

With me, at her age or under, neglect and disgrace were the most dreadful of punishments, but on her they made no impression. Sometimes, exasperated to the utmost pitch, I would shake her violently by the shoulder, or pull her long hair, or put her in the corner, for which she punished me with loud, shrill, piercing screams that went through my head like a knife. She knew I hated this, and when she had shrieked her utmost would look into my face with an air of vindictive satisfaction, exclaiming, "*Now*, then, *that's* for you!" and then shriek again and again, till I was forced to stop my ears. Often these dreadful cries would bring Mrs. Bloomfield up to inquire what was the matter.

"Mary Ann is a naughty girl, ma'am."

"But what are these shocking screams?"

"She is screaming in a passion."

"I never heard such a dreadful noise. You might be killing her. Why is she not out with her brother?"

"I cannot get her to finish her lessons."

"But Mary Ann must be a *good* girl, and finish her lessons." This was blandly spoken to the child. "And I hope I shall *never* hear such terrible cries again."

And fixing her cold, stony eyes upon me with a look that could not be mistaken, she would shut the door and walk away. Sometimes I would try to take the little obstinate creature by surprise, and casually ask her the word while she was thinking of something else. Frequently she would begin to say it, and then suddenly check herself, with a provoking look that seemed to say, "Ah! I'm too sharp for you; you shan't trick it out of me either."

On another occasion I pretended to forget the whole affair, and talked and played with her as usual till night, when I put her to bed; then bending over her, while she lay all smiles and good-humour, just before departing I said, as cheerfully and kindly as before,—

"Now, Mary Ann, just tell me that word before I kiss you good-night. You are a good girl now, and of course you will say it."

"No, I won't."

"Then I can't kiss you."

"Well, I don't care."

In vain I expressed my sorrow, in vain I lingered for some symptom of contrition; she really "didn't care." And I left her alone, and in darkness, wondering most of all at this last proof of insensate stubbornness. In *my* childhood I could not imagine a more afflictive punishment than for my mother to refuse to kiss me at night; the very idea was terrible. More than the idea I never felt, for, happily, I never committed a fault that was deemed worthy of such a penalty; but once, I remember, for some transgression of my sister's our mother thought proper to inflict it upon her. What *she* felt I cannot tell, but my sympathetic tears and suffering for her sake I shall not soon forget.

Another troublesome trait in Mary Ann was her incorrigible propensity to keep running into the nursery to play with her little sisters and the nurse. This was natural enough, but, as it was against her mother's express desire, I, of course, forbade her to do so, and did my utmost to keep her with me; but that only increased her relish for the nursery, and the more I strove to keep her out of it the oftener she went, and the longer she stayed, to the great dissatisfaction of Mrs. Bloomfield, who, I well knew, would impute all the blame of the matter to me. Another of my trials was the dressing in the morning. At one time she would not be washed, at another she would not be dressed unless she might wear some particular frock that I knew her mother would not like her to have, at another she would scream and run away if I attempted to touch her hair. So that, frequently, when, after much trouble and toil, I had, at length, succeeded in bringing her down, the breakfast was nearly half over, and black looks from "mamma," and testy observations from "papa," spoken at me, if not to me, were sure to be my meed, for few things irritated the latter so much as want of punctuality at meal times. Then, among the minor annoyances was my inability to satisfy Mrs. Bloomfield with her daughter's dress, and the child's hair "was never fit to be seen." Sometimes, as a powerful reproach to me, she would perform the office of tire-woman herself, and then complain bitterly of the trouble it gave her.

When little Fanny came into the schoolroom I hoped she would be mild and inoffensive, at least; but a few days, if not a few hours, sufficed to destroy the illusion. I found her a mischievous, intractable little creature, given up to falsehood and deception, young as she was, and alarmingly fond of exercising her two favourite weapons of offence and defence—that of spitting in the faces of those who incurred her displeasure, and bellowing like a bull when her unreasonable desires were not gratified. As she generally was pretty quiet in her parents' presence, and they were impressed with the notion of her being a remarkably gentle child, her falsehoods were readily believed, and her loud uproars led them to suspect harsh and injudicious treatment on my part; and when at length her bad disposition became manifest even to their prejudiced eyes, I felt that the whole was attributed to me.

"What a naughty girl Fanny is getting!" Mrs. Bloomfield would say to her spouse. "Don't you observe, my dear, how she is altered since she entered the schoolroom? She will soon be as bad as the other two; and, I am sorry to say, they have quite deteriorated of late."

"You may say that," was the answer. "I've been thinking that same myself. I thought when we got them a governess they'd improve, but instead of that they get worse and worse. I don't know how it is with their learning, but their habits, I know, make no sort of improvement; they get rougher, and dirtier, and more unseemly every day."

I knew this was all pointed at me, and these and all similar innuendoes affected me far more deeply than any open accusations would have done, for against the latter I should have been roused to speak in my own defence. Now I judged it my wisest plan to subdue every resentful impulse, suppress every sensitive shrinking, and go on perseveringly, doing my best; for, irksome as my situation was, I earnestly wished to retain it. I thought if I could struggle on with unremitting firmness and integrity the children would in time become more humanized; every month would contribute to make them some little wiser, and, consequently, more manageable—for a child of nine or ten as frantic and ungovernable as these at six and seven would be a maniac.

I flattered myself I was benefiting my parents and sister by my continuance here; for, small as the salary was, I still was earning something, and with strict economy I could easily manage to have something to spare for them, if they would favour me by taking it. Then it was by my own will that I had got the place. I had brought all this tribulation on myself, and I was determined to bear it—nay, more than that, I did not even regret the step I had taken. I longed to show my friends that even now I was competent to undertake the charge, and able to acquit myself honourably to the end; and if ever I felt it degrading to submit so quietly, or intolerable to toil so constantly, I would turn towards my home and say within myself,—

> "They may crush, but they shall not subdue me
> 'Tis of thee that I think, not of them."

About Christmas I was allowed to visit home; but my holiday was only of a fortnight's duration, "for," said Mrs. Bloomfield, "I thought, as you had seen your friends so lately, you would not care for a longer stay." I left her to think so still; but she little knew how long, how wearisome, those fourteen weeks of absence had been to me, how intensely I had longed for my holidays, how greatly I was disappointed at their curtailment. Yet she was not to blame in this. I had never told her my feelings, and she could not be expected to divine them. I had not been with her a full term, and she was justified in not allowing me a full vacation.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GRANDMAMMA.

I SPARE my readers the account of my delight on coming home, my happiness while there—enjoying a brief space of rest and liberty in that dear, familiar place, among the loving and the loved—and my sorrow on being obliged to bid them, once more, a long adieu.

I returned, however, with unabated vigour to my work—a more arduous task than any one can imagine who has not felt something like the misery of being charged with the care and direction of a set of mischievous, turbulent rebels, whom his utmost exertions cannot bind to their duty; while, at the same time, he is responsible for their conduct to a higher power, who exacts from him what cannot be achieved without the aid of the superior's more potent authority, which, either from indolence, or the fear of becoming unpopular with the said rebellious gang, the latter refuses to give. I can conceive few situations more harassing than that wherein, however you may long for success, however you may labour to fulfil your duty, your efforts are baffled and set at naught by those beneath you, and unjustly censured and misjudged by those above.

I have not enumerated half the vexatious propensities of my pupils, or half the troubles resulting from my heavy responsibilities, for fear of trespassing too much upon the reader's patience, as, perhaps, I have already done; but my design in writing the few last pages was not to amuse, but to benefit those whom it might concern. He that has no interest in such matters will doubtless have skipped them over with a cursory glance, and perhaps a malediction against the prolixity of the writer; but if a parent has, therefrom, gathered any useful hint, or an unfortunate governess received thereby the slightest benefit, I am well rewarded for my pains.

To avoid trouble and confusion, I have taken my pupils one by one and discussed their various qualities; but this can give no adequate idea of being worried by the whole three together, when, as was often the case, all were determined to "be naughty, and to tease Miss Grey, and put her in a passion."

Sometimes, on such occasions, the thought had suddenly occurred to me—"If *they* could see me now!" meaning, of course, my friends at home; and the idea of how they would pity me has made me pity myself—so greatly that I have had the utmost difficulty to restrain my tears; but I have restrained them, till my little tormentors were gone to dessert, or cleared off to bed (my only prospects of deliverance), and then, in all the bliss of solitude, I have given myself up to the luxury of an unrestricted burst of weeping. But this was a weakness I did not often indulge; my employments were too numerous, my leisure moments too precious, to admit of much time being given to fruitless lamentations.

I particularly remember one wild, snowy afternoon, soon after my return in January. The children had all come up from dinner, loudly declaring that they meant "to be naughty;" and they had well kept their resolution, though I had talked myself hoarse, and wearied every muscle in my throat, in the vain attempt to reason them out of it. I had got Tom pinned up in a corner, whence, I told him, he should not escape till he had done his appointed task. Meantime Fanny had possessed herself of my work-bag, and was rifling its contents, and spitting into it besides. I told her to let it alone, but to no purpose, of course. "Burn it, Fanny!" cried Tom; and *this* command she hastened to obey. I sprang to snatch it from the fire, and Tom darted to the door. "Mary Ann, throw her desk out of the window!" cried he; and my precious desk, containing mv letters and papers, my small amount of cash, and all my valuables, was about to be precipitated from the three-story window. I flew to rescue it. Meanwhile Tom had left the room, and was rushing down the stairs, followed by Fanny. Having secured my desk, I ran to catch them, and Mary Ann came scampering after. All three escaped me, and ran out of the house into the garden, where they plunged about in the snow, shouting and screaming in exultant glee.

What must I do? If I followed them I should probably be unable to capture one, and only drive them farther away; if I did not, how was I to get them in? and what would their parents think of me if they saw or heard the children rioting, hatless, bonnetless, glove-less, and bootless, in the deep, soft snow? While I stood in this perplexity, just without the door, trying, by grim looks and angry words, to awe them into subjection, I heard a voice behind me, in harshly piercing tones, exclaiming,—

"Miss Grey! is it possible? What, in the devil's name, can you be thinking about?"

"I can't get them in, sir," said I, turning round, and beholding Mr. Bloomfield, with his hair on end, and his pale blue eyes bolting from their sockets.

"But I INSIST upon their being got in!" cried he, approaching nearer, and looking perfectly ferocious.

"Then, sir, you must call them yourself, if you please, for they won't listen to me," I replied, stepping back.

"Come in with you, you filthy brats, or I'll horsewhip you every one!" roared he; and the children instantly obeyed.—"There, you see! They come at the first word!"

"Yes, when *you* speak."

"And it's very strange that when you've the care of 'em you've no better control over them than that. Now, there they are—gone upstairs with their nasty snowy feet. Do go after 'em and see them made decent, for Heaven's sake!"

That gentleman's mother was then staying in the house, and as I ascended the stairs and passed the drawing-room door I had the satisfaction of hearing the old lady declaiming aloud to her daughter-in-law to this effect (for I could only distinguish the most emphatic words),—

"Gracious Heavens!——never in all my life——get their death as sure as—— Do you think, my dear, she's a *proper person?* Take my word for it——"

I heard no more; but that sufficed.

The senior Mrs. Bloomfield had been very attentive and civil to me, and till now I had thought her a nice, kind-hearted, chatty old body. She would often come to me and talk in a confidential strain, nodding and shaking her head, and gesticulating with hands and eyes, as a certain class of old ladies are wont to do, though I never knew one that carried the peculiarity to so great an extent. She would even sympathize with me for the trouble I had with the children, and express at times, by half sentences, interspersed with nods and knowing winks, her sense of the injudicious conduct of their mamma in so restricting my power, and neglecting to support me with her authority. Such a mode of testifying disapprobation was not much to my taste, and I generally refused to take it in, or understand anything more than was openly spoken—at least, I never went further than an implied acknowledgment that, if matters were otherwise ordered, my task would be a less difficult one, and I should be better able to guide and instruct my charge. But now I must be doubly cautious. Hitherto, though I saw the old lady had her defects (of which one was a proneness to proclaim her perfections), I had always been wishful to excuse them, and to give her credit for all the virtues she professed, and even imagine others yet untold. Kindness, which had been the food of my life through so many years, had lately been so entirely denied me that I welcomed with grateful joy the slightest semblance of it. No wonder, then, that my heart warmed to the old lady, and always gladdened at her approach and regretted her departure.

But now the few words luckily or unluckily heard in passing had wholly revolutionized my ideas respecting her. Now I looked upon her as hypocritical and insincere, a flatterer, and a spy upon my words and deeds. Doubtless it would have been my interest still to meet her with the same cheerful smile and tone of respectful cordiality as before, but I could not if I would; my manner altered with my feelings, and became so cold and shy that she could not fail to notice it. She soon did notice it, and *her* manner altered too. The familiar nod was changed to a stiff bow, the gracious smile gave place to a glare of Gorgon ferocity; her vivacious loquacity was entirely transferred from me to " the darling boys and girls," whom she flattered and indulged more absurdly than ever their mother had done.

I confess I was somewhat troubled at this change. I feared the consequences of her displeasure, and even made some efforts to recover the ground I had lost, and with better apparent success than I could have anticipated. At one time I, merely in common civility, asked after her cough. Immediately her long visage relaxed into a smile, and she favoured me with a particular history of that and her other infirmities, followed by an account of her pious resignation, delivered in the usual emphatic, declamatory style, which no writing can portray.

" But there's one remedy for all, my dear, and that's resignation " (a toss of the head)—" resignation to the will of Heaven " (an uplifting of the hands and eyes). " It has always supported me through all my trials, and always will do " (a succession of nods). " But then, it isn't everybody that can say that " (a shake of the head) ; " but I'm one of the pious ones, Miss Grey " (a very significant nod and toss). " And, thank Heaven, I always was " (another nod), " and I glory in it " (an emphatic clasping of the hands and shaking of the head). And with several texts of Scripture, misquoted or misapplied, and religious exclamations so redolent of the ludicrous in the style of delivery and manner of bringing in, if not in the expressions themselves, that I decline repeating them, she withdrew, tossing her large head in high good-humour—with herself at least—and left me hoping that, after all, she was rather weak than wicked.

At her next visit to Wellwood House I went so far as to say I was glad to see her looking so well. The effect of this was magical. The words, intended as a mark of civility, were received as a flattering compliment. Her countenance brightened up, and from that moment she became as gracious and benign as heart could wish—in outward semblance at least. From what I now saw of her, and what I heard from the children, I knew that, in order to gain her cordial friendship, I had but to utter a word of flattery at each convenient opportunity. But this was against my principles, and for lack of this the capricious old dame soon deprived me of her favour again, and I believe did me much secret injury.

She could not greatly influence her daughter-in-law against me, because between that lady and herself there was a mutual dislike, chiefly shown by her in secret detractions and calumniations, by the other in an excess of frigid formality in her demeanour; and no fawning flattery of the elder could thaw away the wall of ice which the younger interposed between them. But with her son the old lady had better success. He would listen to all she had to say, provided she could soothe his fretful temper, and refrain from irritating him by her own asperities; and I have reason to believe that she considerably strengthened his prejudice against me. She would tell him that I shamefully neglected the children, and even his wife did not attend to them as she ought, and that he must look after them himself, or they would all go to ruin.

Thus urged, he would frequently give himself the trouble of watching them from the windows during their play; at times he would follow them through the grounds, and too often came suddenly upon them while they were dabbling in the forbidden well, talking to the coachman in the stables, or revelling in the filth of the farmyard, and I, meanwhile, wearily standing by, having previously exhausted my energy in vain attempts to get them away. Often, too, he would unexpectedly pop his head into the schoolroom while the young people were at meals, and find them spilling their milk over the table and themselves, plunging their fingers into their own or each other's mugs, or quarrelling over their victuals like a set of tiger's cubs. If I were quiet at the moment I was conniving at their disorderly conduct, if (as was frequently the case) I happened to be exalting my voice to enforce order, I was using undue violence, and setting the girls a bad example by such ungentleness of tone and language.

I remember one afternoon in spring when, owing to the rain, they could not go out, but by some amazing good fortune they had all finished their lessons, and yet abstained from running down to tease their parents—a trick that annoyed me greatly, but which, on rainy days, I seldom could prevent their doing, because below they found novelty and amusement, especially when visitors were in the house; and their mother, though she bade me keep them in the schoolroom, would never chide them for leaving it, or trouble herself to send them back. But this day they appeared satisfied with their present abode, and, what is more wonderful still, seemed disposed to play together without depending on me for amusement, and without quarrelling with each other. Their occupation was a somewhat puzzling one. They were all squatted together on the floor by the window, over a heap of broken toys and a quantity of birds' eggs—or rather eggshells, for the contents had luckily been abstracted. These shells they had broken up and were pounding into small fragments, to what end I could not imagine; but so long as they were quiet and not in positive mischief, I did not care; and with a feeling of unusual repose I sat by the fire, putting the finishing stitches to a frock for Mary Ann's doll, intending, when that was done, to begin a letter to my mother. Suddenly the door opened, and the dingy head of Mr. Bloomfield looked in.

"All very quiet here! What are you doing?" said he. "No harm *to-day*, at least," thought I. But he was of a different opinion. Advancing to the window, and seeing the children's occupations, he testily exclaimed, "What in the world are you about?"

"We're grinding eggshells, papa!" cried Tom.

"How *dare* you make such a mess, you little devils? Don't you see what confounded work you're making of the carpet?" (The carpet was a plain, brown drugget.) —"Miss Grey, did you know what they were doing?"

"Yes, sir."

"*You knew* it?"

"Yes."

"You *knew* it, and you actually sat there and permitted them to go on, without a word of reproof!"

"I didn't think they were doing any harm."

"Any harm! Why, look there! Just look at that carpet, and see. Was there ever anything like it in a Christian house before? No wonder your room is not fit for a pigsty. No wonder your pupils are worse than a litter of pigs. No wonder—— Oh! I declare, it puts me quite past my patience!" And he departed, shutting the door after him with a bang that made the children laugh.

"It puts *me* quite past my patience too," muttered I, getting up; and seizing the poker, I dashed it repeatedly into the cinders, and stirred them up with unwonted energy, thus easing my irritation under pretence of mending the fire.

After this Mr. Bloomfield was continually looking in to see if the schoolroom was in order; and as the children were continually littering the floor with fragments of toys, sticks, stones, stubble, leaves, and other rubbish, which I could not prevent their bringing, or oblige them to gather up, and which the servants refused to "clean after them," I had to spend a considerable portion of my valuable leisure moments on my knees upon the floor in painfully reducing things to order. Once I told them that they should not taste their supper till they had picked up everything from the carpet; Fanny might have hers when she had taken up a certain quantity, Mary Ann when she had gathered twice as many, and Tom was to clear away the rest. Wonderful to state, the girls did their part, but Tom was in such a fury that he flew upon the table, scattered the bread and milk about the floor, struck his sisters, kicked the coals out of the coal-pan, attempted to overthrow the table and chairs, and seemed inclined to make a Douglas-larder of the whole contents of the room; but I seized upon him, and sending Mary Ann to call her mamma, held him, in spite of kicks, blows, yells, and execrations, till Mrs. Bloomfield made her appearance.

"What is the matter with my boy?" said she.

And when the matter was explained to her, all she did was to send for the nurserymaid to put the room in order, and bring Master Bloomfield his supper.

"There, now!" cried Tom triumphantly, looking up from his viands with his mouth almost too full for speech—"there, now, Miss Grey! You see I have got my supper in spite of you, and I haven't picked up a single thing!"

The only person in the house who had any real sympathy for me was the nurse, for she had suffered like afflictions, though in a smaller degree, as she had not the task of teaching, nor was she so responsible for the conduct of her charge.

"O Miss Grey," she would say, "you have some trouble with them childer!"

"I have, indeed, Betty; and I dare say you know what it is."

"Ay, I do so. But I don't vex myself o'er 'em as you do. And then, you see, I hit 'em a slap sometimes; and them little uns, I gives 'em a good whipping now and then. There's nothing else will do for 'em, as what they say. Howsoever, I've lost my place for it."

"Have you, Betty? I heard you were going to leave."

"Eh, bless you, yes! Missis gave me warning a three wik sin'. She told me afore Christmas how it mud be if I hit 'em again; but I couldn't hold my hand off 'em at nothing. I know not how *you* do, for Miss Mary Ann's worse by the half nor her sisters."

CHAPTER V.

THE UNCLE.

BESIDES the old lady, there was another relative of the family whose visits were a great annoyance to me. This was "Uncle Robson," Mrs. Bloomfield's brother, a tall, self-sufficient fellow, with dark hair and sallow complexion like his sister, a nose that seemed to disdain the earth, and little gray eyes, frequently half closed, with a mixture of real stupidity and affected contempt of all surrounding objects. He was a thick-set, strongly-built man, but he had found some means of compressing his waist into a remarkably small compass; and that, together with the unnatural stiffness of his form, showed that the lofty-minded, manly Mr. Robson, the scorner of the female sex, was not above the foppery of stays. He seldom deigned to notice me, and when he did it was with a certain supercilious insolence of tone and manner that convinced me he was no gentleman, though it was intended to have a contrary effect. But it was not for that I disliked his coming so much as for the harm he did the children—encouraging all their evil propensities, and undoing in a few minutes the little good it had taken me months of labour to achieve.

Fanny and little Harriet he seldom condescended to notice, but Mary Ann was something of a favourite. He was continually encouraging her tendency to affectation (which I had done my utmost to crush), talking about her pretty face, and filling her head with all manner of conceited notions concerning her personal appearance (which I had instructed her to regard as dust in the balance compared with the cultivation of her mind and manners); and I never saw a child so susceptible of flattery as she was. Whatever was wrong in either her or her brother he would encourage by laughing at, if not by actually praising. People little know the injury they do to children by laughing at their faults, and making a pleasant jest of what their true friends have endeavoured to teach them to hold in grave abhorrence.

Though not a positive drunkard, Mr. Robson habitually swallowed great quantities of wine, and took with relish an occasional glass of brandy and water. He taught his nephew to imitate him in this to the utmost of his ability, and to believe that the more wine and spirits he could take, and the better he liked them, the more he manifested his bold and manly spirit, and rose superior to his sisters. Mr. Bloomfield had not much to say against it, for his favourite beverage was gin and water, of which he took a considerable portion every day, by dint of constant sipping; and to that I chiefly attributed his dingy complexion and waspish temper.

Mr. Robson likewise encouraged Tom's propensity to persecute the lower creation, both by precept and example. As he frequently came to course or shoot over his brother-in-law's grounds, he would bring his favourite dogs with him; and he treated them so brutally that, poor as I was, I would have given a sovereign any day to see one of them bite him, provided the animal could have done it with impunity. Sometimes, when in a very complacent mood, he would go a-birdnesting with the children—a thing that irritated and annoyed me exceedingly, as, by frequent and persevering attempts, I flattered myself I had partly shown them the evil of this pastime, and hoped in time to bring them to some general sense of justice and humanity; but ten minutes' birdnesting with Uncle Robson, or even a laugh from him at some relation of their former barbarities, was sufficient at once to destroy the effect of my whole elaborate course of reasoning and persuasion. Happily, however, during that spring they never, but once, got anything but empty nests or eggs, being too impatient to leave them till the birds were hatched. That once Tom, who had been with his uncle into the neighbouring plantation, came running in high glee into the garden, with a brood of little callow nestlings in his hands. Mary Ann and Fanny, whom I was just bringing out, ran to admire his spoils, and to beg each a bird for themselves. "No, not one!" cried Tom. "They're all mine. Uncle Robson gave them to me—one, two, three, four, five. You shan't touch one of them—no, not one, for your lives!" continued he exultingly, laying the nest on the ground, and standing over it with his legs wide apart, his hands thrust into his breeches-pockets, his body bent forward, and his face twisted into all manner of contortions in the ecstasy of his delight.

"But you shall see me fettle 'em off. My word, but I *will* wallop 'em! See if I don't now. By gum! but there's rare sport for me in that nest."

"But, Tom," said I, "I shall not allow you to torture those birds. They must either be killed at once or carried back to the place you took them from, that the old birds may continue to feed them."

"But you don't know where that is, madam. It's only me and Uncle Robson that knows that."

"But if you don't tell me I shall kill them myself, much as I hate it."

"You daren't. You daren't touch them for your life, because you know papa, and mamma, and Uncle Robson would be angry. Ha, ha! I've caught you there, miss!"

"I shall do what I think right in a case of this sort, without consulting any one. If your papa and mamma don't happen to approve of it, I shall be sorry to offend them, but your Uncle Robson's opinions, of course, are nothing to me."

So saying, urged by a sense of duty, at the risk of both making myself sick and incurring the wrath of my employers, I got a large flat stone that had been reared up for a mouse-trap by the gardener; then, having once more vainly endeavoured to persuade the little tyrant to let the birds be carried back, I asked what he intended to do with them. With fiendish glee he commenced a list of torments, and while he was busied in the relation I dropped the stone upon his intended victims and crushed them flat beneath it. Loud were the outcries, terrible the execrations, consequent upon this daring outrage. Uncle Robson had been coming up the walk with his gun, and was just then pausing to kick his dog. Tom flew towards him, vowing he would make him kick me instead of Juno. Mr. Robson leant upon his gun and laughed excessively at the violence of his nephew's passion and the bitter maledictions and opprobrious epithets he heaped upon me. "Well, you *are* a good un!" exclaimed he at length, taking up his weapon and proceeding towards the house. "Damme, but the lad has some spunk in him too. Curse me if ever I saw a nobler little scoundrel than that. He's beyond petticoat government already. By God, he defies mother, granny, governess, and all! Ha, ha, ha!—Never mind, Tom; I'll get you another brood to-morrow."

"If you do, Mr. Robson, I shall kill them too," said I.

"Humph!" replied he; and having honoured me with a broad stare—which, contrary to his expectations, I sustained without flinching—he turned away with an air of supreme contempt, and stalked into the house. Tom next went to tell his mamma. It was not her way to say much on any subject, but when she next saw me her aspect and demeanour were doubly dark and chill. After some casual remark about the weather, she observed,—

"I am sorry, Miss Grey, you should think it necessary to interfere with Master Bloomfield's amusements. He was *very* much distressed about your destroying the birds."

"When Master Bloomfield's amusements consist in injuring sentient creatures," I answered, "I think it my duty to interfere."

"You seemed to have forgotten," said she calmly, "that the creatures were all created for our convenience."

I thought that doctrine admitted some doubt, but merely replied,—

"If they were, we have no right to torment them for our amusement."

"I think," said she, "a child's amusement is scarcely to be weighed against the welfare of a soulless brute."

"But for the child's own sake it ought not to be encouraged to have such amusements," answered I, as meekly as I could, to make up for such unusual pertinacity. "'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.'"

"Oh, of course! But that refers to our conduct towards each other."

"'The merciful man shows mercy to his beast,'" I ventured to add.

"I think *you* have not shown much mercy," replied she, with a short, bitter laugh—"killing the poor birds by wholesale in that shocking manner, and putting the dear boy to such misery for a mere whim."

I judged it prudent to say no more. This was the nearest approach to a quarrel I ever had with Mrs.

Bloomfield, as well as the greatest number of words I ever exchanged with her at one time since the day of my first arrival.

But Mr. Robson and old Mrs. Bloomfield were not the only guests whose coming to Wellwood House annoyed me. Every visitor disturbed me more or less, not so much because they neglected me (though I did feel their conduct strange and disagreeable in that respect) as because I found it impossible to keep my pupils away from them, as I was repeatedly desired to do. Tom must talk to them, and Mary Ann must be noticed by them. Neither the one nor the other knew what it was to feel any degree of shamefacedness, or even common modesty. They would indecently and clamorously interrupt the conversation of their elders, tease them with the most impertinent questions, roughly collar the gentlemen, climb their knees uninvited, hang about their shoulders or rifle their pockets, pull the ladies' gowns, disorder their hair, tumble their collars, and importunately beg for their trinkets.

Mrs. Bloomfield had the sense to be shocked and annoyed at all this, but she had not sense to prevent it. She expected me to prevent it. But how could I, when the guests, with their fine clothes and new faces, continually flattered and indulged them, out of complaisance to their parents—how could *I*, with my homely garments, everyday face, and honest words, draw them away? I strained every nerve to do so. By striving to amuse them I endeavoured to attract them to my side; by the exertion of such authority as I possessed, and by such severity as I dared to use, I tried to deter them from tormenting the guests, and by reproaching their unmannerly conduct to make them ashamed to repeat it. But they knew no shame. They scorned authority which had no terrors to back it; and as for kindness and affection, either they had no hearts, or such as they had were so strongly guarded, and so well concealed, that I, with all my efforts, had not yet discovered how to reach them.

But soon my trials in this quarter came to a close—sooner than I either expected or desired; for one sweet evening towards the close of May, as I was rejoicing in the near approach of the holidays, and congratulating myself upon having made some progress with my pupils (as far as their learning went, at least, for I *had* instilled *something* into their heads, and I had at length brought them to be a little—a very little—more rational about getting their lessons done in time to leave some space for recreation, instead of tormenting themselves and me all day long to no purpose), Mrs. Bloomfield sent for me, and calmly told me that after midsummer my services would be no longer required. She assured me that my character and general conduct were unexceptionable, but the children had made so little improvement since my arrival that Mr. Bloomfield and she felt it their duty to seek some other mode of instruction. Though superior to most children of their years in abilities, they were decidedly behind them in attainments; their manners were uncultivated, and their tempers unruly. And this she attributed to a want of sufficient firmness, and diligent, persevering care on my part.

Unshaken firmness, devoted diligence, unwearied perseverance, unceasing care, were the very qualifications on which I had secretly prided myself, and by which I had hoped in time to overcome all difficulties, and obtain success at last. I wished to say something in my own justification, but in attempting to speak I felt my voice falter, and rather than testify any emotion, or suffer the tears to overflow that were already gathering in my eyes, I chose to keep silence, and bear all like a self-convicted culprit.

Thus was I dismissed, and thus I sought my home. Alas! what would they think of me—unable, after all my boasting, to keep my place, even for a single year, as governess to three small children, whose mother was asserted by my own aunt to be a "very nice woman"? Having been thus weighed in the balance and found wanting, I need not hope they would be willing to try me again. And this was an unwelcome thought; for, vexed, harassed, disappointed as I had been, and greatly as I had learned to love and value my home, I was not yet weary of adventure, nor willing to relax my efforts. I knew that all parents were not like Mr. and Mrs. Bloomfield, and I was certain all children were not like theirs. The next family must be different, and any change must be for the better. I had been seasoned by adversity, and tutored by experience, and I longed to redeem my lost honour in the eyes of those whose opinion was more than that of all the world to me.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PARSONAGE AGAIN.

FOR a few months I remained peaceably at home, in the quiet enjoyment of liberty, and rest, and genuine friendship, from all of which I had fasted so long, and in the earnest prosecution of my studies, to recover what I had lost during my stay at Wellwood House, and to lay in new stores for future use. My father's health was still very infirm, but not materially worse than when I last saw him; and I was glad I had it in my power to cheer him by my return, and to amuse him with singing his favourite songs.

No one triumphed over my failure, or said I had better have taken his or her advice and quietly stayed at home. All were glad to have me back again, and lavished more kindness than ever upon me, to make up for the sufferings I had undergone; but not one would touch a shilling of what I had so cheerfully earned and so carefully saved, in the hope of sharing it with them. By dint of pinching here and scraping there, our debts were already nearly paid. Mary had had good success with her drawings, but our father had insisted upon *her* likewise keeping all the produce of her industry to herself. All we could spare from the supply of our humble wardrobe and our little casual expenses he directed us to put into the savings' bank, saying we knew not how soon we might be dependent on that alone for support; for he felt he had not long to be with us, and what would become of our mother and us when he was gone, God only knew.

Dear papa! if he had troubled himself less about the afflictions that threatened us in case of his death, I am convinced that dreaded event would not have taken place so soon. My mother would never suffer him to ponder on the subject if she could help it.

"O Richard!" exclaimed she, on one occasion, "if you would but dismiss such gloomy subjects from your mind, you would live as long as any of us—at least you would live to see the girls married, and yourself a happy grandfather, with a canty old dame for your companion."

My mother laughed, and so did my father; but his laugh soon perished in a dreary sigh.

"*They* married—poor penniless things!" said he. "Who will take them, I wonder?"

"Why, nobody shall that isn't thankful for them. Wasn't I penniless when you took me? And you *pretended*, at least, to be vastly pleased with your acquisition. But it's no matter whether they get married or not. We can devise a thousand honest ways of making a livelihood. And I wonder, Richard, you can think of bothering your head about our *poverty* in case of your death, as if *that* would be anything compared with the calamity of losing you—an affliction that you well know would swallow up all others, and which you ought to do your utmost to preserve us from; and there is nothing like a cheerful mind for keeping the body in health."

"I know, Alice, it is wrong to keep repining as I do, but I cannot help it. You must bear with me."

"I *won't* bear with you, if I can alter you," replied my mother; but the harshness of her words was undone by the earnest affection of her tone and pleasant smile, that made my father smile again, less sadly and less transiently than was his wont.

" Mamma," said I, as soon as I could find an opportunity of speaking with her alone, " my money is but little, and cannot last long. If I could increase it, it would lessen papa's anxiety, on one subject at least. I cannot draw like Mary, and so the best thing I could do would be to look out for another situation."

" And so you would actually try again, Agnes ? "

" Decidedly, I would."

" Why, my dear, I should have thought you had had enough of it."

" I know," said I, " everybody is not like Mr. and Mrs. Bloomfield——"

" Some are worse," interrupted my mother.

" But not many, I think," replied I. " And I'm sure all children are not like theirs, for I and Mary were not. We always did as you bade us, didn't we ? "

" Generally. But then I did not spoil you, and you were not perfect angels after all. Mary had a fund of quiet obstinacy, and you were somewhat faulty in regard to temper ; but you were very good children on the whole."

" I know I was sulky sometimes, and I should have been glad to see these children sulky sometimes too, for then I could have understood them ; but they never were, for they *could* not be offended, nor hurt, nor ashamed. They could not be unhappy in any way, except when they were in a passion."

" Well, if they *could* not, it was not their fault. You cannot expect stone to be as pliable as clay."

" No, but still it is very unpleasant to live with such unimpressible, incomprehensible creatures. You cannot love them ; and if you could, your love would be utterly thrown away. They could neither return it nor value nor understand it. But, however, even if I should stumble on such a family again, which is quite unlikely, I have all this experience to begin with, and I should manage better another time ; and the end and aim of this preamble is—let me try again."

" Well, my girl, you are not easily discouraged, I see ;

I am glad of that. But let me tell you you are a good deal paler and thinner than when you first left home; and we cannot have you undermining your health to hoard up money, either for yourself or others."

"Mary tells me I am changed too; and I don't much wonder at it, for I was in a constant state of agitation and anxiety all day long. But next time I am determined to take things coolly."

After some further discussion my mother promised once more to assist me, provided I would wait and be patient; and I left her to broach the matter to my father, when and how she deemed it most advisable, never doubting her ability to obtain his consent. Meantime I searched with great interest the advertising columns of the newspapers, and wrote answers to every "Wanted a Governess" that appeared at all eligible; but all my letters, as well as the replies, when I got any, were dutifully shown to my mother, and she, to my chagrin, made me reject the situations one after another. These were low people, these were too exacting in their demands, and these too niggardly in their remuneration.

"Your talents are not such as every poor clergyman's daughter possesses, Agnes," she would say, "and you must not throw them away. Remember you promised to be patient. There is no need of hurry. You have plenty of time before you, and may have many chances yet."

At length she advised me to put an advertisement myself in the paper, stating my qualifications, etc.

"Music, singing, drawing, French, Latin, and German," said she, "are no mean assemblage—many will be glad to have so much in one instructor; and this time you shall try your fortune in a somewhat higher family—in that of some genuine, thorough-bred gentleman; for such are far more likely to treat you with proper respect and consideration than those purse-proud tradespeople and arrogant upstarts. I have known several among the higher ranks who treated their governesses quite as one of the family, though some, I allow, are as insolent and exacting as any one else can be, for there are bad and good in all classes."

The advertisement was quickly written and dispatched. Of the two parties who answered it, but one would consent to give me fifty pounds—the sum my mother bade me name as the salary I should require; and here I hesitated about engaging myself, as I feared the children would be too old, and their parents would require some one more showy, or more experienced, if not more accomplished than I. But my mother dissuaded me from declining it on that account. I should do vastly well, she said, if I would only throw aside my diffidence and acquire a little more confidence in myself. I was just to give a plain, true statement of my acquirements and qualifications, and name what stipulations I chose to make, and then await the result. The only stipulation I ventured to propose was that I might be allowed two months' holidays during the year to visit my friends—at Midsummer and Christmas. The unknown lady, in her reply, made no objection to this, and stated that, as to my acquirements, she had no doubt I should be able to give satisfaction; but in the engagement of governess she considered those things as but subordinate points, as, being situated in the neighbourhood of O——, she could get masters to supply any deficiencies in that respect; but in her opinion, next to unimpeachable morality, a mild and cheerful temper and obliging disposition were the most essential requisites.

My mother did not relish this at all, and now made many objections to my accepting the situation, in which my sister warmly supported her; but unwilling to be balked again, I overruled them all, and having first obtained the consent of my father (who had, a short time previously, been apprised of these transactions), I wrote a most obliging epistle to my unknown correspondent, and finally the bargain was concluded.

It was decreed that on the last day of January I was to enter upon my new office as governess in the family of Mr. Murray of Horton Lodge, near O——, about seventy miles from our village—a formidable distance to me, as I had never been above twenty miles from home in all the course of my twenty years' sojourn on earth, and as, moreover, every individual in that family and in the neighbourhood was utterly unknown to myself and all my acquaintances. But this rendered it only the more piquant to me. I had now in some measure got rid of the *mauvaise honte* that had formerly oppressed me so much; there was a pleasing excitement in the idea of entering these unknown regions and making my way alone among its strange inhabitants. I now flattered myself I was going to see something of the world. Mr. Murray's residence was near a large town, and not in a manufacturing district, where the people had nothing to do but to make money. His rank, from what I could gather, appeared to be higher than that of Mr. Bloomfield, and doubtless he was one of those genuine thoroughbred gentry my mother spoke of, who would treat his governess with due consideration as a respectable, well-educated lady, the instructor and guide of his children, and not a mere upper servant. Then, my pupils being older, would be more rational, more teachable, and less troublesome than the last. They would be less confined to the schoolroom, and not require that constant labour and incessant watching; and finally, bright visions mingled with my hopes, with which the care of children and the mere duties of a governess had little or nothing to do. Thus the reader will see that I had no claim to be regarded as a martyr to filial piety, going forth to sacrifice peace and liberty for the sole purpose of laying up stores for the comfort and support of my parents, though certainly the comfort of my father and the future support of my mother had a large share in my calculations; and fifty pounds appeared to me no ordinary sum. I must have decent clothes becoming my station; I must, it seemed, put out my washing, and also pay for my four annual journeys between Horton Lodge and home; but, with strict attention to economy, surely twenty pounds, or little more, would cover those expenses, and then there would be thirty for the bank, or little less. What a valuable addition to our stock! Oh, I *must* struggle to keep this situation, whatever it might be, both for my own honour among my friends and for the solid services I might render them by my continuance there.

CHAPTER VII.

HORTON LODGE.

THE 31st of January was a wild, tempestuous day. There was a strong north wind, with a continual storm of snow drifting on the ground and whirling through the air. My friends would have had me delay my departure, but fearful of prejudicing my employers against me by such want of punctuality at the commencement of my undertaking, I persisted in keeping the appointment.

I will not inflict upon my readers an account of my leaving home on that dark winter morning—the fond farewells, the long, long journey to O——, the solitary waitings in inns for coaches or trains (for there were some railways then), and finally the meeting at O—— with Mr. Murray's servant, who had been sent with the phaeton to drive me from thence to Horton Lodge. I will just state that the heavy snow had thrown such impediments in the way of both horses and steam-engines that it was dark some hours before I reached my journey's end, and that a most bewildering storm came on at last, which made the few miles' space between O—— and Horton Lodge a long and formidable passage. I sat resigned, with the cold, sharp snow drifting through my veil and filling my lap, seeing nothing, and wondering how the unfortunate horse and driver could make their way even as well as they did; and indeed it was but a toilsome, creeping style of progression, to say the best of it. At length we paused, and at the call of the driver some one unlatched and rolled back upon their creaking hinges what appeared to be the park gates.

Then we proceeded along a smoother road, whence occasionally I perceived some huge hoary mass gleaming through the darkness, which I took to be a portion of a snow-clad tree. After a considerable time we paused again, before the stately portico of a large house with long windows descending to the ground.

I rose with some difficulty from under the superincumbent snowdrift, and alighted from the carriage, expecting that a kind and hospitable reception would indemnify me for the toils and hardships of the day. A gentlemanly person in black opened the door, and admitted me into a spacious hall, lighted by an amber-coloured lamp suspended from the ceiling. He led me through this, along a passage, and opening the door of a back room, told me that was the schoolroom. I entered, and found two young ladies and two young gentlemen—my future pupils, I supposed. After a formal greeting, the elder girl, who was trifling over a piece of canvas and a basket of German wools, asked if I should like to go upstairs. I replied in the affirmative, of course.

" Matilda, take a candle and show her her room," said she.

Miss Matilda, a strapping hoiden of about fourteen, with a short frock and trousers, shrugged her shoulders and made a slight grimace, but took a candle and proceeded before me up the back stairs (a long, steep, double flight), and through a long, narrow passage to a small but tolerably comfortable room. She then asked me if I would take some tea or coffee. I was about to answer No, but remembering that I had taken nothing since seven o'clock that morning, and feeling faint in consequence, I said I would take a cup of tea. Saying she would tell " Brown," the young lady departed; and by the time I had divested myself of my heavy, wet cloak, shawl, bonnet, etc., a mincing damsel came to say the young ladies desired to know whether I would take my tea up there or in the schoolroom. Under the plea of fatigue, I chose to take it there. She withdrew, and after a while returned again with a small tea-tray, and placed it on the chest of drawers which served as a dressing-table. Having civilly thanked her, I asked at what time I should be expected to rise in the morning.

"The young ladies and gentlemen breakfast at half-past eight, ma'am," said she. "They rise early. But as they seldom do any lessons before breakfast, I should think it will do if you rise soon after seven."

I desired her to be so kind as to call me at seven, and promising to do so, she withdrew. Then having broken my long fast on a cup of tea and a little thin bread and butter, I sat down beside the small, smouldering fire, and amused myself with a hearty fit of crying, after which I said my prayers, and then, feeling considerably relieved, began to prepare for bed. Finding that none of my luggage was brought up, I instituted a search for the bell; and failing to discover any signs of such a convenience in any corner of the room, I took my candle and ventured through the long passage, and down the steep stairs, on a voyage of discovery. Meeting a well-dressed female on the way, I told her what I wanted, but not without considerable hesitation, as I was not quite sure whether it was one of the upper servants or Mrs. Murray herself. It happened, however, to be the lady's-maid. With the air of one conferring an unusual favour, she vouchsafed to undertake the sending up of my things; and when I had re-entered my room, and waited and wondered a long time (greatly fearing that she had forgotten or neglected to perform her promise, and doubting whether to keep waiting, or go to bed, or go down again), my hopes at length were revived by the sound of voices and laughter, accompanied by the tramp of feet along the passage; and presently the luggage was brought in by a rough-looking maid and a man, neither of them very respectful in their demeanour to me. Having shut the door upon their retiring footsteps, and unpacked a few of my things, I betook myself to rest, gladly enough, for I was weary in body and mind.

It was with a strange feeling of desolation, mingled with a strong sense of the novelty of my situation, and a joyless kind of curiosity concerning what was yet unknown, that I awoke the next morning, feeling like one whirled away by enchantment, and suddenly dropped from the clouds into a remote and unknown land, widely and completely isolated from all he had ever seen or known before; or like a thistle-seed borne on the wind to some strange nook of uncongenial soil, where it must lie long enough before it can take root and germinate, extracting nourishment from what appears so alien to its nature—if, indeed, it ever can. But this gives no proper idea of my feelings at all; and no one that has not lived such a retired, stationary life as mine can possibly imagine what they were—hardly even if he has known what it is to awake some morning and find himself in Port Nelson in New Zealand, with a world of waters between himself and all that knew him.

I shall not soon forget the peculiar feeling with which I raised my blind and looked out upon the unknown world. A wide, white wilderness was all that met my gaze—a waste of

> "Deserts tossed in snow,
> And heavy-laden groves."

I descended to the schoolroom with no remarkable eagerness to join my pupils, though not without some feeling of curiosity respecting what a further acquaintance would reveal. One thing among others of more obvious importance I determined with myself—I must begin with calling them Miss and Master. It seemed to me a chilling and unnatural piece of punctilio between the children of a family and their instructor and daily companion, especially where the former were in their early childhood, as at Wellwood House; but even there my calling the little Bloomfields by their simple names had been regarded as an offensive liberty, as their parents had taken care to show me, by carefully designating them *Master* and *Miss* Bloomfield, etc., in speaking to me. I had been very slow to take the hint, because the whole affair struck me as so very absurd; but now I determined to be wiser, and begin at once with as much form and ceremony as any member of the family would be likely to require. And indeed, the children being so much older, there would be less difficulty—though the little words Miss and Master seemed to have a surprising effect in repressing all familiar, open-hearted kindness, and extinguishing every gleam of cordiality that might arise between us.

As I cannot, like Dogberry, find it in my heart to bestow *all* my tediousness upon the reader, I will not go on to bore him with a minute detail of all the discoveries and proceedings of this and the following day. No doubt he will be amply satisfied with a slight sketch of the different members of the family, and a general view of the first year or two of my sojourn among them.

To begin with the head, Mr. Murray was, by all accounts, a blustering, roistering, country squire, a devoted fox-hunter, a skilful horse-jockey and farrier, an active, practical farmer, and a hearty *bon vivant*. By all accounts, I say, for, except on Sundays, when he went to church, I never saw him from month to month —unless in crossing the hall or walking in the grounds the figure of a tall, stout gentleman, with scarlet cheeks and crimson nose, happened to come across me; on which occasions, if he passed near enough to speak, an unceremonious nod, accompanied by a "Morning, Miss Grey," or some such brief salutation, was usually vouchsafed. Frequently, indeed, his loud laugh reached me from afar, and oftener still I heard him swearing and blaspheming against the footmen, groom, coachman, or some other hapless dependant.

Mrs. Murray was a handsome, dashing lady of forty, who certainly required neither rouge nor padding to add to her charms, and whose chief enjoyments were, or seemed to be, in giving or frequenting parties, and in dressing at the very top of the fashion. I did not see her till eleven o'clock on the morning after my arrival, when she honoured me with a visit. just as my mother might step into the kitchen to see a new servant-girl—

yet not so either, for my mother would have seen her immediately after her arrival, and not waited till the next day; and, moreover, she would have addressed her in a more kind and friendly manner, and given her some words of comfort as well as a plain exposition of her duties; but Mrs. Murray did neither the one nor the other. She just stepped into the schoolroom on her return from ordering dinner in the housekeeper's room, bade me good-morning, stood for two minutes by the fire, said a few words about the weather and the "rather rough" journey I must have had yesterday; petted her youngest child—a boy of ten—who had just been wiping his mouth and hands on her gown, after indulging in some savoury morsel from the housekeeper's stores; told me what a sweet, good boy he was; and then sailed out, with a self-complacent smile upon her face, thinking, no doubt, that she had done quite enough for the present, and had been delightfully condescending into the bargain. Her children evidently held the same opinion, and I alone thought otherwise.

After this she looked in upon me once or twice, during the absence of my pupils, to enlighten me concerning my duties towards them. For the girls, she seemed anxious only to render them as superficially attractive and showily accomplished as they could possibly be made, without present trouble or discomfort to themselves; and I was to act accordingly—to study and strive to amuse and oblige, instruct, refine, and polish, with the least possible exertion on their part, and no exercise of authority on mine. With regard to the two boys, it was much the same, only, instead of accomplishments I was to get the greatest possible quantity of Latin grammar and Valpy's Delectus into their heads, in order to fit them for school — the greatest possible quantity, at least, *without* trouble to themselves. John might be a "little high-spirited," and Charles might be a little "nervous and tedious."

"But at all events, Miss Grey," said she, "I hope *you* will keep your temper, and be mild and patient throughout, especially with the dear little Charles—he is so extremely nervous and susceptible, and so utterly unaccustomed to anything but the tenderest treatment. You will excuse my naming these things to you; for the fact is, I have hitherto found all the governesses, even the very best of them, faulty in this particular. They wanted that meek and quiet spirit which St. Matthew, or some of them, says is better than the putting on of apparel. You will know the passage to which I allude, for you are a clergyman's daughter. But I have no doubt you will give satisfaction in this respect as well as the rest. And remember, on all occasions, when any of the young people do anything improper, if persuasion and gentle remonstrance will not do, let one of the others come and tell me, for I can speak to them more plainly than it would be proper for you to do. And make them as happy as you can, Miss Grey, and I dare say you will do very well."

I observed that while Mrs. Murray was so extremely solicitous for the comfort and happiness of her children, and continually talking about it, she never once mentioned mine, though they were at home surrounded by friends, and I an alien among strangers; and I did not yet know enough of the world not to be considerably surprised at this anomaly.

Miss Murray, otherwise Rosalie, was about sixteen when I came, and decidedly a very pretty girl; and in two years longer, as time more completely developed her form and added grace to her carriage and deportment, she became positively beautiful, and that in no common degree. She was tall and slender, yet not thin; perfectly formed, exquisitely fair, though not without a brilliant, healthy bloom; her hair, which she wore in a profusion of long ringlets, was of a very light brown inclining to yellow; her eyes were pale blue, but so clear and bright that few would wish them darker; the rest of her features were small, not quite regular, and not remarkably otherwise, but altogether you could not hesitate to pronounce her a very lovely girl. I wish I could say as much for mind and disposition as I can for her form and face.

Yet think not I have any dreadful disclosures to make. She was lively, light-hearted, and could be very agreeable with those who did not cross her will. Towards me, when I first came, she was cold and haughty, then insolent and overbearing; but on a further acquaintance she gradually laid aside her airs, and in time became as deeply attached to me as it was possible for *her* to be to one of my character and position—for she seldom lost sight for above half an hour at a time of the fact of my being a hireling and a poor curate's daughter. And yet, upon the whole, I believe she respected me more than she herself was aware of, because I was the only person in the house who steadily professed good principles, habitually spoke the truth, and generally endeavoured to make inclination bow to duty; and this I say, not, of course, in commendation of myself, but to show the unfortunate state of the family to which my services were, for the present, devoted. There was no member of it in whom I regretted this sad want of principle so much as Miss Murray herself, not only because she had taken a fancy to me, but because there was so much of what was pleasant and prepossessing in herself that, in spite of her failings, I really liked her—when she did not rouse my indignation or ruffle my temper by *too* great a display of her faults. These, however, I would fain persuade myself, were rather the effect of her education than her disposition. She had never been perfectly taught the distinction between right and wrong; she had, like her brothers and sisters, been suffered from infancy to tyrannize over nurses, governesses, and servants; she had not been taught to moderate her desires, to control her temper or bridle her will, or to sacrifice her own pleasure for the good of others. Her temper being naturally good, she was never violent or morose, but from constant indulgence and habitual scorn of reason she was often testy and capricious. Her mind had never been cultivated. Her intellect at best was somewhat shallow. She possessed considerable vivacity, some quickness of perception, and some talent for music and the acquisition of languages, but till fifteen she had troubled herself to acquire nothing. Then the love of display had roused her faculties, and induced her to apply herself, but only to the more showy accomplishments. And when I came it was the same. Everything was neglected but French, German, music, singing, dancing, fancy-work, and a little drawing—such drawing as might produce the greatest show with the smallest labour, and the principal parts of which were generally done by me. For music and singing, besides my occasional instructions she had the attendance of the best master the country afforded; and in these accomplishments, as well as in dancing, she certainly attained great proficiency. To music, indeed, she devoted too much of her time, as, governess though I was, I frequently told her; but her mother thought that if *she* liked it she *could* not give too much time to the acquisition of so attractive an art. Of fancy-work I knew nothing but what I gathered from my pupil and my own observation; but no sooner was I initiated than she made me useful in twenty different ways. All the tedious parts of her work were shifted on to my shoulders, such as stretching the frames, stitching in the canvas, sorting the wools and silks, putting in the grounds, counting the stitches, rectifying mistakes, and finishing the pieces she was tired of.

At sixteen Miss Murray was something of a romp, yet not more so than is natural and allowable for a girl of that age; but at seventeen that propensity, like all other things, began to give way to the ruling passion, and soon was swallowed up in the all-absorbing ambition to attract and dazzle the other sex. But enough of her. Now let us turn to her sister.

Miss Matilda Murray was a veritable hoiden, of whom little need be said. She was about two years and a half younger than her sister; her features were larger, her complexion much darker. She might possibly make a handsome woman, but she was far too big-boned and awkward ever to be called a pretty girl, and at present she cared little about it. Rosalie knew all her charms, and thought them even greater than they were, and valued them more highly than she ought to have done had they been three times as great. Matilda thought she was well enough, but cared little about the matter ; still less did she care about the cultivation of her mind, and the acquisition of ornamental accomplishments. The manner in which she learned her lessons and practised her music was calculated to drive any governess to despair. Short and easy as her tasks were, if done at all they were slurred over, at any time and in any way, but generally at the least convenient times, and in the way least beneficial to herself and least satisfactory to me. The short half-hour of practising was horribly strummed through, she meantime unsparingly abusing me, either for interrupting her with corrections, or for not rectifying her mistakes before they were made, or something equally unreasonable. Once or twice I ventured to remonstrate with her seriously for such irrational conduct, but on each of those occasions I received such reprehensive expostulations from her mother as convinced me that, if I wished to keep the situation, I must even let Miss Matilda go on in her own way.

When her lessons were over, however, her ill-humour was generally over too. While riding her spirited pony, or romping with the dogs or her brothers and sister, but especially with her dear brother John, she was as happy as a lark. As an animal Matilda was all right—full of life, vigour, and activity ; as an intelligent being she was barbarously ignorant, indocile, careless, and irrational, and consequently very distressing to one who had the task of cultivating her understanding, reforming her manners, and aiding her to acquire those ornamental attainments which, unlike her sister, she despised as much as the rest. Her mother was partly aware of her deficiencies, and gave me many a lecture as to how I should try to form her tastes, and endeavour to rouse and cherish her dormant vanity, and by insinuating, skilful flattery to win her attention to the desired objects—which I would not do; and how I should prepare and smooth the path of learning till she could glide along it without the least exertion to herself—which I could not, for nothing can be taught to any purpose without some little exertion on the part of the learner.

As a moral agent Matilda was reckless, headstrong, violent, and unamenable to reason. One proof of the deplorable state of her mind was that from her father's example she had learned to swear like a trooper. Her mother was greatly shocked at the "unladylike trick," and wondered "how she had picked it up." "But you can soon break her of it, Miss Grey," said she. "It is only a habit, and if you will just gently remind her every time she does so, I am sure she will soon lay it aside." I not only "gently reminded" her—I tried to impress upon her how wrong it was, and how distressing to the ears of decent people; but all in vain. I was only answered by a careless laugh, and, "O Miss Grey, how shocked you are! I'm so glad!" Or, "Well, I can't help it. Papa shouldn't have taught me. I learned it all from him, and maybe a bit from the coachman."

Her brother John, *alias* Master Murray, was about eleven when I came—a fine, stout, healthy boy, frank and good-natured in the main, and might have been a decent lad had he been properly educated; but now he was as rough as a young bear, boisterous, unruly, unprincipled, untaught, unteachable—at least for a governess under his mother's eye. His masters at school might be able to manage him better—for to school he was sent, greatly to my relief, in the course of a year, in a state, it is true, of scandalous ignorance as to Latin, as well as the more useful though more neglected things. And this, doubtless, would all be laid to the account of his education having been entrusted to an ignorant female teacher, who had presumed to take in hand what she was wholly incompetent to perform. I was not delivered from his brother till full twelve months after, when he also was dispatched in the same state of disgraceful ignorance as the former.

Master Charles was his mother's peculiar darling. He was little more than a year younger than John, but much smaller, paler, and less active and robust—a pettish, cowardly, capricious, selfish little fellow, only active in doing mischief, and only clever in inventing falsehoods, not simply to hide his faults, but, in mere malicious wantonness, to bring odium upon others. In fact, Master Charles was a very great nuisance to me. It was a trial of patience to live with him peaceably; to watch over him was worse; and to teach him, or pretend to teach him, was inconceivable. At ten years old he could not read correctly the easiest line in the simplest book; and as, according to his mother's principle, he was to be told every word before he had time to hesitate or examine its orthography, and never even to be informed, as a stimulant to exertion, that other boys were more forward than he, it is not surprising that he made but little progress during the two years I had charge of his education. His minute portions of Latin grammar, etc., were to be repeated over to him till he chose to say he knew them, and then he was to be helped to say them. If he made mistakes in his little easy sums in arithmetic, they were to be shown him at once, and the sum done for him, instead of his being left to exercise his faculties in finding them out himself; so that, of course, he took no pains to avoid mistakes, but frequently set down his figures at random, without any calculation at all.

I did not invariably confine myself to these rules—it was against my conscience to do so; but I seldom could venture to deviate from them in the slightest degree without incurring the wrath of my little pupil, and subsequently of his mamma, to whom he would relate my transgressions, maliciously exaggerated, or adorned with embellishments of his own; and often, in consequence, was I on the point of losing or resigning my situation. But for their sakes at home I smothered my pride and suppressed my indignation, and managed to struggle on till my little tormentor was dispatched to school, his father declaring that home education was "no go for him, it was plain; his mother spoiled him outrageously, and his governess could make no hand of him at all."

A few more observations about Horton Lodge and its ongoings, and I have done with dry description for the present. The house was a very respectable one, superior to Mr. Bloomfield's both in age, size, and magnificence. The garden was not so tastefully laid out; but instead of the smooth-shaven lawn, the young trees guarded by palings, the grove of upstart poplars, and the plantation of firs, there was a wide park, stocked with deer, and beautified by fine old trees. The surrounding country itself was pleasant, as far as fertile fields, flourishing trees, quiet green lanes, and smiling hedges with wild flowers scattered along their banks could make it; but it was depressingly flat to one born and nurtured among the rugged hills of ——.

We were situated nearly two miles from the village church, and consequently the family carriage was put in requisition every Sunday morning, and sometimes oftener. Mr. and Mrs. Murray generally thought it sufficient to show themselves at church once in the course of the day, but frequently the children preferred going a second time to wandering about the grounds all the day with nothing to do. If some of my pupils chose to walk and take me with them, it was well for me; for otherwise my position in the carriage was to be crushed into the corner farthest from the open window, and with my back to the horses—a position which invariably made me sick; and if I were not actually obliged to leave the church in the middle of the service, my devotions were disturbed with a feeling of languor and sickliness, and the tormenting fear of its becoming worse, and a depressing headache was generally my companion throughout the day, which would otherwise have been one of welcome rest and holy, calm enjoyment.

"It's very odd, Miss Grey, that the carriage should always make you sick. It never makes *me*," remarked Miss Matilda.

"Nor me either," said her sister. "But I dare say it would if I sat where she does.—Such a nasty, horrid place, Miss Grey. I wonder how you can bear it."

I am obliged to bear it, since no choice is left me, I might have answered; but in tenderness for their feelings I only replied, "Oh, it is but a short way, and if I am not sick in church I don't mind it."

If I were called upon to give a description of the usual divisions and arrangements of the day, I should find it a very difficult matter. I had all my meals in the schoolroom with my pupils, at such times as suited their fancy. Sometimes they would ring for dinner before it was half cooked; sometimes they would keep it waiting on the table for above an hour, and then be out of humour because the potatoes were cold and the gravy covered with cakes of solid fat; sometimes they would have tea at four; frequently they would storm at the servants because it was not in precisely at five; and when these orders were obeyed, by way of encouragement to punctuality, they would keep it on the table till seven or eight.

Their hours of study were managed in much the same way; my judgment or convenience was never once consulted. Sometimes Matilda and John would determine "to get all the plaguy business over before breakfast," and send the maid to call me up at half-past five, without any scruple or apology; sometimes I was told to be ready precisely at six, and having dressed in a hurry, came down to an empty room, and after waiting a long time in suspense, discovered that they had changed their minds, and were still in bed; or perhaps, if it were a fine summer morning, Brown would come to tell me that the young ladies and gentlemen had taken a holiday, and were gone out; and then I was kept waiting for breakfast till I was almost ready to faint, they having fortified themselves with something before they went.

Often they would do their lessons in the open air, which I had nothing to say against, except that I frequently caught cold by sitting on the damp grass, or from exposure to the evening dew, or some insidious draught, which seemed to have no injurious effect on them. It was quite right that they should be hardy, yet surely they might have been taught some consideration for others who were less so. But I must not blame them for what was, perhaps, my own fault; for I never made any particular objections to sitting where they pleased, foolishly choosing to risk the consequences rather than trouble them for my convenience. Their indecorous manner of doing their lessons was quite as remarkable as the caprice displayed in their choice of time and place. While receiving my instructions, or repeating what they had learned, they would lounge upon the sofa, lie on the rug, stretch, yawn, talk to each other, or look out of the window; whereas I could not so much as stir the fire, or pick up the handkerchief I had dropped, without being rebuked for inattention by one of my pupils, or told that "mamma would not like me to be so careless."

The servants, seeing in what little estimation the governess was held by both parents and children, regulated their behaviour by the same standard. I have frequently stood up for them, at the risk of some injury to myself, against the tyranny and injustice of their young masters and mistresses, and I always endeavoured to give them as little trouble as possible; but they entirely neglected my comfort, despised my requests, and slighted my directions. All servants, I am convinced, would not have done so; but domestics in general, being ignorant and little accustomed to reason and reflection, are too easily corrupted by the carelessness and bad example of those above them; and these, I think, were not of the best order to begin with.

I sometimes felt myself degraded by the life I led, and ashamed of submitting to so many indignities; and sometimes I thought myself a fool for caring so much about them, and feared I must be sadly wanting in Christian humility, or that charity which "suffereth long and is kind, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, beareth all things, endureth all things." But with time and patience matters began to be slightly ameliorated—slowly, it is true, and almost imperceptibly; but I got rid of my male pupils (that was no trifling advantage), and the girls, as I intimated before concerning one of them, became a little less insolent, and began to show some symptoms of esteem. "Miss Grey was a queer creature: she never flattered, and did not praise them half enough; but whenever she did speak favourably of them, or anything belonging to them, they could be quite sure her approbation was sincere. She was very obliging, quiet, and peaceable in the main, but there were some things that put her out of temper. They did not much care for that, to be sure, but still it was better to keep her in tune, as when she was in a good humour she would talk to them, and be very agreeable and amusing sometimes, in her way, which was quite different to mamma's, but still very well for a change. She had her own opinions on every subject, and kept steadily to them. Very tiresome opinions they often were, as she was always thinking of what was right and what was wrong, and had a strange reverence for matters connected with religion, and an unaccountable liking for good people."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "COMING OUT."

AT eighteen Miss Murray was to emerge from the quiet obscurity of the schoolroom into the full blaze of the fashionable world—as much of it, at least, as could be had out of London; for her papa could not be persuaded to leave his rural pleasures and pursuits even for a few weeks' residence in town. She was to make her *début* on the 3rd of January, at a magnificent ball which her mamma proposed to give to all nobility and choice gentry of O—— and its neighbourhood for twenty miles round. Of course she looked forward to it with the wildest impatience and the most extravagant anticipations of delight.

"Miss Grey," said she one evening, a month before the all-important day, as I was perusing a long and extremely interesting letter of my sister's, which I had just glanced at in the morning to see that it contained no very bad news, and kept till now, unable before to find a quiet moment for reading it—"Miss Grey, do put away that dull, stupid letter, and listen to me. I'm sure my talk must be far more amusing than that."

She seated herself on the low stool at my feet, and I, suppressing a sigh of vexation, began to fold up the epistle.

"You should tell the good people at home not to bore you with such long letters," said she; "and above all, do bid them write on proper note-paper, and not on those great vulgar sheets. You should see the charming little ladylike notes mamma writes to her friends."

"The good people at home," replied I, "know very well that the longer their letters are the better I like them. I should be very sorry to receive a charming little ladylike note from any of them; and I thought you were too much of a lady yourself, Miss Murray, to talk about the 'vulgarity' of writing on a large sheet of paper."

"Well, I only said it to tease you. But now I want to talk about the ball, and to tell you that you positively must put off your holidays till it is over."

"Why so? I shall not be present at the ball."

"No, but you will see the rooms decked out before it begins, and hear the music, and, above all, see me in my splendid new dress. I shall be so charming, you'll be ready to worship me. You really must stay."

"I should like to see you very much, but I shall have many opportunities of seeing you equally charming on the occasion of some of the numberless balls and parties that are to be, and I cannot disappoint my friends by postponing my return so long."

"Oh, never mind your friends! Tell them we won't let you go."

"But, to say the truth, it would be a disappointment to myself. I long to see them as much as they to see me—perhaps more."

"Well, but it is such a short time."

"Nearly a fortnight, by my computation; and besides, I cannot bear the thoughts of a Christmas spent from home. And, moreover, my sister is going to be married."

"Is she?—when?"

"Not till next month; but I want to be there to assist her in making preparations, and to make the best of her company while we have her."

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I've only got the news in this letter, which you stigmatize as dull and stupid, and won't let me read."

"To whom is she to be married?"

"To Mr. Richardson, the vicar of a neighbouring parish."

"Is he rich?"

"No; only comfortable."

"Is he handsome?"

"No; only decent."

"Young?"

"No; only middling."

"Oh, mercy! what a wretch! What sort of a house is it?"

"A quiet little vicarage, with an ivy-clad porch, an old-fashioned garden, and——"

"Oh, stop! You'll make me sick. How *can* she bear it?"

"I expect she'll not only be able to bear it, but to be very happy. You did not ask me if Mr. Richardson were a good, wise, or amiable man; I could have answered Yes to all these questions—at least, so Mary thinks, and I hope she will not find herself mistaken."

"But—miserable creature!—how can she think of spending her life there, cooped up with that nasty old man, and *no* hope of change?"

" He is not old; he's only six or seven and thirty, and she herself is twenty-eight, and as sober as if she were fifty."

" Oh! that's better, then—they're well matched. But do they call him the 'worthy vicar'?"

" I don't know; but if they do, I believe he merits the epithet."

" Mercy! how shocking! And will she wear a white apron, and make pies and puddings?"

" I don't know about the white apron, but I dare say she will make pies and puddings now and then; but that will be no great hardship, as she has done it before."

" And will she go about in a plain shawl and a large straw bonnet, carrying tracts and bone soup to her husband's poor parishioners?"

" I'm not clear about that; but I dare say she will do her best to make them comfortable in body and mind, in accordance with our mother's example."

CHAPTER IX.

THE BALL.

" Now, Miss Grey," exclaimed Miss Murray, immediately I entered the schoolroom, after having taken off my outdoor garments, upon returning from my four weeks' recreation—" now, shut the door, and sit down, and I'll tell you all about the ball."

" No, damn it, no!" shouted Miss Matilda. " Hold your tongue, can't ye? and let me tell her about my new mare.—*Such* a splendour, Miss Grey—a fine blood mare——"

" Do be quiet, Matilda, and let me tell my news first."

" No, no, Rosalie; you'll be such a damned long time over it. She shall hear me first—I'll be hanged if she doesn't!"

" I'm sorry to hear, Miss Matilda, that you've not got rid of that shocking habit yet."

"Well, I can't help it; but I'll never say a wicked word again if you'll only listen to me, and tell Rosalie to hold her confounded tongue."

Rosalie remonstrated, and I thought I should have been torn in pieces between them; but Miss Matilda having the loudest voice, her sister at length gave in, and suffered her to tell her story first. So I was doomed to hear a long account of her splendid mare, its breeding and pedigree, its paces, its action, its spirit, etc., and of her own amazing skill and courage in riding it, concluding with an assertion that she could clear a five-barred gate "like winking," that papa said she might hunt the next time the hounds met, and mamma had ordered a bright scarlet hunting-habit for her.

"O Matilda, what stories you are telling!" exclaimed her sister.

"Well," answered she, no whit abashed, "I know I *could* clear a five-barred gate if I tried, and papa *will* say I may hunt, and mamma *will* order the habit when I ask it."

"Well, now, get along," replied Miss Murray; "and do, dear Matilda, try to be a little more ladylike.—Miss Grey, I wish you *would* tell her not to use such shocking words. She *will* call her horse a mare. It is so *inconceivably* shocking! And then she uses such dreadful expressions in describing it; she *must* have learned it from the grooms. It nearly puts me into fits when she begins."

"I learned it from papa, you ass, and his jolly friends," said the young lady, vigorously cracking a hunting-whip, which she habitually carried in her hand. "I'm as good a judge of horseflesh as the best of 'em."

"Well, now, get along, you shocking girl! I really shall take a fit if you go on in such a way.—And now, Miss Grey, attend to me; I'm going to tell you about the ball. You must be dying to hear about it, I know. Oh, *such* a ball! You never saw, or heard, or read, or dreamt of anything like it in all your life! The decorations, the entertainment, the supper, the music, were indescribable! And then the guests! There were two noblemen, three baronets, and five titled ladies, and other ladies and gentlemen innumerable. The ladies, of course, were of no consequence to me, except to put me in a good humour with myself, by showing how ugly and awkward most of them were; and the best, mamma told me, the most transcendent beauties among them, were nothing to me. As for *me*, Miss Grey—I'm so *sorry* you didn't see me! I was *charming*.—Wasn't I, Matilda?'

"Middling."

"No, but I really *was*—at least, so mamma said, and Brown, and Williamson. Brown said she was sure no gentleman could set eyes on me without falling in love that minute; and so I may be allowed to be a little vain. I know you think me a shocking, conceited, frivolous girl; but then you know I don't attribute it *all* to my personal attractions. I give some praise to the hairdresser, and some to my exquisitely lovely dress—you must see it to-morrow—white gauze over pink satin, and so *sweetly* made, and a necklace and bracelet of beautiful, large pearls!"

"I have no doubt you looked very charming; but should that delight you so very much?"

"Oh no! not that alone. But then I was so much admired; and I made so *many* conquests in that one night, you'd be astonished to hear——"

"But what good will they do you?"

"What good! Think of any woman asking that!"

"Well, I should think one conquest would be enough, and too much, unless the subjugation were mutual."

"Oh, but you know I never agree with you on those points. Now, wait a bit, and I'll tell you my principal admirers—those who made themselves very conspicuous that night and after (for I've been to two parties since). Unfortunately the two noblemen, Lord G—— and Lord F——, were married, or I might have condescended to be particularly gracious to *them*. As it was, I did not, though Lord F——, who hates his wife, was evidently much struck with me. He asked me to dance with him twice; he is a charming dancer, by-the-bye, and so am I. You can't think how well I did; I was astonished at myself. My lord was very complimentary too—rather too much so, in fact—and I thought proper to be a little haughty and repellent; but I had the pleasure of seeing his nasty, cross wife ready to perish with spite and vexation——"

"O Miss Murray, you don't mean to say that such a thing could really give you pleasure! However, cross or——"

"Well, I know it's very wrong; but never mind. I mean to be good some time; only don't preach now—there's a good creature. I haven't told you half yet. Let me see. Oh! I was going to tell you how many unmistakable admirers I had. Sir Thomas Ashby was one. Sir Hugh Meltham and Sir Broadley Wilson are old codgers, only fit companions for papa and mamma. Sir Thomas is young, rich, and gay, but an ugly beast nevertheless. However, mamma says I should not mind that after a few months' acquaintance. Then there was Henry Meltham, Sir Hugh's younger son—rather good-looking, and a pleasant fellow to flirt with; but *being* a younger son, that is all he is good for. Then there was young Mr. Green—rich enough, but of no family, and a great stupid fellow, a mere country booby; and then our good rector, Mr. Hatfield—an *humble* admirer he ought to consider himself, but I fear he has forgotten to number humility among his stock of Christian virtues."

"Was Mr. Hatfield at the ball?"

"Yes, to be sure. Did you think he was too good to go?"

"I thought he might consider it unclerical."

"By *no* means. He did not profane his cloth by dancing, but it was with difficulty he could refrain, poor man. He looked as if he were dying to ask my hand just for *one* set. And oh! by-the-bye, he's got a new curate: that seedy old fellow Mr. Bligh has got his long-wished-for living at last, and is gone."

"And what is the new one like?"

"Oh, *such* a beast! Weston his name is. I can give you his description in three words—an insensate, ugly, stupid blockhead. That's four, but no matter—enough of *him* now."

Then she returned to the ball, and gave me a further account of her deportment there, and at the several parties she had since attended, and further particulars respecting Sir Thomas Ashby and Messrs. Meltham, Green, and Hatfield, and the ineffaceable impression she had wrought upon each of them.

"Well, which of the four do you like best?" said I, suppressing my third or fourth yawn.

"I detest them all!" replied she, shaking her bright ringlets in vivacious scorn.

"That means, I suppose, I like them all; but which most?"

"No, I really detest them all; but Harry Meltham is the handsomest and most amusing, and Mr. Hatfield the cleverest, Sir Thomas the wickedest, and Mr. Green the most stupid. But the one I'm to have, I suppose, if I'm doomed to have any of them, is Sir Thomas Ashby."

"Surely not, if he's so wicked, and if you dislike him?"

"Oh, I don't mind his being wicked—he's all the better for that; and as for disliking him, I shouldn't greatly object to being Lady Ashby of Ashby Park, if I must marry. But if I could be always young, I would be always single. I should like to enjoy myself thoroughly, and coquet with all the world, till I am on the verge of being called an old maid; and then, to escape the infamy of that, after having made ten thousand conquests, to break all their hearts save one, by marrying some high-born, rich, indulgent husband, whom, on the other hand, fifty ladies were dying to have."

"Well, as long as you entertain these views, keep single by all means, and never marry at all, not even to escape the infamy of old-maidenhood."

CHAPTER X.

THE CHURCH.

"WELL, Miss Grey, what do you think of the new curate?" asked Miss Murray on our return from church the Sunday after the recommencement of our duties.

"I can scarcely tell," was my reply. "I have not even heard him preach."

"Well, but you saw him, didn't you?"

"Yes; but I cannot pretend to judge of a man s character by a single cursory glance at his face."

"But isn't he ugly?"

"He did not strike me as being particularly so; I don't dislike that cast of countenance. But the only thing I particularly noticed about him was his style of reading, which appeared to me good—infinitely better, at least, than Mr. Hatfield's. He read the lessons as if he were bent on giving full effect to every passage. It seemed as if the most careless person could not have helped attending, nor the most ignorant have failed to understand; and the prayers he read as if he were not reading at all, but praying earnestly and sincerely from his own heart."

"Oh yes, that's all he is good for. He can plod through the service well enough, but he has not a single idea beyond it."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I know perfectly well. I am an excellent judge in such matters. Did you see how he went out of church—stumping along as if there were nobody there but himself, never looking to the right hand or the left, and evidently thinking of nothing but just getting out of the church, and perhaps home to his dinner? His great stupid head could contain no other idea."

"I suppose you would have had him cast a glance into the squire's pew," said I, laughing at the vehemence of her hostility.

"Indeed, I should have been highly indignant if he had dared to do such a thing!" replied she, haughtily tossing her head. Then, after a moment's reflection, she added, "Well, well, I suppose he's good enough for his place; but I'm glad I'm not dependent on *him* for amusement—that's all. Did you see how Mr. Hatfield hurried out to get a bow from me, and be in time to put us into the carriage?"

"Yes," answered I, internally adding, "And I thought it somewhat derogatory to his dignity as a clergyman to come flying from the pulpit in such eager haste to shake hands with the squire, and hand his wife and daughters into their carriage; and, moreover, I owe him a grudge for nearly shutting me out of it." For, in fact, though I was standing before his face, close beside the carriage steps, waiting to get in, he would persist in putting them up and closing the door, till one of the family stopped him by calling out that the governess was not in yet; then, without a word of apology, he departed, wishing them good-morning, and leaving the footman to finish the business.

Nota bene.—Mr. Hatfield never spoke to me, neither did Sir Hugh or Lady Meltham, nor Mr. Harry or Miss Meltham, nor Mr. Green or his sisters, nor any other lady or gentleman who frequented that church, nor, in fact, any one that visited at Horton Lodge.

Miss Murray ordered the carriage again in the afternoon for herself and her sister. She said it was too cold for them to enjoy themselves in the garden, and besides, she believed Harry Meltham would be at church. "For," said she, smiling slyly at her own fair image in the glass, "he has been a most exemplary attendant at church these last few Sundays. You would think he was quite a good Christian. And you may go with us, Miss Grey. I want you to see him. He is so greatly improved since he returned from abroad—you can't think! And besides, then you will have an opportunity of seeing the beautiful Mr. Weston again, and of hearing him preach."

I did hear him preach, and was decidedly pleased with the evangelical truth of his doctrine, as well as the earnest simplicity of his manner, and the clearness and force of his style. It was truly refreshing to hear such a sermon, after being so long accustomed to the dry, prosy discourses of the former curate, and the still less edifying harangues of the rector. Mr. Hatfield would come sailing up the aisle, or rather sweeping along like a whirlwind, with his rich silk gown flying behind him and rustling against the pew doors, mount the pulpit like a conqueror ascending his triumphal car; then, sinking on the velvet cushion in an attitude of studied grace, remain in silent prostration for a certain time; then mutter over a collect, and gabble through the Lord's Prayer; rise, draw off one bright lavender glove, to give the congregation the benefit of his sparkling rings, lightly pass his fingers through his well-curled hair, flourish a cambric handkerchief, recite a very short passage, or, perhaps, a mere phrase of Scripture, as a headpiece to his discourse, and finally deliver a composition which, as a composition, might be considered good, though far too studied and too artificial to be pleasing to me. The propositions were well laid down, the arguments logically conducted, and yet it was sometimes hard to listen quietly throughout without some slight demonstrations of disapproval or impatience.

His favourite subjects were church discipline, rites and ceremonies, apostolical succession, the duty of reverence and obedience to the clergy, the atrocious criminality of dissent, the absolute necessity of observing all the forms of godliness, the reprehensible presumption of individuals who attempted to think for themselves in matters connected with religion, or to be guided by their own interpretations of Scripture, and occasionally (to please his wealthy parishioners) the necessity of deferential obedience from the poor to the rich, supporting his maxims and exhortations throughout with quotations from the Fathers, with whom he appeared to be far better acquainted than with the Apostles and Evangelists, and whose importance he seemed to consider at least equal to theirs. But now and then he gave us a sermon of a different order—what some would call a very good one, but sunless and severe, representing the Deity as a terrible task-master, rather than a benevolent father. Yet, as I listened, I felt inclined to think the man was sincere in all he said. He must have changed his views, and become decidedly religious, gloomy, and austere, yet still devout. But such illusions were usually dissipated, on coming out of church, by hearing his voice in jocund colloquy with some of the Melthams or Greens, or perhaps the Murrays themselves, probably laughing at his own sermon, and hoping that he had given the rascally people something to think about; perchance exulting in the thought that old Betty Holmes would now lay aside the sinful indulgence of her pipe, which had been her daily solace for upwards of thirty years; that George Higgins would be frightened out of his Sabbath evening walks, and Thomas Jackson would be sorely troubled in his conscience, and shaken in his sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection at the last day.

Thus I could not but conclude that Mr. Hatfield was one of those who " bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them upon men's shoulders, while they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers," and who " make the word of God of none effect by their traditions, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." I was well pleased to observe that the new curate resembled him, as far as I could see, in none of these particulars.

" Well, Miss Grey, what do you think of him now ? " said Miss Murray, as we took our places in the carriage after service.

" No harm still," replied I.

" No harm ! " repeated she, in amazement. " What do you mean ? "

" I mean I think no worse of him than I did before."

" No worse ! I should think not indeed—quite the contrary ! Is he not greatly improved ? "

" Oh yes—very much indeed," replied I; for I had now discovered that it was Harry Meltham she meant, not Mr. Weston. That gentleman had eagerly come forward to speak to the young ladies—a thing he would hardly have ventured to do had their mother been present; he had likewise politely handed them into the carriage. He had not attempted to shut me out, like Mr. Hatfield, neither, of course, had he offered me his assistance (I should not have accepted it if he had), but as long as the door remained open he had stood smirking and chatting with them, and then lifted his hat and departed to his own abode; but I had scarcely noticed him all the time. My companions, however, had been more observant, and as we rolled along they discussed between them not only his looks, words, and actions, but every feature of his face, and every article of his apparel.

"You shan't have him all to yourself, Rosalie," said Miss Matilda at the close of this discussion. "I like him. I know he'd make a nice, jolly companion for me."

"Well, you're quite welcome to him, Matilda," replied her sister, in a tone of affected indifference.

"And I'm sure," continued the other, "he admires me quite as much as he does you.—Doesn't he, Miss Grey?"

"I don't know; I'm not acquainted with his sentiments."

"Well, but he *does* though."

"My *dear* Matilda, nobody will ever admire you till you get rid of your rough, awkward manners."

"Oh, stuff! Harry Meltham likes such manners, and so do papa's friends."

"Well, you *may* captivate old men and younger sons, but nobody else, I am sure, will ever take a fancy to you."

"I don't care. I'm not always grubbing after money like you and mamma. If my husband is able to keep a few good horses and dogs I shall be quite satisfied, and all the rest may go to the devil!"

"Well, if you use such shocking expressions I'm sure no real gentleman will ever venture to come near you. —Really, Miss Grey, you should not let her do so."

"I can't possibly prevent it, Miss Murray."

"And you're quite mistaken, Matilda, in supposing that Harry Meltham admires you. I assure you he does nothing of the kind."

Matilda was beginning an angry reply, but happily our journey was now at an end, and the contention was cut short by the footman opening the carriage door and letting down the steps for our descent.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COTTAGERS.

As I had now only one regular pupil — though she contrived to give me as much trouble as three or four ordinary ones, and though her sister still took lessons in German and drawing—I had considerably more time at my own disposal than I had ever been blessed with before since I had taken upon me the governess's yoke, which time I devoted partly to correspondence with my friends, partly to reading, study, and the practice of music, singing, etc., partly to wandering in the grounds or adjacent fields, with my pupils if they wanted me, alone if they did not.

Often, when they had not more agreeable occupation at hand, the Misses Murray would amuse themselves with visiting the poor cottagers on their father's estate, to receive their flattering homage, or to hear the old stories or gossiping news of the garrulous old women, or perhaps to enjoy the purer pleasure of making the poor people happy with their cheering presence and their occasional gifts, so easily bestowed, so thankfully received. Sometimes I was called upon to accompany one or both of the sisters in these visits, and sometimes I was desired to go alone, to fulfil some promise which they had been more ready to make than to perform, to carry some small donation, or read to one who was sick or seriously disposed. And thus I made a few acquaintances among the cottagers, and occasionally I went to see them on my own account.

I generally had more satisfaction in going alone than with either of the young ladies; for they, chiefly owing to their defective education, comported themselves towards their inferiors in a manner that was highly disagreeable for me to witness. They never in thought exchanged places with them, and consequently had no consideration for their feelings, regarding them as an order of beings entirely different from themselves. They would watch the poor creatures at their meals, making uncivil remarks about their food and their manner of eating; they would laugh at their simple notions and provincial expressions, till some of them scarcely durst venture to speak; they would call the grave elderly men and women old fools and silly old blockheads to their faces, and all this without meaning to offend. I could see that the people were often hurt and annoyed by such conduct, though their fear of the "grand ladies" prevented them from testifying any resentment; but *they* never perceived it. They thought that, as these cottagers were poor and untaught, they must be stupid and brutish; and as long as they, their superiors, condescended to talk to them, and to give them shillings and half-crowns, or articles of clothing, they had a right to amuse themselves, even at their expense; and the people must adore them as angels of light, condescending to minister to their necessities and enlighten their humble dwellings.

I made many and various attempts to deliver my pupils from these delusive notions without alarming their pride—which was easily offended and not soon appeased—but with little apparent result; and I know not which was the more reprehensible of the two. Matilda was more rude and boisterous, but from Rosalie's womanly age and ladylike exterior better things were expected; yet she was as provokingly careless and inconsiderate as a giddy child of twelve.

One bright day in the last week of February I was walking in the park, enjoying the threefold luxury of solitude, a book, and pleasant weather; for Miss Matilda had set out on her daily ride, and Miss Murray was gone in the carriage with her mamma to pay some morning calls. But it struck me that I ought to leave these selfish pleasures, and the park with its glorious canopy of bright blue sky—the west wind sounding through its yet leafless branches, the snow-wreaths still lingering in its hollows, but melting fast beneath the sun, and the graceful deer browsing on its moist herbage, already assuming the freshness and verdure of spring—and go to the cottage of one Nancy Brown, a widow, whose son was at work all day in the fields, and who was afflicted with an inflammation in the eyes, which had for some time incapacitated her from reading, to her own great grief, for she was a woman of a serious, thoughtful turn of mind. I accordingly went, and found her alone, as usual, in her little, close, dark cottage, redolent of smoke and confined air, but as tidy and clean as she could make it. She was seated beside her little fire (consisting of a few red cinders and a bit of stick) busily knitting, with a small sackcloth cushion at her feet, placed for the accommodation of her gentle friend the cat, who was seated thereon with her long tail half encircling her velvet paws, and her half-closed eyes dreamily gazing on the low, crooked fender.

"Well, Nancy, how are you to-day?"

"Why, middling, miss, i' myseln. My eyes is no better, but I'm a deal easier i' my mind nor I have been," replied she, rising to welcome me with a contented smile, which I was glad to see, for Nancy had been somewhat afflicted with religious melancholy. I congratulated her upon the change. She agreed that it was a great blessing, and expressed herself "right down thankful for it," adding, "If it please God to spare my sight, and make me so as I can read my Bible again, I think I shall be as happy as a queen."

"I hope He will, Nancy," replied I; "and meantime I'll come and read to you now and then when I have a little time to spare."

With expressions of grateful pleasure the poor woman moved to get me a chair, but as I saved her the trouble she busied herself with stirring the fire and adding a few more sticks to the decaying embers, and then, taking her well-used Bible from the shelf, dusted it carefully and gave it me. On my asking if there was any particular part she should like me to read, she answered,—

"Well, Miss Grey, if it's all the same to you I should like to hear that chapter in the First Epistle of St. John that says, 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.'"

With a little searching I found these words in the fourth chapter. When I came to the seventh verse she interrupted me, and, with needless apologies for such a liberty, desired me to read it very slowly, that she might take it all in, and dwell on every word, hoping I would excuse her, as she was but a "simple body."

"The wisest person," I replied, "might think over each of these verses for an hour, and be all the better for it; and I would rather read them slowly than not."

Accordingly I finished the chapter as slowly as need be, and at the same time as impressively as I could. My auditor listened most attentively all the while, and sincerely thanked me when I had done. I sat still about half a minute to give her time to reflect upon it, when, somewhat to my surprise, she broke the pause by asking me how I liked Mr. Weston?

"I don't know," I replied, a little startled by the suddenness of the question. "I think he preaches very well."

"Ay, he does so, and talks well too."

"Does he?"

"He does. Maybe you haven't seen him—not to talk to him much, yet?"

"No, I never see any one to talk to—except the young ladies of the hall."

"Ah! they're nice, kind young ladies; but they can't talk as he does."

"Then he comes to see you, Nancy?"

"He does, miss, and I'se thankful for it. He comes to see all us poor bodies a deal oftener nor Maister Bligh or th' rector ever did; an' it's well he does, for he's always welcome. We can't say as much for th' rector. There is 'at says they're fair feared on him. When he comes into a house, they say he's sure to find summat wrong, and begin a-calling 'em as soon as he crosses th' doorstuns; but maybe he thinks it his duty like to tell 'em what's wrong. And very oft he comes o' purpose to reprove folk for not coming to church, or not kneeling an' standing when other folk does, or going to the Methody chapel, or summat o' that sort; but I can't say 'at he ever fund much fault wi' me. He came to see me once or twice afore Maister Weston come, when I was so ill troubled in my mind; and as I had only very poor health besides, I made bold to send for him; and he came right enough. I was sore distressed, Miss Grey—thank God it's owered now—but when I took my Bible I could get no comfort of it at all. That very chapter 'at you've just been reading troubled me as much as aught—'He that loveth not, knoweth not God.' It seemed fearsome to me; for I felt that I loved neither God nor man as I should do, and could not if I tried ever so. And th' chapter afore, where it says, 'He that is born of God cannot commit sin.' And another place where it says, 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' And many, many others, miss. I should fair weary you out if I was to tell them all. But all seemed to condemn me, and to show me 'at I was not in the right way; and as I knew not how to get into it, I sent our Bill to beg Maister Hatfield to be as kind as look in on me some day, and when he came I telled him all my troubles."

"And what did he say, Nancy?"

"Why, miss, he seemed to scorn me. I might be mista'en, but he like gave a sort of a whistle, and I saw a bit of a smile on his face; and he said, 'Oh, it's all stuff! You've been among the Methodists, my good woman.' But I telled him I'd never been near the Methodies. And then he said,—

"'Well,' says he, 'you must come to church, where you'll hear the Scriptures properly explained, instead of sitting poring over your Bible at home.'

"But I telled him I always used coming to church when I had my health, but this very cold winter weather I hardly durst venture so far, and me so bad wi' th' rheumatiz and all.

"But he says, 'It'll do your rheumatiz good to hobble to church. There's nothing like exercise for the rheumatiz. You can walk about the house well enough; why can't you walk to church? The fact is,' says he, 'you're getting too fond of your ease. It's always easy to find excuses for shirking one's duty.'

"But then, you know, Miss Grey, it wasn't so. However, I telled him I'd try. 'But please, sir,' says I, 'if I do go to church, what the better shall I be? I want to have my sins blotted out, and to feel that they are remembered no more against me, and that the love of God is shed abroad in my heart; and if I can get no good by reading my Bible an' saying my prayers at home, what good shall I get by going to church?'

"'The church,' says he, 'is the place appointed by God for His worship. It's your duty to go there as often as you can. If you want comfort, you must seek it in the path of duty.' An' a deal more he said, but I cannot remember all his fine words. However, it all came to this, that I was to come to church as oft as ever I could, and bring my prayer-book with me, an' read up all the sponsers after the clerk, an' stand, an' kneel, an' sit, an' do all as I should, an' take the Lord's Supper at every opportunity, an' hearken his sermons, and Maister's Bligh's, an' it 'ud be all right. If I went on doing my duty I should get a blessing at last.

"'But if you get no comfort that way,' says he, 'it's all up.'

"'Then, sir,' says I, 'should you think I'm a reprobate?'

"'Why,' says he, he says, 'if you do your best to get to heaven and can't manage it, you must be one of those that seek to enter in at the strait gate and shall not be able.'

"An' then he asked me if I'd seen any of the ladies o' th' hall about that mornin'; so I telled him where I had seen the young missis go on th' Moss Lane; an' he kicked my poor cat right across th' floor, an' went after 'em as gay as a lark. But I was very sad; that last word o' his fair sunk into my heart, an' lay there like a lump o' lead, till I was weary to bear it.

"Howsever, I follered his advice. I thought he meant it all for th' best, though he *had* a queer way with him. But you know, miss, he's rich an' young, and such like cannot right understand the thoughts of a poor old woman such as me. But howsever, I did my best to do all as he bade me; but maybe I'm plaguing you, miss, wi' my chatter."

"Oh no, Nancy! Go on, and tell me all."

"Well, my rheumatiz got better—I know not whether wi' going to church or not; but one frosty Sunday I got this cold i' my eyes. Th' inflammation didn't come on all at once like, but bit by bit. But I wasn't going to tell you about my eyes; I was talking about my trouble o' mind. And to tell the truth, Miss Grey, I don't think it was anyways eased by coming to church—nought to speak on, at least. I like got my health better, but that didn't mend my soul. I hearkened and hearkened the ministers, and read an' read at my prayer-book, but it was all like sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. The sermons I couldn't understand, an' th' prayer-book only served to show me how wicked I was, that I could read such good words an' never be no better for it, and often feel it a sore labour an' a heavy task beside, instead of a blessing and a privilege as all good Christians does. It seemed like as all were barren an' dark to me. And then them dreadful words, 'Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.' They like as they fair dried up my sperrit.

"But one Sunday, when Maister Hatfield gave out about the sacrament, I noticed where he said, 'If there be any of you that cannot quiet his own conscience, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or some other discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open his grief.' So next Sunday morning, afore service, I just looked into the vestry, an' began a talking to th' rector again. I hardly could fashion to take such a liberty, but I thought when my soul was at stake I shouldn't stick at a trifle. But he said he hadn't time to attend to me then.

"'And, indeed,' says he, 'I've nothing to say to you but what I've said before. Take the sacrament, of course, and go on doing your duty; and if that won't serve you, nothing will. So don't bother me any more.'

"So then I went away. But I heard Maister Weston—Maister Weston was there, miss—this was his first Sunday at Horton, you know, an' he was i' th' vestry in his surplice, helping th' rector on with his gown."

"Yes, Nancy."

"And I heard him ask Maister Hatfield who I was; an' he says, 'Oh, she's a canting old fool.'

"And I was very ill grieved, Miss Grey; but I went to my seat, and I tried to do my duty as aforetime, but I like got no peace. An' I even took the sacrament; but I felt as though I were eating and drinking to my own damnation all th' time. So I went home, sorely troubled.

"But next day, afore I'd gotten fettled up—for indeed, miss, I'd no heart to sweeping an' fettling an' washing pots, so I sat me down i' th' muck—who should come in but Maister Weston! I started siding stuff then, an' sweeping an' doing; and I expected he'd begin a-calling me for my idle ways, as Maister Hatfield would 'a done. But I was mista'en; he only bid me good-mornin' like, in a quiet dacent way. So I dusted him a chair, an' fettled up th' fireplace a bit; but I hadn't forgotten th' rector's words, so says I, 'I wonder, sir, you should give yourself that trouble to come so far to see a "canting old fool" such as me.'

"He seemed taken aback at that, but he would fain persuade me 'at the rector was only in jest; and when that wouldn't do, he says, 'Well, Nancy, you shouldn't think so much about it. Mr. Hatfield was a little out of humour just then. You know we're none of us perfect—even Moses spoke unadvisedly with his lips. But now sit down a minute, if you can spare the time, and tell me all your doubts and fears, and I'll try to remove them.'

"So I sat me down anent him. He was quite a stranger, you know, Miss Grey, and even *younger* nor Maister Hatfield, I believe; an' I had thought him not so pleasant-looking as him, and rather a bit crossish at first to look at. But he spake so civil like. And when th' cat, poor thing, jumped on to his knee, he only stroked her, and gave a bit of a smile; so I thought that was a good sign, for once, when she did so to th' rector, he knocked her off, like as it might be in scorn and anger, poor thing. But you can't expect a cat to know manners like a Christian, you know, Miss Grey."

"No, of course not, Nancy. But what did Mr. Weston say then?"

"He said naught; but he listened to me as steady an' patient as could be, an' never a bit o' scorn about him. So I went on, and telled him all, just as I've telled you—an' more too.

"'Well,' says he, 'Mr. Hatfield was quite right in telling you to persevere in doing your duty; but in advising you to go to church and attend to the service, and so on, he didn't mean that was the whole of a Christian's duty. He only thought you might there learn what more was to be done, and be led to take delight in those exercises, instead of finding them a task and a burden. And if you had asked him to explain those words that trouble you so much, I think he would have told you that if many shall seek to enter in at the strait gate and shall not be able, it is their own sins that hinder them—just as a man with a large sack on his back might wish to pass through a narrow doorway, and find it impossible to do so unless he would leave his sack behind him. But you, Nancy, I dare say, have no sins that you would not gladly throw aside, if you knew how?'

" 'Indeed, sir, you speak truth,' said I.

" 'Well,' says he, 'you know the first and great commandment, and the second, which is like unto it—on which two commandments hang all the law and the prophets? You say you cannot love God; but it strikes me that if you rightly consider who and what He is you cannot help it. He is your father, your best friend. Every blessing, everything good, pleasant, or useful, comes from Him; and everything evil, everything you have reason to hate, to shun, or to fear, comes from Satan—*His* enemy as well as ours. And for *this* cause was God manifest in the flesh—that He might destroy the works of the devil. In one word, God is LOVE, and the more of love we have within us the nearer we are to Him, and the more of His spirit we possess.'

" 'Well, sir,' I said, 'if I can always think on these things I think I might well love God; but how can I love my neighbours when they vex me, and be so contrairy and sinful as some on 'em is?'

" 'It may seem a hard matter,' says he, 'to love our neighbours, who have so much of what is evil about them, and whose faults so often awaken the evil that lingers within ourselves; but remember that *He* made them, and *He* loves them; and whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him that is begotten also. And if God so loveth us that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us, we ought also to love one another. But if you cannot feel positive affection for those who do not care for you, you can at least try to do to them as you would they should do unto you. You can endeavour to pity their failings and excuse their offences, and to do all the good you can to those about you. And if you accustom yourself to this, Nancy, the very effort itself will make you love them in some degree, to say nothing of the goodwill your kindness would beget in them, though they might have little else that is good about them. If we love God and wish to serve Him, let us try to be like Him, to do His work, to labour for His glory—which is the good of man—to hasten the coming of His kingdom, which is the peace and happiness of all the world. However powerless we may seem to be, in doing all the good we can through life the humblest of us may do much towards it; and let us dwell in love, that He may dwell in us and we in Him. The more happiness we bestow the more we shall receive, even here, and the greater will be our reward in heaven when we rest from our labours.' I believe, miss, them is his very words, for I've thought 'em ower many a time. An' then he took that Bible, an' read bits here and there, an' explained 'em as clear as the day; and it seemed like as a new light broke in on my soul, an' I felt fair a glow about my heart, an' only wished poor Bill an' all the world could ha' been there an' heard it all and rejoiced wi' me.

"After he was gone, Hannah Rogers, one o' th' neighbours, came in and wanted me to help her to wash. I telled her I couldn't just then, for I hadn't set on th' potaties for th' dinner, nor washed up th' breakfast stuff yet. So then she began a-calling me for my nasty idle ways. I was a little bit vexed at first, but I never said nothing wrong to her. I only telled her, like all in a quiet way, 'at I'd had th' new parson to see me, but I'd get done as quick as ever I could, an' then come an' help her. So then she softened down, and my heart like as it warmed towards her, an' in a bit we was very good friends. An' so it is, Miss Grey: 'A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.' It isn't only in them you speak to, but in yourself."

"Very true, Nancy, if we could always remember it."

"Ay, if we could."

"And did Mr. Weston ever come to see you again?"

"Yes, many a time; and since my eyes has been so bad he's sat an' read to me by the half-hour together. But you know, miss, he has other folks to see, and other things to do—God bless him! An' that next Sunday he preached *such* a sermon! His text was, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' and them two blessed verses that follows. You wasn't there, miss—you was with your friends then

—but it made me *so* happy! And I *am* happy now, thank God! An' I take a pleasure now in doing little bits o' jobs for my neighbours, such as a poor old body 'at's half blind can do; and they take it kindly of me, just as he said. You see, miss, I'm knitting a pair o' stockings now. They're for Thomas Jackson. He's a queerish old body, an' we've had many a bout at threaping, one anent t' other, an' at times we've differed sorely. So I thought I couldn't do better nor knit him a pair o' warm stockings; an' I've felt to like him a deal better, poor old man, sin' I began. It's turned out just as Maister Weston said."

"Well, I'm very glad to see you so happy, Nancy, and so wise. But I must go now; I shall be wanted at the hall," said I. And bidding her good-bye I departed, promising to come again when I had time, and feeling nearly as happy as herself.

At another time I went to read to a poor labourer who was in the last stage of consumption. The young ladies had been to see him, and somehow a promise of reading had been extracted from them; but it was too much trouble, so they begged *me* to do it instead. I went, willingly enough; and there too I was gratified with the praises of Mr. Weston, both from the sick man and his wife. The former told me that he derived great comfort and benefit from the visits of the new parson, who frequently came to see him, and was "another guess sort of man" to Mr. Hatfield, who, before the other's arrival at Horton, had now and then paid him a visit; on which occasions he would always insist upon having the cottage door kept open, to admit the fresh air for his own convenience, without considering how it might injure the sufferer; and having opened his prayer-book and hastily read over a part of the Service for the Sick, would hurry away again, if he did not stay to administer some harsh rebuke to the afflicted wife, or to make some thoughtless, not to say heartless, observation, rather calculated to increase than diminish the troubles of the suffering pair.

"Whereas," said the man, "Maister Weston 'ull pray with me quite in a different fashion, an' talk to me as kind as owt, an' oft read to me too, an' sit beside me just like a brother."

"Just for all the world!" exclaimed his wife. "An' about a three wik sin', when he see'd how poor Jem shivered wi' cold, an' what pitiful fires we kept, he axed if wer stock of coals was nearly done. I telled him it was, an' we was ill set to get more. But you know, mum, I didn't think o' him helping us. But, howsever, he sent us a sack o' coals next day; an' we've had good fires ever sin', an' a great blessing it is this winter time. But that's his way, Miss Grey. When he comes into a poor body's house a-seein' sick folk, he like notices what they most stand i' need on; an' if he thinks they can't readily get it theirseln, he never says nowt about it, but just gets it for 'em. An' it isn't everybody 'at 'ud do that 'at has as little as he has; for you know, mum, he's nowt at all to live on but what he gets fra th' rector, an' that's little enough, they say."

I remembered then, with a species of exultation, that he had frequently been styled a vulgar brute by the amiable Miss Murray, because he wore a silver watch and clothes not quite so bright and fresh as Mr. Hatfield's.

In returning to the lodge I felt very happy, and thanked God that I had now something to think about, something to dwell on as a relief from the weary monotony, the lonely drudgery of my present life—for I *was* lonely. Never, from month to month, from year to year, except during my brief intervals of rest at home, did I see one creature to whom I could open my heart, or freely speak my thoughts with any hope of sympathy or even comprehension—never one, unless it were poor Nancy Brown, with whom I could enjoy a single moment of real social intercourse, or whose conversation was calculated to render me better, wiser, or happier than before, or who, as far as I could see, could be greatly benefited by mine. My only companions had been unamiable children, and ignorant, wrong-headed girls, from whose fatiguing folly unbroken solitude was often a relief most earnestly desired and dearly prized. But to be restricted to such associates was a serious evil, both in its immediate effects and the consequences that were likely to ensue. Never a new idea of stirring thought came to me from without; and such as rose within me were, for the most part, miserably crushed at once, or doomed to sicken and fade away, because they could not see the light.

Habitual associates are known to exercise a great influence over each other's minds and manners. Those whose actions are for ever before our eyes, whose words are ever in our ears, will naturally lead us, albeit against our will, slowly, gradually, imperceptibly, perhaps, to act and speak as they do. I will not presume to say how far this irresistible power of assimilation extends, but if one civilized man were doomed to pass a dozen years amid a race of intractable savages, unless he had power to improve them, I greatly question whether at the close of that period he would not have become at least a barbarian himself. And I, as I could not make my young companions better, feared exceedingly that they would make me worse—would gradually bring my feelings, habits, capacities, to the level of their own, without, however, imparting to me their light-heartedness and cheerful vivacity.

Already I seemed to feel my intellect deteriorating, my heart petrifying, my soul contracting, and I trembled lest my very moral perceptions should become deadened, my distinctions of right and wrong confounded, and all my better faculties be sunk at last beneath the baneful influence of such a mode of life. The gross vapours of earth were gathering around me, and closing in upon my inward heaven; and thus it was that Mr. Weston rose at length upon me, appearing like the morning-star in my horizon, to save me from the fear of utter darkness; and I rejoiced that I had now a subject for contemplation that was above me, not beneath. I was glad to see that all the world was not made up of Bloomfields, Murrays, Hatfields, Ashbys, etc., and that human excellence was not a mere dream of the imagination. When we hear a little good and no harm of a person, it is easy and pleasant to imagine more. In short, it is needless to analyze all my thoughts; but Sunday was now become a day of peculiar delight to me (I was now almost broken in to the back corner in the carriage), for I liked to hear him, and I liked to see him too, though I knew he was not handsome, or even what is called agreeable, in outward aspect, but certainly he was not ugly.

In stature he was a little, a very little, above the middle size. The outline of his face would be pronounced too square for beauty, but to me it announced decision of character; his dark brown hair was not carefully curled like Mr. Hatfield's, but simply brushed aside over a broad white forehead; the eyebrows, I suppose, were too projecting, but from under those dark brows there gleamed an eye of singular power, brown in colour, not large, and somewhat deep-set, but strikingly brilliant, and full of expression. There was character, too, in the mouth—something that bespoke a man of firm purpose and a habitual thinker; and when he smiled—but I will not speak of that yet, for at the time I mention I had never seen him smile; and indeed his general appearance did not impress me with the idea of a man given to such a relaxation, nor of such an individual as the cottagers described him. I had early formed my opinion of him, and in spite of Miss Murray's objurgations was fully convinced that he was a man of strong sense, firm faith, and ardent piety, but thoughtful and stern; and when I found that, to his other good qualities, was added that of true benevolence and gentle, considerate kindness, the discovery perhaps delighted me the more, as I had not been prepared to expect it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SHOWER.

THE next visit I paid to Nancy Brown was in the second week in March; for though I had many spare minutes during the day, I seldom could look upon an hour as entirely my own, since, where everything was left to the caprices of Miss Matilda and her sister, there could be no order or regularity. Whatever occupation I chose, when not actually busied about them or their concerns, I had, as it were, to keep my loins girded, my shoes on my feet, and my staff in my hand, for not to be immediately forthcoming when called for was regarded as a grave and inexcusable offence, not only by my pupils and their mother, but by the very servant, who came in breathless haste to call me, exclaiming, "You're to go to the schoolroom *directly*, mum. The young ladies is WAITING ! !" Climax of horror ! actually waiting for their governess ! ! !

But this time I was pretty sure of an hour or two to myself, for Matilda was preparing for a long ride, and Rosalie was dressing for a dinner-party at Lady Ashby's; so I took the opportunity of repairing to the widow's cottage, where I found her in some anxiety about her cat, which had been absent all day. I comforted her with as many anecdotes of that animal's roving propensities as I could recollect. "I'm feared o' th' gamekeepers," said she; "that's all 'at I think on. If th' young gentlemen had been at home I should 'a thought they'd been setting their dogs at her, an' worried her, poor thing, as they did *many* a poor thing's cat; but I haven't that to be feared on now." Nancy's eyes were better, but still far from well. She had been trying to make a Sunday shirt for her son, but told me she could only bear to do a little bit at it now and then, so that it progressed but slowly, though the poor lad wanted it sadly. So I proposed to help her a little, after I had read to her, for I had plenty of time that evening, and need not return till dusk. She thankfully accepted the offer. "An' you'll be a bit o' company for me too, miss," said she; "I like as I feel lonesome without my cat." But when I had finished reading, and done the half of a seam, with Nancy's capacious brass thimble fitted on to my finger by means of a roll of paper, I was disturbed by the entrance of Mr. Weston, with the identical cat in his arms. I now saw that he could smile, and very pleasantly too.

"I've done you a piece of good service, Nancy," he began; then seeing me, he acknowledged my presence by a slight bow. I should have been invisible to Hatfield or any other gentleman of those parts. "I've delivered your cat," he continued, "from the hands, or rather the gun, of Mr. Murray's gamekeeper."

"God bless you, sir!" cried the grateful old woman, ready to weep for joy as she received her favourite from his arms.

"Take care of it," said he, "and don't let it go near the rabbit warren, for the gamekeeper swears he'll shoot it if he sees it there again. He would have done so to-day if I had not been in time to stop him.—I believe it is raining, Miss Grey," added he, more quietly, observing that I had put aside my work and was preparing to depart. "Don't let me disturb you. I shan't stay two minutes."

"You'll *both* stay while this shower gets owered," said Nancy, as she stirred the fire and placed another chair beside it. "What! there's room for all."

"I can see better here, thank you, Nancy," replied I, taking my work to the window, where she had the goodness to suffer me to remain unmolested, while she got a brush to remove the cat's hairs from Mr. Weston's coat, carefully wiped the rain from his hat, and gave the cat its supper, busily talking all the time—now thanking her clerical friend for what he had done, now wondering how the cat had found out the warren, and now lamenting the probable consequences of such a discovery. He listened with a quiet, good-natured smile, and at length took a seat in compliance with her pressing invitations, but repeated that he did not mean to stay.

"I have another place to go to," said he, "and I see" (glancing at the book on the table) "some one else has been reading to you."

"Yes, sir; Miss Grey has been as kind as read me a chapter, an' now she's helping me with a shirt for our Bill. But I'm feared she'll be cold there.—Won't you come to th' fire, miss ? "

" No, thank you, Nancy; I'm quite warm. I must go as soon as this shower is over."

" O miss, you said you could stop while dusk ! " cried the provoking old woman; and Mr. Weston seized his hat.

" Nay, sir," exclaimed she; " pray don't go now while it rains so fast."

" But it strikes me I'm keeping your visitor away from the fire."

" No, you're not, Mr. Weston," replied I, hoping there was no harm in a falsehood of that description.

" No, sure ! " cried Nancy. " What ! there's lots o' room."

" Miss Grey," said he, half jestingly, as if he felt it necessary to change the present subject, whether he had anything particular to say or not, " I wish you would make my peace with the squire when you see him. He was by when I rescued Nancy's cat, and did not quite approve of the deed. I told him I thought he might better spare all his rabbits than she her cat, for which audacious assertion he treated me to some rather ungentlemanly language, and I fear I retorted a trifle too warmly."

" Oh, lawful sir ! I hope you didn't fall out wi' th' maister for sake o' my cat ! He cannot bide answering again, can th' maister."

" Oh, it's no matter, Nancy. I don't care about it, really. I said nothing *very* uncivil ; and I suppose Mr. Murray is accustomed to use rather strong language when he's heated."

" Ay, sir ; it's a pity."

" And now I really must go. I have to visit a place a mile beyond this, and you would not have me to return in the dark. Besides, it has nearly done raining now. So good-evening, Nancy.—Good-evening, Miss Grey."

" Good-evening, Mr. Weston ; but don't depend upon me for making your peace with Mr. Murray, for I never see him—to speak to."

"Don't you? It can't be helped, then," replied he, in dolorous resignation; then with a peculiar half-smile he added, But never mind; I imagine the squire has more to apologize for than I," and left the cottage.

I went on with my sewing as long as I could see, and then bade Nancy good-evening, checking her too lively gratitude by the undeniable assurance that I had only done for her what she would have done for me if she had been in my place and I in hers. I hastened back to Horton Lodge, where, having entered the schoolroom, I found the tea-table all in confusion, the tray flooded with slops, and Miss Matilda in a most ferocious humour.

"Miss Grey, whatever have you been about? I've had tea half an hour ago, and had to make it myself, and drink it all alone. I wish you *would* come in sooner."

"I've been to see Nancy Brown. I thought you would not be back from your ride."

"How could I ride in the rain, I should like to know? That damned pelting shower was vexatious enough, coming on when I was just in full swing; and then to come and find nobody in to tea! And you know I can't make the tea as I like it."

"I didn't think of the shower," replied I (and indeed the thought of its driving her home had never entered my head).

"No, of course; you were under shelter yourself, and you never thought of other people."

I bore her coarse reproaches with astonishing equanimity, even with cheerfulness, for I was sensible that I had done more good to Nancy Brown than harm to her; and perhaps some other thoughts assisted to keep up my spirits and impart a relish to the cup of cold, overdrawn tea, and a charm to the otherwise unsightly table, and—I had almost said—to Miss Matilda's unamiable face. But she soon betook herself to the stables, and left me to the quiet enjoyment of my solitary meal.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PRIMROSES.

Miss Murray now always went twice to church, for she so loved admiration that she could not bear to lose a single opportunity of obtaining it; and she was so sure of it wherever she showed herself, that, whether Harry Meltham and Mr. Green were there or not, there was certain to be somebody present who would not be insensible to her charms, besides the rector, whose official capacity generally obliged him to attend. Usually, also, if the weather permitted, both she and her sister would walk home—Matilda, because she hated the confinement of the carriage; she, because she disliked the privacy of it, and enjoyed the company that generally enlivened the first mile of the journey in walking from the church to Mr. Green's park gates, near which commenced the private road to Horton Lodge, which lay in the opposite direction, while the highway conducted in a straightforward course to the still more distant mansion of Sir Hugh Meltham. Thus there was always a chance of being accompanied, so far, either by Harry Meltham, with or without Miss Meltham, or Mr. Green, with perhaps one or both of his sisters, and any gentleman visitors they might have.

Whether I walked with the young ladies or rode with their parents depended upon their own capricious will. If they chose to "take" me, I went; if, for reasons best known to themselves, they chose to go alone, I took my seat in the carriage. I liked walking better, but a sense of reluctance to obtrude my presence on any one who did not desire it always kept me passive on these and similar occasions; and I never inquired into the causes of their varying whims. Indeed this was the best policy, for to submit and oblige was the governess's part; to consult their own pleasure was that of the pupils. But when I did walk, the first half of the journey was generally a great nuisance to me. As none of the before-mentioned ladies and gentlemen ever noticed me, it was disagreeable to walk beside them, as if listening to what they said, or wishing to be thought one of them, while they talked over me, or across; and if their eyes, in speaking, chanced to fall on me, it seemed as if they looked on vacancy—as if they either did not see me, or were very desirous to make it appear so. It was disagreeable, too, to walk behind, and thus appear to acknowledge my own inferiority; for, in truth, I considered myself pretty nearly as good as the best of them, and wished them to know that I did so, and not to imagine that I looked upon myself as a mere domestic, who knew her own place too well to walk beside such fine ladies and gentlemen as they were—though her young ladies might choose to have her with them, and even condescended to converse with her when no better company were at hand. Thus—I am almost ashamed to confess it—but indeed I gave myself no little trouble in my endeavours (if I did keep up with them) to appear perfectly unconscious or regardless of their presence, as if I were wholly absorbed in my own reflections, or the contemplation of surrounding objects; or if I lingered behind, it was some bird or insect, some tree or flower, that attracted my attention, and having duly examined that, I would pursue my walk alone, at a leisurely pace, until my pupils had bidden adieu to their companions and turned off into the quiet, private road.

One such occasion I particularly well remember. It was a lovely afternoon about the close of March. Mr. Green and his sisters had sent their carriage back empty, in order to enjoy the bright sunshine and balmy air in a sociable walk home along with their visitors, Captain Somebody and Lieutenant Somebody-else (a couple of military fops), and the Misses Murray, who, of course, contrived to join them. Such a party was highly agreeable to Rosalie; but not finding it equally suitable to my taste, I presently fell back, and began to botanize and entomologize along the green banks and budding hedges, till the company was considerably in advance of me, and I could hear the sweet song of the happy *l*ark. Then my spirit of misanthropy began to melt away beneath the soft, pure air and genial sunshine; but sad thoughts of early childhood, and yearnings for departed joys, or for a brighter future lot, arose instead. As my eyes wandered over the steep banks covered with young grass and green-leaved plants, and surmounted by budding hedges, I longed intensely for some familiar flower that might recall the woody dales or green hill-sides of home. The brown moorlands, of course, were out of the question. Such a discovery would make my eyes gush out with water, no doubt; but that was one of my greatest enjoyments now. At length I descried, high up between the twisted roots of an oak, three lovely primroses, peeping so sweetly from their hiding-place that the tears already started at the sight; but they grew so high above me that I tried in vain to gather one or two, to dream over and to carry with me. I could not reach them unless I climbed the bank, which I was deterred from doing by hearing a footstep at that moment behind me, and was therefore about to turn away, when I was startled by the words, "Allow me to gather them for you, Miss Grey," spoken in the grave, low tones of a well-known voice. Immediately the flowers were gathered and in my hand. It was Mr. Weston, of course. Who else would trouble himself to do so much for *me?*

I thanked him; whether warmly or coldly I cannot tell, but certain I am that I did not express half the gratitude I felt. It was foolish, perhaps, to feel any gratitude at all; but it seemed to me, at that moment, as if this were a remarkable instance of his good-nature, an act of kindness which I could not repay but never should forget, so utterly unaccustomed was I to receive such civilities, so little prepared to expect them from any one within fifty miles of Horton Lodge. Yet this did not prevent me from feeling a little uncomfortable in his presence, and I proceeded to follow my pupils at a much quicker pace than before, though perhaps, if Mr. Weston had taken the hint and let me pass without another word, I might have repented it an hour after; but he did not. A somewhat rapid walk for me was but an ordinary pace for him.

"Your young ladies have left you alone," said he.

"Yes, they are occupied with more agreeable company."

"Then don't trouble yourself to overtake them."

I slackened my pace, but next moment regretted having done so. My companion did not speak, and I had nothing in the world to say, and feared he might be in the same predicament. At length, however, he broke the pause by asking, with a certain quiet abruptness peculiar to himself, if I liked flowers.

"Yes, very much," I answered—"wild flowers especially."

"*I* like wild flowers," said he; "others I don't care about, because I have no particular associations connected with them, except one or two. What are your favourite flowers?"

"Primroses, bluebells, and heath-blossoms."

"Not violets?"

"No; because, as you say, I have no particular associations connected with them, for there are no sweet violets among the hills and valleys round my home."

"It must be a great consolation to you to have a home, Miss Grey," observed my companion after a short pause. "However remote, or however seldom visited, still it is something to look to."

"It is so much that I think I could not live without it," replied I, with an enthusiasm of which I immediately repented, for I thought it must have sounded essentially silly.

"Oh yes, you could," said he, with a thoughtful smile. "The ties that bind us to life are tougher than you imagine, or than any one can who has not felt how roughly they may be pulled without breaking. You might be miserable without a home, but even *you* could live, and not *so* miserably as you suppose. The human heart is like india-rubber: a little swells it, but a great deal will not burst it. If 'little more than nothing will disturb it, little less than all things will suffice' to break it. As in the outer members of our frame, there is a vital power inherent in itself that strengthens it against external violence. Every blow that shakes it will serve to harden it against a future stroke, as constant labour thickens the skin of the hand and strengthens its muscles instead of wasting them away; so that a day of arduous toil that might excoriate a lady's palm would make no sensible impression on that of a hardy ploughman.

"I speak from experience—partly my own. There was a time when I thought as you do—at least, I was fully persuaded that home and its affections were the only things that made life tolerable, that if deprived of these existence would become a burden hard to be endured; but now I have no home—unless you would dignify my two hired rooms at Horton by such a name; and not twelve months ago I lost the last and dearest of my early friends; and yet not only I live, but I am not wholly destitute of hope and comfort, even for this life, though I must acknowledge that I can seldom enter even an humble cottage at the close of day, and see its inhabitants peaceably gathered around their cheerful hearth, without a feeling *almost* of envy at their domestic enjoyment."

"You don't know what happiness lies before you yet," said I; "you are now only in the commencement of your journey."

"The best of happiness," replied he, "is mine already—the power and the will to be useful."

We now approached a stile communicating with a footpath that conducted to a farm-house, where, I suppose, Mr. Weston purposed to make himself "useful," for he presently took leave of me, crossed the stile, and traversed the path with his usual firm, elastic tread, leaving me to ponder his words as I continued my course alone. I had heard before that he had lost his mother not many months before he came. She, then, was the last and dearest of his early friends, and he had *no home*.

I pitied him from my heart; I almost wept for sympathy. And this, I thought, accounted for the shade of premature thoughtfulness that so frequently clouded his brow, and obtained for him the reputation of a morose and sullen disposition with the charitable Miss Murray and all her kin. "But," thought I, "he is not so miserable as I should be under such a deprivation. He leads an active life, and a wide field for useful exertion lies before him. He can *make* friends, and he can make a home too if he pleases; and doubtless he will please some time. God grant the partner of that home may be worthy of his choice, and make it a happy one—such a home as he deserves to have! And how delightful it would be to——" But no matter what I thought.

I began this book with the intention of concealing nothing, that those who liked might have the benefit of perusing a fellow-creature's heart; but we have *some* thoughts that all the angels in heaven are welcome to behold but not our brother-men—not even the best and kindest amongst them.

By this time the Greens had taken themselves to their own abode, and the Murrays had turned down the private road, whither I hastened to follow them. I found the two girls warm in an animated discussion on the respective merits of the two young officers; but on seeing me Rosalie broke off in the middle of a sentence to exclaim, with malicious glee,—

"Oh, ho, Miss Grey! you're come at last, are you? No *wonder* you lingered so long behind; and no *wonder* you always stand up so vigorously for Mr. Weston when I abuse him. Ah, ha! I see it all now!"

"Now, come, Miss Murray, don't be foolish," said I, attempting a good-natured laugh; "you know such nonsense can make no impression on me."

But she still went on talking such intolerable stuff—her sister helping her with appropriate fiction coined for the occasion—that I thought it necessary to say something in my own justification.

"What folly all this is!" I exclaimed. "If Mr. Weston's road happened to be the same as mine for a few yards, and if he chose to exchange a word or two in passing, what is there so remarkable in that? I assure you I never spoke to him before—except once."

"Where? where? and when?" cried they eagerly.

"In Nancy's cottage."

"Ah, ha! you've met him there, have you?" exclaimed Rosalie, with exultant laughter.—"Ah! now, Matilda, I've found out why she's so fond of going to Nancy Brown's! She goes there to flirt with Mr. Weston."

"Really, that is not worth contradicting. I only saw him there once, I tell you, and how could I know he was coming?"

Irritated as I was at their foolish mirth and vexatious imputations, the uneasiness did not continue long. When they had had their laugh out, they returned again to the captain and lieutenant; and while they disputed and commented upon them my indignation rapidly cooled. The cause of it was quickly forgotten, and I turned my thoughts into a pleasanter channel. Thus we proceeded up the park, and entered the hall; and as I ascended the stairs to my own chamber I had but one thought within me, my heart was filled to overflowing with one single earnest wish. Having entered the room and shut the door, I fell upon my knees and offered up a fervent but not impetuous prayer. "Thy will be done," I strove to say throughout, but "Father, all things are possible with Thee, and may it be Thy will," was sure to follow. That wish—that prayer—both men and women would have scorned me for, "but, Father, *Thou* wilt *not* despise," I said, and felt that it was true. It seemed to me that another's welfare was at least as ardently implored for as my own—nay, even *that* was the principal object of my heart's desire. I might have been deceiving myself, but that idea gave me confidence to ask and power to hope I did not ask in vain. As for the primroses, I kept two of them in a glass in my room until they were completely withered, and the housemaid threw them out;

and the petals of the other I pressed between the leaves of my Bible. I have them still, and mean to keep them always.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RECTOR.

THE following day was as fine as the preceding one. Soon after breakfast Miss Matilda, having galloped and blundered through a few unprofitable lessons, and vengeably thumped the piano for an hour, in a terrible humour with both me and it, because her mamma would not give her a holiday, had betaken herself to her favourite places of resort—the yards, the stables, and the dog-kennels; and Miss Murray was gone forth to enjoy a quiet ramble with a new fashionable novel for her companion, leaving me in the schoolroom hard at work upon a water-colour drawing which I had promised to do for her, and which she insisted upon my finishing that day.

At my feet lay a little rough terrier. It was the property of Miss Matilda, but she hated the animal, and intended to sell it, alleging that it was quite spoiled. It was really an excellent dog of its kind, but she affirmed it was fit for nothing, and had not even the sense to know its own mistress.

The fact was, she had purchased it when but a small puppy, insisting at first that no one should touch it but herself; but soon becoming tired of so helpless and troublesome a nursling, she had gladly yielded to my entreaties to be allowed to take charge of it; and I, by carefully nursing the little creature from infancy to adolescence, of course had obtained its affections—a reward I should have greatly valued, and looked upon as far outweighing all the trouble I had had with it, had not poor Snap's grateful feelings exposed him to many a harsh word and many a spiteful kick and pinch from his owner, and were he not now in danger of being "put away" in consequence, or transferred to some rough, stony-hearted master. But how could I help it? I could not make the dog hate me by cruel treatment, and she would not propitiate him by kindness.

However, while I thus sat, working away with my pencil, Mrs. Murray came, half sailing, half bustling, into the room.

"Miss Grey," she began, "dear! how can you sit at your drawing such a day as this?" (She thought I was doing it for my own pleasure.) "I *wonder* you don't put on your bonnet and go out with the young ladies."

"I think, ma'am, Miss Murray is reading; and Miss Matilda is amusing herself with her dogs."

"If you would try to amuse Miss Matilda yourself a little more, I think she would not be *driven* to seek amusement in the companionship of dogs and horses and grooms so much as she is; and if you would be a little more cheerful and conversable with Miss Murray, she would not so often go wandering in the fields with a book in her hand. However, I don't want to vex you," added she, seeing, I suppose, that my cheeks burned and my hand trembled with some unamiable emotion. "Do, pray, try not to be so touchy; there's no speaking to you else. And tell me if you know where Rosalie is gone, and why she likes to be so much alone."

"She says she likes to be alone when she has a new book to read."

"But why can't she read it in the park or the garden? Why should she go into the fields and lanes? And how is it that that Mr. Hatfield so often finds her out? She told me last week he'd walked his horse by her side all up Moss Lane; and now I'm sure it was he I saw from my dressing-room window, walking so briskly past the park-gates, and on towards the field where she so frequently goes. I wish you would go and see if she is there; and just gently remind her that it is not proper for a young lady of her rank and prospects to be wandering about by herself in that manner, exposed to the attentions of any one that presumes to address her, like some poor neglected girl that has no park to walk in, and no friends to take care of her; and tell her that her papa would be extremely angry if he knew of her treating Mr. Hatfield in the familiar manner that I fear she does. And oh! if you—if *any* governess had but half a mother's watchfulness, half a mother's anxious care, I should be saved this trouble, and you would see at once the necessity of keeping your eye upon her, and making your company agreeable to—— Well, go—go; there's no time to be lost," cried she, seeing that I had put away my drawing materials, and was waiting in the doorway for the conclusion of her address.

According to her prognostications, I found Miss Murray in her favourite field just without the park, and unfortunately not alone, for the tall, stately figure of Mr. Hatfield was slowly sauntering by her side.

Here was a poser for me. It was my duty to interrupt the *tête-à-tête*, but how was it to be done? Mr. Hatfield could not be driven away by so insignificant a person as I; and to go and place myself on the other side of Miss Murray, and intrude my unwelcome presence upon her without noticing her companion, was a piece of rudeness I could not be guilty of. Neither had I the courage to cry aloud from the top of the field that she was wanted elsewhere. So I took the intermediate course of walking slowly but steadily towards them, resolving, if my approach failed to scare away the beau, to pass by and tell Miss Murray her mamma wanted her.

She certainly looked very charming as she strolled, lingering along under the budding horse-chestnut trees that stretched their long arms over the park-palings, with her closed book in one hand, and in the other a graceful sprig of myrtle, which served as a very pretty plaything, her bright ringlets escaping profusely from her little bonnet, and gently stirred by the breeze, her fair cheek flushed with gratified vanity, her smiling blue eyes now slyly glancing towards her admirer, now gazing downward at her myrtle sprig. But Snap, running before me, interrupted her in the midst of some half-pert, half-playful repartee, by catching hold of her dress and vehemently tugging thereat, till Mr. Hatfield, with his cane, administered a resounding thwack upon the animal's skull, and sent it yelping back to me, with a clamorous outcry that afforded the reverend gentleman great amusement. But seeing me so near, he thought, I suppose, he might as well be taking his departure; and as I stooped to caress the dog, with ostentatious pity, to show my disapproval of his severity, I heard him say,—

"When shall I see you again, Miss Murray?"

"At church, I suppose," replied she, "unless your business chances to bring you here again, at the precise moment when I happen to be walking by."

"I could always manage to have business here, if I knew precisely when and where to find you."

"But if I would, I could not inform you, for I am so immethodical, I never can tell to-day what I shall do to-morrow."

"Then give me that, meantime, to comfort me," said he, half jestingly and half in earnest, extending his hand for the sprig of myrtle.

"No, indeed, I shan't."

"Do! *pray* do! I shall be the most miserable of men if you don't. You cannot be so cruel as to deny me a favour so easily granted and yet so highly prized," pleaded he, as ardently as if his life depended on it.

By this time I stood within a very few yards of them, impatiently waiting his departure.

"There, then! Take it and go," said Rosalie.

He joyfully received the gift, murmured something that made her blush and toss her head, but with a little laugh that showed her displeasure was entirely affected, and then with a courteous salutation withdrew.

"Did you ever see such a man, Miss Grey?" said she, turning to me. "I'm so *glad* you came! I thought I never *should* get rid of him; and I was so terribly afraid of papa seeing him."

"Has he been with you long?"

"No, not long; but he's so extremely impertinent; and he's always hanging about, pretending his business or his clerical duties require his attendance in these parts, and really watching for poor me, and pouncing upon me wherever he sees me."

"Well, your mamma thinks you ought not to go beyond the park or garden without some discreet, matronly person like me to accompany you, and keep off all intruders. She descried Mr. Hatfield hurrying past the park-gates, and forthwith dispatched me with instructions to seek you up, and to take care of you, and likewise to warn——"

"Oh, mamma's so tiresome! As if I couldn't take care of myself! She bothered me before about Mr. Hatfield, and I told her she might trust me; I never should forget my rank and station for the most delightful man that ever breathed. I wish he would go down on his knees to-morrow, and implore me to be his wife, that I might just show her how mistaken she is in supposing that I could ever—— Oh, it provokes me so! To think that I could be such a fool as to fall in *love!* It is quite beneath the dignity of a woman to do such a thing. Love! I detest the word! As applied to one of our sex, I think it a perfect insult. A preference I *might* acknowledge, but never for one like poor Mr. Hatfield, who has not seven hundred a year to bless himself with. I like to talk to him, because he's so clever and amusing. I wish Sir Thomas Ashby were half as nice. Besides, I must have *somebody* to flirt with, and no one else has the sense to come here. And when we go out, mamma won't let me flirt with anybody but Sir Thomas—if he's there; and if he's *not* there, I'm bound hand and foot, for fear somebody should go and make up some exaggerated story, and put it into his head that I'm engaged, or likely to be engaged, to somebody else; or, what is more probable, for fear his nasty old mother should see or hear of my ongoings, and conclude that I'm not a fit wife for her excellent son—as if the said son were not the greatest scamp in Christendom, and as if any woman of common decency were not a world too good for him."

"Is it really so, Miss Murray? And does your mamma know it, and yet wish you to marry him?"

"To be sure she does. She knows more against him than I do, I believe. She keeps it from me lest I should be discouraged, not knowing how little I care about such things. For it's no great matter, really. He'll be all right when he's married, as mamma says; and reformed rakes make the best husbands, everybody knows. I only wish he were not so ugly—*that's* all *I* think about; but then there's no choice here in the country, and papa *will not* let us go to London."

"But I should think Mr. Hatfield would be far better."

"And so he would, if he were lord of Ashby Park; there's not a doubt of it. But the fact is, I *must* have Ashby Park, whoever shares it with me."

"But Mr. Hatfield thinks you like him all this time. You don't consider how bitterly he will be disappointed when he finds himself mistaken."

"*No*, indeed! It will be a proper punishment for his presumption—for ever *daring* to think I could like him. I should enjoy nothing so much as lifting the veil from his eyes."

"The sooner you do it the better, then."

"No. I tell you I like to amuse myself with him. Besides, he doesn't really think I like him. I take good care of that. You don't know how cleverly I manage. He may presume to think he can *induce* me to like him, for which I shall punish him as he deserves."

"Well, mind you don't give too much reason for such presumption—that's all," replied I.

But all my exhortations were in vain; they only made her somewhat more solicitous to disguise her wishes and her thoughts from me. She talked no more to me about the rector, but I could see that her mind, if not her heart, was fixed upon him still, and that she was intent upon obtaining another interview; for though, in compliance with her mother's request, I was now constituted the companion of her rambles for a time, she still persisted in wandering in the fields and lanes that lay in the nearest proximity to the road; and whether she talked to me or read the book she carried in her hand, she kept continually pausing to look round her, or gaze up the road to see if any one was coming; and if a horseman trotted by, I could tell by her unqualified abuse of the poor equestrian, whoever he might be, that she hated him *because* he was not Mr. Hatfield.

"Surely," thought I, "she is not so indifferent to him as she believes herself to be, or would have others to believe her; and her mother's anxiety is not so wholly causeless as she affirms."

Three days passed away, and he did not make his appearance. On the afternoon of the fourth, as we were walking beside the park palings in the memorable field, each furnished with a book (for I always took care to provide myself with something to be doing when she did not require me to talk), she suddenly interrupted my studies by exclaiming,—

"O Miss Grey! do be so kind as to go and see Mark Wood, and take his wife half a crown from me; I should have given or sent it a week ago, but quite forgot. There!" said she, throwing me her purse, and speaking very fast. "Never mind getting it out now, but take the purse and give them what you like. I would go with you, but I want to finish this volume. I'll come and meet you when I've done it. Be quick, will you—and—oh, wait; hadn't you better read to him a bit? Run to the house and get some sort of a good book. Anything will do."

I did as I was desired; but suspecting something from her hurried manner and the suddenness of the request, I just glanced back before I quitted the field, and there was Mr. Hatfield about to enter at the gate below. By sending me to the house for a book, she had just prevented my meeting him on the road.

"Never mind," thought I; "there'll be no great harm done. Poor Mark will be glad of the half-crown, and perhaps of the good book too; and if the rector does steal Miss Rosalie's heart, it will only humble her pride a little; and if they do get married at last, it will only save her from a worse fate; and she will be quite a good enough partner for him, and he for her."

Mark Wood was the consumptive labourer whom I mentioned before. He was now rapidly wearing away. Miss Murray, by her liberality, obtained literally the blessing of him that was ready to perish; for though the half-crown could be of very little service to him, he was glad of it for the sake of his wife and children, so soon to be widowed and fatherless. After I had sat a few minutes, and read a little for the comfort and edification of himself and his afflicted wife, I left them; but I had not proceeded fifty yards before I encountered Mr. Weston, apparently on his way to the same abode. He greeted me in his usual quiet, unaffected way, stopped to inquire about the condition of the sick man and his family, and with a sort of unconscious, brotherly disregard to ceremony, took from my hand the book out of which I had been reading, turned over its pages, made a few brief but very sensible remarks, and restored it; then told me about some poor sufferer he had just been visiting, talked a little about Nancy Brown, made a few observations upon my little rough friend the terrier that was frisking at his feet, and finally upon the beauty of the weather, and departed.

I have omitted to give a detail of his words, from a notion that they would not interest the reader as they did me, and not because I have forgotten them. No; I remember them well, for I thought them over and over again in the course of that day and many succeeding ones, I know not how often, and recalled every intonation of his deep, clear voice, every flash of his quick, brown eye, and every gleam of his pleasant but too transient smile. Such a confession will look very absurd, I fear, but no matter. I have written it, and they that read it will not know the writer.

While I was walking along, happy within, and pleased with all around, Miss Murray came hastening to meet me, her buoyant step, flushed cheek, and radiant smiles showing me that she too was happy in her own way. Running up to me, she put her arm through mine, and without waiting to recover breath, began,—

"Now, Miss Grey, think yourself highly honoured, for I'm come to tell you my news before I've breathed a word of it to any one else."

"Well, what is it?"

"Oh, *such* news! In the first place, you must know that Mr. Hatfield came upon me just after you were gone. I was in *such* a way for fear papa or mamma should see him; but you know I couldn't call you back again, and so I—— Oh dear! I can't tell you all about it now, for there's Matilda, I see, in the park, and I must go and open my budget to her. But, however, Hatfield was most uncommonly audacious, unspeakably complimentary, and unprecedentedly tender—tried to be so, at least; he didn't succeed very well in *that*, because it's not his vein. I'll tell you all he said another time."

"But what did *you* say? I'm more interested in that."

"I'll tell you that too at some future period. I happened to be in a very good humour just then; but though I was complaisant and gracious enough, I took care not to compromise myself in any possible way. But, however, the conceited wretch chose to interpret my amiability of temper his own way, and at length presumed upon my indulgence so far—what do you think?—he actually—made me an offer!"

"And you——"

"I proudly drew myself up, and with the greatest coolness expressed my astonishment at such an occurrence, and hoped he had seen nothing in my conduct to justify his expectations. You should have *seen* how his countenance fell! He went perfectly white in the face. I assured him that I esteemed him and all that, but could not possibly accede to his proposals; and if I did, papa and mamma could never be brought to give their consent.

"'But if they could,' said he, 'would yours be wanting?'

"'Certainly, Mr. Hatfield,' I replied, with a cool decision which quelled all hope at once. Oh, if you had seen how dreadfully mortified he was—how crushed to the earth by his disappointment! Really, I almost pitied him myself.

"One more desperate attempt, however, he made. After a silence of considerable duration, during which he struggled to be calm, and I to be grave—for I felt a strong propensity to laugh, which would have ruined all—he said, with the ghost of a smile,—

"'But tell me plainly, Miss Murray, if I had the wealth of Sir Hugh Meltham, or the prospects of his eldest son, would you still refuse me? Answer me truly, upon your honour.'

"'Certainly,' said I. 'That would make no difference whatever.'

"It was a great lie, but he looked so confident in his own attractions still that I determined not to leave him one stone upon another. He looked me full in the face; but I kept my countenance so well that he could not imagine I was saying anything more than the actual truth.

"'Then it's all over, I suppose,' he said, looking as if he could have died on the spot with vexation and the intensity of his despair. But he was angry as well as disappointed. There was he, suffering so unspeakably, and there was I, the pitiless cause of it all, so utterly impenetrable to all the artillery of his looks and words, so calmly cold and proud, he could not but feel some resentment, and with singular bitterness he began,—

"'I certainly did not expect this, Miss Murray. I might say something about your past conduct, and the hopes you have led me to foster, but I forbear, on condition——'

"'No conditions, Mr. Hatfield!' said I, now truly indignant at his insolence.

"'Then let me beg it as a favour,' he replied, lowering his voice at once, and taking a humbler tone—'let me entreat that you will not mention this affair to any one whatever. If you will keep silence about it, there need be no unpleasantness on either side—nothing, I mean, beyond what is quite unavoidable; for my own feelings I will endeavour to keep to myself, if I cannot annihilate them—I will try to forgive if I cannot forget the cause of my sufferings. I will not suppose, Miss Murray, that you know how deeply you have injured me—I would not have you aware of it; but if, in addition to the injury you have already done me—pardon me, but whether innocently or not, you *have* done it—and if you add to it by giving publicity to this unfortunate affair, or naming it *at all*, you will find that I too can speak, and though you scorned my love, you will hardly scorn my——'

"He stopped, but he bit his bloodless lip, and looked so terribly fierce that I was quite frightened. However, my pride upheld me still, and I answered disdainfully,—

"'I do not know what motive you suppose I could have for naming it to any one, Mr. Hatfield; but if I were disposed to do so, you would not deter me by threats, and it is scarcely the part of a gentleman to attempt it.'

"'Pardon me, Miss Murray,' said he; 'I have loved you so intensely, I do still adore you so deeply, that I would not willingly offend you; but though I never have loved, and never *can* love, any woman as I have loved you, it is equally certain that I never was so ill-treated by any. On the contrary, I have always found your sex the kindest and most tender and obliging of God's creation, till now.' (Think of the conceited fellow saying that!) 'And the novelty and harshness of the lesson you have taught me to-day, and the bitterness of being disappointed in the only quarter on which the happiness of my life depended, must excuse any appearance of asperity. If my presence is disagreeable to you, Miss Murray,' he said (for I was looking about me to show how little I cared for him; so he thought I was tired of him, I suppose)—'if my presence is disagreeable to you, Miss Murray, you have only to promise me the favour I named, and I will relieve you at once. There are many ladies—some even in this parish—who would be delighted to accept what you have so scornfully trampled under your feet. They would be naturally inclined to hate one whose surpassing loveliness has so completely estranged my heart from them and blinded me to their attractions; and a single hint of the truth from me to one of these would be sufficient to raise such a talk against you as would seriously injure your prospects, and diminish your chance of success with any other gentleman you or your mamma might design to entangle.'

"'What do you mean, sir?' said I, ready to stamp with passion.

"'I mean that this affair from beginning to end appears to me like a case of arrant flirtation, to say the least of it—such a case as you would find it rather inconvenient to have blazoned through the world, especially with the additions and exaggerations of your female rivals, who would be too glad to publish the matter, if I only gave them a handle to it. But I promise you, on the faith of a gentleman, that no word or syllable that could tend to your prejudice shall ever escape my lips, provided you will——'

"'Well, well, I won't mention it,' said I. 'You may rely upon my silence, if that can afford you any consolation.'

"'You promise it?'

"'Yes,' I answered, for I wanted to get rid of him now.

"'Farewell, then!' said he, in a most doleful, heart-sick tone, and with a look where pride vainly struggled against despair, he turned and went away, longing, no doubt, to get home, that he might shut himself up in his study and cry, if he doesn't burst into tears before he gets there."

"But you have broken your promise already," said I, truly horrified at her perfidy.

"Oh, it's only to you. I know you won't repeat it."

"Certainly I shall not. But you say you are going to tell your sister, and she will tell your brothers when they come home, and Brown immediately, if you do not tell her yourself; and Brown will blazon it, or be the means of blazoning it, throughout the country."

"No, indeed, she won't. We shall not tell her at all, unless it be under the promise of the strictest secrecy."

"But how can you expect her to keep her promises better than her more enlightened mistress?"

"Well, well, she shan't hear it then," said Miss Murray, somewhat snappishly.

"But you will tell your mamma, of course," pursued I, "and she will tell your papa."

"Of course I shall tell mamma. That is the very thing that pleases me so much. I shall now be able to convince her how mistaken she was in her fears about me."

"Oh, *that's* it, is it? I was wondering what it was that delighted you so much."

"Yes; and another thing is, that I've humbled Mr. Hatfield so charmingly; and another—— Why, you must allow me some share of female vanity; I don't pretend to be without that most essential attribute of our sex. And if you had seen poor Hatfield's intense eagerness in making his ardent declaration, and his flattering proposal, and his agony of mind, that no effort of pride could conceal, on being refused, you would have allowed I had some cause to be gratified."

"The greater his agony, I should think, the less your cause for gratification."

"Oh, nonsense!" cried the young lady, shaking herself with vexation. "You either can't understand me or you won't. If I had not confidence in your magnanimity I should think you envied me. But you will, perhaps, comprehend this cause of pleasure, which is as great as any—namely, that I am delighted with myself for my prudence, my self-command, my heartlessness, if you please. I was not a bit taken by surprise, not a bit confused, or awkward, or foolish; I just acted and spoke as I ought to have done, and was completely my own mistress throughout. And here was a man, decidedly good-looking—Jane and Susan Green call him bewitchingly handsome—I suppose they're two of the ladies he pretends would be so glad to have him; but, however, he was certainly a very clever, witty, agreeable companion—not what *you* call clever, but just enough to make him entertaining, and a man one needn't be ashamed of anywhere, and would not soon grow tired of. And to confess the truth, I rather liked him—better even, of late, than Harry Meltham—and he evidently idolized me; and yet, though he came upon me all alone and unprepared, I had the wisdom and the pride and the strength to refuse him—and so scornfully and coolly as I did. I have good reason to be proud of that!"

"And are you equally proud of having told him that his having the wealth of Sir Hugh Meltham would make no difference to you, when that was not the case, and of having promised to tell no one of his misadventure, apparently without the slightest intention of keeping your promise?"

"Of course! What else could I do? You would not have had me—— But I see, Miss Grey, you're not in a good temper. Here's Matilda; I'll see what she and mamma have to say about it."

She left me, offended at my want of sympathy, and thinking, no doubt, that I envied her. I did not—at least, I firmly believed I did not. I was sorry for her; I was amazed, disgusted at her heartless vanity. I wondered why so much beauty should be given to those who made so bad a use of it, and denied to some who would make it a benefit to both themselves and others.

But God knows best, I concluded. There are, I suppose, some men as vain, as selfish, and as heartless as she is, and, perhaps, such women may be useful to punish them.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WALK.

"OH dear! I wish Hatfield had not been so precipitate!" said Rosalie next day at 4 p.m., as, with a portentous yawn, she laid down her worsted-work and looked listlessly towards the window. "There's no inducement to go out now, and nothing to look forward to. The days will be so long and dull when there are no parties to enliven them; and there are none this week, or next either, that I know of."

"Pity you were so cross to him," observed Matilda, to whom this lamentation was addressed. "He'll never come again; and I suspect you liked him, after all. I hoped you would have taken him for your beau, and left dear Harry to me."

"Humph! My beau must be an Adonis indeed, Matilda, the admired of all beholders, if I am to be contented with him alone. I'm sorry to lose Hatfield, I confess, but the first decent man or number of men that come to supply his place will be more than welcome. It's Sunday to-morrow. I do wonder how he'll look, and whether he'll be able to go through the service. Most likely he'll pretend he's got a cold, and make Mr. Weston do it all."

"Not he!" exclaimed Matilda, somewhat contemptuously. "Fool as he is, he's not so soft as that comes to."

Her sister was slightly offended. But the event proved Matilda was right: the disappointed lover performed his pastoral duties as usual. Rosalie, indeed, affirmed he looked very pale and dejected. He might be a little paler, but the difference, if any, was scarcely perceptible. As for his dejection, I certainly did not hear his laugh ringing from the vestry as usual, nor his voice loud in hilarious discourse, though I did hear it uplifted in rating the sexton in a manner that made the congregation stare; and in his transits to and from the pulpit and the communion-table there was more of solemn pomp, and less of that irreverent, self-confident, or rather self-delighted imperiousness with which he usually swept along—that air that seemed to say, " You all reverence and adore me, I know; but if any one does not, I defy him to the teeth ! " But the most remarkable change was that he never once suffered his eyes to wander in the direction of Mr. Murray's pew, and did not leave the church till we were gone.

Mr. Hatfield had doubtless received a very severe blow, but his pride impelled him to use every effort to conceal the effects of it. He had been disappointed in his certain hope of obtaining not only a beautiful and, to him, highly attractive wife, but one whose rank and fortune might give brilliance to far inferior charms. He was likewise, no doubt, intensely mortified by his repulse, and deeply offended at the conduct of Miss Murray throughout. It would have given him no little consolation to have known how disappointed she was to find him apparently so little moved, and to see that he was able to refrain from casting a single glance at her throughout both services; though, she declared, it showed he was thinking of her all the time, or his eyes would have fallen upon her, if it were only by chance; but if they had so chanced to fall, she would have affirmed it was because they could not resist the attraction. It might have pleased him, too, in some degree, to have seen how dull and dissatisfied she was throughout that week (the greater part of it, at least), for lack of her usual source of excitement, and how often she regretted having " used him up so soon," like a child that, having devoured its plum-cake too hastily, sits sucking its fingers, and vainly lamenting its greediness.

At length I was called upon, one fine morning, to accompany her in a walk to the village. Ostensibly she went to get some shades of Berlin wool at a tolerably respectable shop that was chiefly supported by the ladies of the vicinity. Really I trust there is no breach of charity in supposing that she went with the idea of meeting either with the rector himself or some other admirer by the way; for as we went along she kept wondering "what Hatfield would do or say if we met him," etc. As we passed Mr. Green's park-gates she "wondered whether he was at home, great stupid blockhead." As Lady Meltham's carriage passed us she "wondered what Mr. Harry was doing this fine day," and then began to abuse his elder brother for being "such a fool as to get married and go and live in London."

"Why," said I, "I thought you wanted to live in London yourself."

"Yes, because it's so dull here. But then he makes it still duller by taking himself off; and if he were not married I might have him instead of that odious Sir Thomas."

Then, observing the prints of a horse's feet on the somewhat miry road, she "wondered whether it was a gentleman's horse," and finally concluded it was, for the impressions were too small to have been made by a "great, clumsy cart-horse;" and then she "wondered who the rider could be," and whether we should meet him coming back, for she was sure he had only passed that morning; and lastly, when we entered the village and saw only a few of its humble inhabitants moving about, she "wondered why the stupid people couldn't keep in their houses; she was sure she didn't want to see their ugly faces and dirty, vulgar clothes—it wasn't for that she came to Horton!"

Amid all this I confess I wondered too, in secret, whether we should meet or catch a glimpse of somebody else, and as we passed his lodgings I even went so far as to wonder whether he was at the window. On entering the shop, Miss Murray desired me to stand in the doorway while she transacted her business, and tell her if any one passed. But, alas! there was no one visible besides the villagers, except Jane and Susan Green, coming down the single street, apparently returning from a walk.

"Stupid things!" muttered she, as she came out after having concluded her bargain. "Why couldn't they have their dolt of a brother with them? Even he would be better than nothing."

She greeted them, however, with a cheerful smile, and protestations of pleasure at the happy meeting equal to their own. They placed themselves one on each side of her, and all three walked away chatting and laughing as young ladies do when they get together, if they be but on tolerably intimate terms. But I, feeling myself to be one too many, left them to their merriment, and lagged behind, as usual on such occasions. I had no relish for walking beside Miss Green or Miss Susan like one deaf and dumb, who could neither speak nor be spoken to.

But this time I was not long alone. It struck me, at first, as very odd that just as I was thinking about Mr. Weston he should come up and accost me; but afterwards, on due reflection, I thought there was nothing odd about it, unless it were the fact of his speaking to me—for on such a morning and so near his own abode it was natural enough that he should be about; and as for my thinking of him, I had been doing that, with little intermission, ever since we set out on our journey, so there was nothing remarkable in that.

"You are alone again, Miss Grey," said he.

"Yes."

"What kind of people are those ladies—the Misses Green?"

"I really don't know."

"That's strange, when you live so near and see them so often."

"Well, I suppose they are lively, good-tempered girls; but I imagine you must know them better than I do yourself, for I never exchanged a word with either of them."

"Indeed! They don't strike me as being particularly reserved."

"Very likely they are not so to people of their own class, but they consider themselves as moving in quite a different sphere from me."

He made no reply to this, but after a short pause he said,—

"I suppose it's these things, Miss Grey, that make you think you could not live without a home?"

"Not exactly. The fact is, I am too socially disposed to be able to live contentedly without a friend; and as the only friends I have, or am likely to have, are at home, if it, or rather if they were gone, I will not say I could not live, but I would rather not live in such a desolate world."

"But why do you say the only friends you are likely to have? Are you so unsociable that you cannot make friends?"

"No, but I never made one yet; and in my present position there is no possibility of doing so, or even of forming a common acquaintance. The fault may be partly in myself, but I hope not altogether."

"The fault is partly in society, and partly, I should think, in your intimate neighbours, and partly, too, in yourself, for many ladies in your position would make themselves be noticed and accounted of. But your pupils should be companions for you in some degree; they cannot be many years younger than yourself."

"Oh yes, they are good company sometimes; but I cannot call them friends, nor would they think of bestowing such a name on me. They have other companions better suited to their tastes."

"Perhaps you are too wise for them. How do you amuse yourself when alone? Do you read much?"

"Reading is my favourite occupation, when I have leisure for it and books to read."

From speaking of books in general, he passed to different books in particular, and proceeded by rapid transitions from topic to topic, till several matters, both of taste and opinion, had been discussed considerably within the space of half an hour, but without the embellishment of many observations from himself, he being evidently less bent upon communicating his own thoughts and predilections than on discovering mine. He had not the tact or the art to effect such a purpose by skilfully drawing out my sentiments or ideas through the real or apparent statement of his own, or leading the conversation by imperceptible gradations to such topics as he wished to advert to; but such gentle abruptness and such single-minded straightforwardness could not possibly offend me.

"And why should he interest himself at all in my moral and intellectual capacities? What is it to him what I think or feel?" I asked myself. And my heart throbbed in answer to the question.

But Jane and Susan Green soon reached their home. As they stood parleying at the park-gates, attempting to persuade Miss Murray to come in, I wished Mr. Weston would go, that she might not see him with me when she turned round; but unfortunately his business, which was to pay one more visit to poor Mark Wood, led him to pursue the same path as we did till nearly the close of our journey. When, however, he saw that Rosalie had taken leave of her friends and I was about to join her, he would have left me and passed on at a quicker pace; but as he civilly lifted his hat in passing her, to my surprise, instead of returning the salute with a stiff, ungracious bow, she accosted him with one of her sweetest smiles, and, walking by his side, began to talk to him with all imaginable cheerfulness and affability; and so we proceeded all three together.

After a short pause in the conversation Mr. Weston made some remark addressed particularly to me, as referring to something we had been talking of before; but before I could answer, Miss Murray replied to the observation and enlarged upon it. He rejoined; and from thence to the close of the interview she engrossed him entirely to herself. It might be partly owing to my own stupidity, my want of tact and assurance, but I felt myself wronged. I trembled with apprehension, and I listened with envy to her easy, rapid flow of utterance, and saw with anxiety the bright smile with which she looked into his face from time to time—for she was walking a little in advance, for the purpose (as I judged) of being seen as well as heard. If her conversation was light and trivial, it was amusing, and she was never at a loss for something to say, or for suitable words to express it in. There was nothing pert or flippant in her manner now, as when she walked with Mr. Hatfield; there was only a gentle, playful kind of vivacity, which I thought must be peculiarly pleasing to a man of Mr. Weston's disposition and temperament.

When he was gone she began to laugh, and muttered to herself, "I thought I could do it!"

"Do what?" I asked.

"Fix that man."

"What in the world do you mean?"

"I mean that he will go home and dream of me. I have shot him through the heart."

"How do you know?"

"By many infallible proofs, more especially the look he gave me when he went away. It was not an impudent look—I exonerate him from that—it was a look of reverential, tender adoration. Ha, ha! he's not quite such a stupid blockhead as I thought him."

I made no answer, for my heart was in my throat, or something like it, and I could not trust myself to speak. "O God, avert it!" I cried internally—"for his sake, not for mine!"

Miss Murray made several trivial observations as we passed up the park, to which (in spite of my reluctance to let one glimpse of my feelings appear) I could only answer by monosyllables. Whether she intended to torment me, or merely to amuse herself, I could not tell and did not much care; but I thought of the poor man and his one lamb, and the rich man with his thousand flocks, and I dreaded I knew not what for Mr. Weston, independently of my own blighted hopes.

Right glad was I to get into the house and find myself alone once more in my own room. My first impulse was to sink into the chair beside the bed, and laying my head on the pillow, to seek relief in a passionate burst of tears.

There was an imperative craving for such an indulgence; but, alas! I must restrain and swallow back my feelings still. There was the bell—the odious bell for the schoolroom dinner; and I must go down with a calm face, and smile, and laugh, and talk nonsense—yes, and eat too, if possible, as if all was right, and I was just returned from a pleasant walk.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SUBSTITUTION.

NEXT Sunday was one of the gloomiest of April days—a day of thick dark clouds and heavy showers. None of the Murrays were disposed to attend church in the afternoon, excepting Rosalie. She was bent upon going as usual, so she ordered the carriage, and I went with her—nothing loath, of course, for at church I might look without fear of scorn or censure upon a form and face more pleasing to me than the most beautiful of God's creations; I might listen without disturbance to a voice more charming than the sweetest music to my ears; I might seem to hold communion with that soul in which I felt so deeply interested, and imbibe its purest thoughts and holiest aspirations, with no alloy to such felicity except the secret reproaches of my conscience, which would too often whisper that I was deceiving my own self, and mocking God with the service of a heart more bent upon the creature than the Creator.

Sometimes such thoughts would give me trouble enough, but sometimes I could quiet them with thinking—it is not the man, it is his goodness that I love. "Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are honest and of good report, think on these things." We do well to worship God in His works; and I know none of them in which so many of His attributes, so much of His own spirit shines, as in this His faithful servant, whom to know and not to appreciate were obtuse insensibility in me, who have so little else to occupy my heart.

Almost immediately after the conclusion of the service Miss Murray left the church. We had to stand in the porch, for it was raining, and the carriage was not yet come. I wondered at her coming forth so hastily, for neither young Meltham nor Squire Green was there; but I soon found it was to secure an interview with Mr. Weston as he came out, which he presently did. Having saluted us both, he would have passed on, but she detained him, first with observations upon the disagreeable weather, and then with asking if he would be so kind as to come some time to-morrow to see the granddaughter of the old woman who kept the porter's lodge, for the girl was ill of a fever, and wished to see him. He promised to do so.

"And at what time will you be most likely to come, Mr. Weston? The old woman will like to know when to expect you. You know such people think more about having their cottages in order when decent people come to see them than we are apt to suppose."

Here was a wonderful instance of consideration from the thoughtless Miss Murray. Mr. Weston named an hour in the morning at which he would endeavour to be there. By this time the carriage was ready, and the footman was waiting, with an open umbrella, to escort Miss Murray through the churchyard. I was about to follow, but Mr. Weston had an umbrella too, and offered me the benefit of its shelter, for it was raining heavily.

"No, thank you; I don't mind the rain," I said. I always lacked common sense when taken by surprise.

"But you don't *like* it, I suppose. An umbrella will do you no harm, at any rate," he replied, with a smile that showed he was not offended, as a man of worse temper or less penetration would have been at such a refusal of his aid. I could not deny the truth of his assertion, and so went with him to the carriage. He even offered me his hand on getting in—an unnecessary piece of civility; but I accepted that too, for fear of giving offence. One glance he gave, one little smile at parting; it was but for a moment, but therein I read, or thought I read, a meaning that kindled in my heart a brighter flame of hope than had ever yet arisen.

"I would have sent the footman back for you, Miss Grey, if you'd waited a moment. You needn't have taken Mr. Weston's umbrella," observed Rosalie, with a very unamiable cloud upon her pretty face.

"I would have come without an umbrella, but Mr. Weston offered me the benefit of his, and I could not have refused it more than I did without offending him," replied I, smiling placidly—for my inward happiness made that amusing which would have wounded me at another time.

The carriage was now in motion. Miss Murray bent forwards and looked out of the window as we were passing Mr. Weston. He was pacing homewards along the causeway, and did not turn his head.

"Stupid ass!" cried she, throwing herself back again in the seat. "You don't know *what* you've lost by not looking this way!"

"What has he lost?"

"A bow from me that would have raised him to the seventh heaven!"

I made no answer. I saw she was out of humour, and I derived a secret gratification from the fact, not that she was vexed, but that she thought she had reason to be so. It made me think my hopes were not entirely the offspring of my wishes and imagination.

"I mean to take up Mr. Weston instead of Mr. Hatfield," said my companion after a short pause, resuming something of her usual cheerfulness. "The ball at Ashby Park takes place on Tuesday, you know, and mamma thinks it very likely that Sir Thomas will propose to me then. Such things are often done in the privacy of the ballroom, when gentlemen are most easily ensnared and ladies most enchanting. But if I am to be married so soon, I must make the best of the present time. I am determined Hatfield shall not be the only man who shall lay his heart at my feet and implore me to accept the worthless gift in vain."

"If you mean Mr. Weston to be one of your victims," said I, with affected indifference, "you will have to make such overtures yourself that you will find it difficult to draw back when he asks you to fulfil the expectations you have raised."

"I don't suppose he will ask me to *marry* him, nor should I desire it. That would be *rather* too much presumption. But I intend him to feel my power. He has felt it already, indeed; but he shall acknowledge it too. And what visionary hopes he may have he must keep to himself, and only amuse me with the result of them—for a time."

"Oh that some kind spirit would whisper those words in his ear!" I inwardly exclaimed. I was far too indignant to hazard a reply to her observation aloud, and nothing more was said about Mr. Weston that day, by me or in my hearing. But next morning, soon after breakfast, Miss Murray came into the schoolroom where her sister was employed at her studies, or rather her lessons—for studies they were not—and said, "Matilda, I want you to take a walk with me about eleven o'clock."

"Oh, I can't, Rosalie! I have to give orders about my new bridle and saddle-cloth, and speak to the rat-catcher about his dogs. Miss Grey must go with you."

"No, I want *you*," said Rosalie; and calling her sister to the window, she whispered an explanation in her ear, upon which the latter consented to go.

I remembered that eleven was the hour at which Mr. Weston proposed to come to the porter's lodge, and remembering that I beheld the whole contrivance. Accordingly, at dinner, I was entertained with a long account of how Mr. Weston had overtaken them as they were walking along the road; and how they had had a long walk and talk with him, and really found him quite an agreeable companion; and how he must have been, and evidently was, delighted with them and their amazing condescension, etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONFESSIONS.

As I am in the way of confessions, I may as well acknowledge that, about this time, I paid more attention to dress than ever I had done before. This is not saying much, for hitherto I had been a little neglectful in that particular. But now, also, it was no uncommon thing to spend as much as two minutes in the contemplation of my own image in the glass, though I never could derive any consolation from such a study. I could discover no beauty in those marked features, that pale, hollow cheek, and ordinary dark brown hair. There might be intellect in the forehead, there might be expression in the dark gray eyes; but what of that? A low Grecian brow and large black eyes devoid of sentiment would be esteemed far preferable. It is foolish to wish for beauty. Sensible people never either desire it for themselves or care about it in others. If the mind be but well cultivated, and the heart well disposed, no one ever cares for the exterior. So said the teachers of our childhood, and so say we to the children of the present day. All very judicious and proper, no doubt; but are such assertions supported by actual experience?

We are naturally disposed to love what gives us pleasure, and what more pleasing than a beautiful face—when we know no harm of the possessor, at least? A little girl loves her bird—why? Because it lives and feels? because it is helpless and harmless? A toad likewise lives and feels, and is equally helpless and harmless; but though she would not hurt a toad, she cannot love it like the bird, with its graceful form, soft feathers, and bright, speaking eyes. If a woman is fair and amiable, she is praised for both qualities, but especially the former, by the bulk of mankind. If, on the other hand, she is disagreeable in person and character, her plainness is commonly inveighed against as her greatest crime, because, to common observers, it gives the greatest offence; while, if she is plain and good, provided she is a person of retired manners and secluded life, no one ever knows of her goodness except her immediate connections. Others, on the contrary, are disposed to form unfavourable opinions of her mind and disposition, if it be but to excuse themselves for their instinctive dislike of one so unfavoured by nature, and *vice versa* with her whose angel form conceals a vicious heart, or sheds a false, deceitful charm over defects and foibles that would not be tolerated in another. They that have beauty, let them be thankful for it, and make a good use of it like any other talent; they that have it not, let them console themselves, and do the best they can without it. Certainly, though liable to be overestimated, it is a gift of God, and not to be despised. Many will feel this who have felt that they could love, and whose hearts tell them that they are worthy to be loved again, while yet they are debarred by the lack of this or some such seeming trifle from giving and receiving that happiness they seem almost made to feel and to impart. As well might the humble glow-worm despise that power of giving light without which the roving fly might pass her and repass her a thousand times, and never rest beside her. She might hear her winged darling buzzing over and around her, he vainly seeking her, she longing to be found, but with no power to make her presence known, no voice to call him, no wings to follow his flight. The fly must seek another mate, the worm must live and die alone.

Such were some of my reflections about this period. I might go on prosing more and more, I might dive much deeper, and disclose other thoughts, propose questions the reader might be puzzled to answer, and deduce arguments that might startle his prejudices, or perhaps provoke his ridicule, because he could not comprehend them; but I forbear.

Now, therefore, let us return to Miss Murray. She accompanied her mamma to the ball on Tuesday, of course splendidly attired, and delighted with her prospects and her charms. As Ashby Park was nearly ten miles distant from Horton Lodge, they had to set out pretty early, and I intended to have spent the evening with Nancy Brown, whom I had not seen for a long time; but my kind pupil took care I should spend it neither there nor anywhere else beyond the limits of the schoolroom, by giving me a piece of music to copy, which kept me closely occupied till bedtime. About eleven next morning, as soon as she had left her room, she came to tell me her news. Sir Thomas had indeed proposed to her at the ball—an event which reflected great credit on her mamma's sagacity, if not upon her skill in contrivance. I rather incline to the belief that she had first laid her plans, and then predicted their success. The offer had been accepted, of course, and the bridegroom-elect was coming that day to settle matters with Mr. Murray.

Rosalie was pleased with the thoughts of becoming mistress of Ashby Park. She was elated with the prospect of the bridal ceremony and its attendant splendour and *éclat*, the honeymoon spent abroad, and the subsequent gaieties she expected to enjoy in London and elsewhere. She appeared pretty well pleased, too, for the time being, with Sir Thomas himself, because she had so lately seen him, danced with him, and been flattered by him; but after all she seemed to shrink from the idea of being so soon united. She wished the ceremony to be delayed some months, at least, and I wished it too. It seemed a horrible thing to hurry on the inauspicious match, and not to give the poor creature time to think and reason on the irrevocable step she was about to take. I made no pretension to "a mother's watchful, anxious care," but I was amazed and horrified at Mrs. Murray's heartlessness, or want of thought for the real good of her child; and by my unheeded warnings and exhortations I vainly strove to remedy the evil. Miss Murray only laughed at what I said, and I soon found that her reluctance to an immediate union arose chiefly from a desire to do what execution she could among the young gentlemen of her acquaintance, before she was incapacitated from further mischief of the kind. It was for this cause that, before confiding to me the secret of her engagement, she had extracted a promise that I would not mention a word on the subject to any one. And when I saw this, and when I beheld her plunge more recklessly than ever into the depths of heartless coquetry, I had no more pity for her. "Come what will," I thought, "she deserves it. Sir Thomas cannot be too bad for her, and the sooner she is incapacitated from deceiving and injuring others the better."

The wedding was fixed for the 1st of June. Between that and the critical ball was little more than six weeks; but, with Rosalie's accomplished skill and resolute exertion, much might be done, even within that period, especially as Sir Thomas spent most of the interim in London, whither he went up, it was said, to settle affairs with his lawyer, and make other preparations for the approaching nuptials. He endeavoured to supply the want of his presence by a pretty constant fire of billets-doux. But these did not attract the neighbours' attention and open their eyes as personal visits would have done; and old Lady Ashby's haughty, sour spirit of reserve withheld her from spreading the news, while her indifferent health prevented her coming to visit her future daughter-in-law; so that, altogether, this affair was kept far closer than such things usually are.

Rosalie would sometimes show her lover's epistles to me, to convince me what a kind, devoted husband he would make. She showed me the letters of another individual too, the unfortunate Mr. Green, who had not the courage, or, as she expressed it, the "spunk," to plead his cause in person, but whom one denial would not satisfy; he must write again and again. He would not have done so if he could have seen the grimaces his fair idol made over his moving appeals to her feelings, and heard her scornful laughter, and the opprobrious epithets she heaped upon him for his perseverance.

"Why don't you tell him at once that you are engaged?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't want him to know that," replied she. "If he knew it, his sisters and everybody would know it, and then there would be an end of my—ahem! And, besides, if I told him that, he would think my engagement was the only obstacle, and that I would have him if I were free; which I could not bear that any man should think, and he of all others, at least. Besides, I don't care for his letters," she added contemptuously; "he may write as often as he pleases, and look as great a calf as he likes when I meet him. It only amuses me."

Meantime, young Meltham was pretty frequent in his visits to the house or transits past it; and, judging by Matilda's execrations and reproaches, her sister paid more attention to him than civility required—in other words, she carried on as animated a flirtation as the presence of her parents would admit. She made some attempts to bring Mr. Hatfield once more to her feet, but finding them unsuccessful, she repaid his haughty indifference with still loftier scorn, and spoke of him with as much disdain and detestation as she had formerly done of his curate. But, amid all this, she never for a moment lost sight of Mr. Weston. She embraced every opportunity of meeting him, tried every art to fascinate him, and pursued him with as much perseverance as if he really loved him and no other, and the happiness of her life depended upon eliciting a return of affection. Such conduct was completely beyond my comprehenion. Had I seen it depicted in a novel, I should have hought it unnatural; had I heard it described by others, should have deemed it a mistake or an exaggeration: ut when I saw it with my own eyes, and suffered from too, I could only conclude that excessive vanity, like runkenness, hardens the heart, enslaves the faculties, nd perverts the feelings, and that dogs are not the only reatures which, when gorged to the throat, will yet gloat over what they cannot devour, and grudge the smallest morsel to a starving brother.

She now became extremely beneficent to the poor cottagers. Her acquaintance among them was more widely extended, her visits to their humble dwellings were more frequent and excursive than they had ever been before. Hereby she earned among them the reputation of a condescending and very charitable young lady, and their encomiums were sure to be repeated to Mr. Weston, whom also she had thus a daily chance of meeting in one or other of their abodes, or in her transits to and fro; and often, likewise, she could gather, through their gossip, to what places he was likely to go at such and such a time, whether to baptize a child, or to visit the aged, the sick, the sad, or the dying, and most skilfully she laid her plans accordingly. In these excursions she would sometimes go with her sister—whom, by some means, she had persuaded or bribed to enter into her schemes—sometimes alone, never, now, with me; so that I was debarred the pleasure of seeing Mr. Weston, or hearing his voice even in conversation with another, which would certainly have been a very great pleasure, however hurtful or however fraught with pain. I could not even see him at church; for Miss Murray, under some trivial pretext, chose to take possession of that corner in the family pew which had been mine ever since I came, and unless I had the presumption to station myself between Mr. and Mrs. Murray, I must sit with my back to the pulpit, which I accordingly did.

Now, also, I never walked home with my pupils. They said their mamma thought it did not look well to see three people out of the family walking, and only two going in the carriage; and as they greatly preferred walking in fine weather, I should be honoured by going with the seniors. "And, besides," said they, "you can't walk as fast as we do; you know you're always lagging behind." I knew these were false excuses, but I made no objections, and never contradicted such assertions, well knowing the motives which dictated them. And in the afternoons, during those six memorable weeks, I never went to church at all. If I had a cold, or any slight indisposition, they took advantage of that to make me stay at home; and often they would tell me they were not going again that day themselves, and then pretend to change their minds and set off without telling me, so managing their departure that I never discovered the change of purpose till too late. Upon their return home, on one of these occasions, they entertained me with an animated account of a conversation they had had with Mr. Weston as they came along. "And he asked if you were ill, Miss Grey," said Matilda; "but we told him you were quite well, only you didn't want to come to church. So he'll think you're turned wicked."

All chance meetings on week-days were likewise carefully prevented; for, lest I should go to see poor Nancy Brown or any other person, Miss Murray took good care to provide sufficient employment for all my leisure hours. There was always some drawing to finish, some music to copy, or some work to do, sufficient to incapacitate me from indulging in anything beyond a short walk about the grounds, however she or her sister might be occupied.

One morning, having sought and waylaid Mr. Weston, they returned in high glee to give me an account of their interview. "And he asked after you again," said Matilda, in spite of her sister's silent but imperative intimation that she should hold her tongue. "He wondered why you were never with us, and thought you must have delicate health, as you came out so seldom."

"He didn't, Matilda; what nonsense you're talking!"

"O Rosalie, what a lie! He did, you know; and you said—— Don't, Rosalie—hang it!—I won't be pinched so!—And, Miss Grey, Rosalie told him you were quite well, but you were always so buried in your books that you had no pleasure in anything else."

"What an idea he must have of me!" I thought.

"And," I asked, "does old Nancy ever inquire about me?"

"Yes; and we tell her you are so fond of reading and drawing that you can do nothing else."

"That is not the case, though. If you had told her I was so busy I *could* not come to see her, it would have been nearer the truth."

"I don't think it would," replied Miss Murray, suddenly kindling up. "I'm sure you have plenty of time to yourself now, when you have so little teaching to do."

It was no use beginning to dispute with such indulged, unreasoning creatures, so I held my peace. I was accustomed now to keeping silence when things distasteful to my ear were uttered; and now, too, I was used to wearing a placid, smiling countenance when my heart was bitter within me. Only those who have felt the like can imagine my feelings, as I sat with an assumption of smiling indifference, listening to the accounts of those meetings and interviews with Mr. Weston, which they seemed to find such pleasure in describing to me, and hearing things asserted of him which, from the character of the man, I knew to be exaggerations and perversions of the truth, if not entirely false—things derogatory to him, and flattering to them, especially to Miss Murray—which I burned to contradict, or, at least, to show my doubts about, but dared not, lest, in expressing my disbelief, I should display my interest too. Other things I heard which I felt or feared were indeed too true; but I must still conceal my anxiety respecting him, my indignation against them, beneath a careless aspect: others, again, mere hints of something said or done, which I longed to hear more of, but could not venture to inquire. So passed the weary time. I could not even comfort myself with saying, "She will soon be married, and then there may be hope."

Soon after her marriage the holidays would come, and when I returned from home most likely Mr. Weston would be gone, for I was told that he and the rector could not agree (the rector's fault, of course), and he was about to remove to another place.

No, besides my hope in God, my only consolation was in thinking that, though he knew it not, I was more worthy of his love than Rosalie Murray, charming and engaging as she was, for I could appreciate his excellence, which she could not. I would devote my life to the promotion of his happiness; she would destroy his happiness for the momentary gratification of her own vanity. "Oh, if he could but know the difference!" I would earnestly exclaim. "But no; I would not have him see my heart. Yet, if he could but know her hollowness, her worthless, heartless frivolity, he would then be safe, and I should be—*almost* happy, though I might never see him more!"

I fear by this time the reader is well-nigh disgusted with the folly and weakness I have so freely laid before him. I never disclosed it then, and would not have done so had my own sister or my mother been with me in the house. I was a close and resolute dissembler—in this one case, at least. My prayers, my tears, my wishes, fears, and lamentations were witnessed by myself and Heaven alone.

When we are harassed by sorrows or anxieties, or long oppressed by any powerful feelings which we must keep to ourselves, for which we can obtain and seek no sympathy from any living creature, and which yet we cannot or will not wholly crush, we often naturally seek relief in poetry—and often find it, too—whether in the effusions of others, which seem to harmonize with our existing case, or in our own attempts to give utterance to those thoughts and feelings in strains less musical, perchance, but more appropriate, and therefore more penetrating and sympathetic, and, for the time, more soothing or more powerful to rouse and to unburden the oppressed and swollen heart. Before this time, at Wellwood House and here, when suffering from home-sick melancholy, I had sought relief twice or thrice at this secret source of consolation; and now I flew to it again, with greater avidity than ever, because I seemed to need it more. I still preserve those relics of past sufferings and experience, like pillars of witness set up in travelling through the vale of life, to mark particular occurrences. The footsteps are obliterated now, the face of the country may be changed, but the pillar is still there, to remind me how all things were when it was reared. Lest the reader should be curious to see any of these effusions, I will favour him with one short specimen. Cold and languid as the lines may seem, it was almost a passion of grief to which they owed their being.

"Oh, they have robbed me of the hope
My spirit held so dear;
They will not let me hear that voice
My soul delights to hear.

"They will not let me see that face
I so delight to see;
And they have taken all thy smiles
And all thy love from me.

"Well, let them seize on all they can;
One treasure still is mine—
A heart that loves to think on thee,
And feels the worth of thine."

Yes, at least they could not deprive me of that. I could think of him day and night, and I could feel that he was worthy to be thought of. Nobody knew him as I did, nobody could appreciate him as I did, nobody could love him as I—could, if I might; but there was the evil. What business had I to think so much of one that never thought of me? Was it not foolish? Was it not wrong? Yet, if I found such deep delight in thinking of him, and if I kept those thoughts to myself, and troubled no one else with them, where was the harm of it? I would ask myself. And such reasoning prevented me from making any sufficient effort to shake off my fetters.

But if those thoughts brought delight, it was a painful, troubled pleasure, too near akin to anguish, and one that did me more injury than I was aware of. It was an indulgence that a person of more wisdom or more experience would doubtless have denied herself. And yet, how dreary to turn my eyes from the contemplation of that bright object and force them to dwell on the dull, gray, desolate prospect around, the joyless, hopeless, solitary path that lay before me! It was wrong to be so joyless, so desponding; I should have made God my friend, and to do His will the pleasure and the business of my life; but faith was weak, and passion was too strong.

In this time of trouble I had two other causes of affliction. The first may seem a trifle, but it cost me many a tear. Snap, my little dumb, rough-visaged, but bright-eyed, warm-hearted companion, the only thing I had to love me, was taken away, and delivered over to the tender mercies of the village rat-catcher, a man notorious for his brutal treatment of his canine slaves. The other was serious enough. My letters from home gave intimation that my father's health was worse. No boding fears were expressed, but I was grown timid and despondent, and could not help fearing that some dreadful calamity awaited us there. I seemed to see the black clouds gathering round my native hills, and to hear the angry muttering of a storm that was about to burst and desolate our hearth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MIRTH AND MOURNING.

THE 1st of June arrived at last, and Rosalie Murray was transmuted into Lady Ashby. Most splendidly beautiful she looked in her bridal costume. Upon her return from church, after the ceremony, she came flying into the schoolroom, flushed with excitement, and laughing, half in mirth, and half in reckless desperation, as it seemed to me.

"Now, Miss Grey, I'm Lady Ashby!" she exclaimed. "It's done; my fate is sealed. There's no drawing back now. I'm come to receive your congratulations and bid you good-bye; and then I'm off for Paris, Rome, Naples, Switzerland, London! Oh dear! what a deal I shall see and hear before I come back again! But don't forget me. I shan't forget you, though I've been a naughty girl. Come, why don't you congratulate me?"

"I cannot congratulate you," I replied, "till I know whether this change is really for the better. But I sincerely hope it is, and I wish you true happiness and the best of blessings."

"Well, good-bye, the carriage is waiting, and they're calling me."

She gave me a hasty kiss, and was hurrying away, but suddenly returning, embraced me with more affection than I thought her capable of evincing, and departed with tears in her eyes. Poor girl! I really loved her then, and forgave her from my heart all the injury she had done me, and others also. She had not half known it, I was sure; and I prayed God to pardon her too.

During the remainder of that day of festal sadness I was left to my own devices. Being too much unhinged for any steady occupation, I wandered about with a book in my hand for several hours, more thinking than reading, for I had many things to think about. In the evening I made use of my liberty to go and see my old friend Nancy once again, to apologize for my long absence (which must have seemed so neglectful and unkind) by telling her how busy I had been, and to talk, or read, or work for her, whichever might be most acceptable, and also, of course, to tell her the news of this important day, and perhaps to obtain a little information from her in return respecting Mr. Weston's expected departure. But of this she seemed to know nothing, and I hoped, as she did, that it was all a false report. She was very glad to see me; but, happily, her eyes were now so nearly well that she was almost independent of my services. She was deeply interested in the wedding; but while I amused her with the details of the festive day, the splendours of the bridal party and of the bride herself, she often sighed and shook her head, and wished good might come of it. She seemed, like me, to regard it rather as a theme for sorrow than rejoicing. I sat a long time talking to her about that and other things, but *no one came*.

Shall I confess that I sometimes looked towards the door with a half-expectant wish to see it open and give entrance to Mr. Weston, as had happened once before; and that, returning through the lanes and fields, I often paused to look round me, and walked more slowly than was at all necessary—for though a fine evening it was not a hot one—and finally felt a sense of emptiness and disappointment at having reached the house without meeting or even catching a distant glimpse of any one, except a few labourers returning from their work?

Sunday, however, was approaching; I should see him then, for now that Miss Murray was gone I could have my old corner again. I should see him, and by look, speech, and manner I might judge whether the circumstance of her marriage had very much afflicted him. Happily I could perceive no shadow of a difference. He wore the same aspect as he had worn two months ago—voice, look, manner, all alike unchanged. There was the same keen-sighted, unclouded truthfulness in his discourse, the same forcible clearness in his style, the same earnest simplicity in all he said and did, that made itself not marked by the eye and ear, but felt upon the hearts of his audience.

I walked home with Miss Matilda, but *he did not join us*. Matilda was now sadly at a loss for amusement, and woefully in want of a companion: her brothers at school, her sister married and gone, she too young to be admitted into society, for which, from Rosalie's example, she was in some degree beginning to acquire a taste—a taste at least for the company of certain classes of gentlemen; at this dull time of year—no hunting going on, no shooting even—for though she might not join in that, it was *something* to see her father or the gamekeeper go out with the dogs, and talk with them on their return about the different birds they had bagged. Now, also, she was denied the solace which the companionship of the coachman, grooms, horses, greyhounds, and pointers might have afforded; for her mother having, notwithstanding the disadvantages of a country life, so satisfactorily disposed of her elder daughter, the pride of her heart, had begun seriously to turn her attention to the younger; and being truly alarmed at the roughness of her manners, and thinking it high time to work a reform, had been roused at length to exert her authority, and prohibited entirely the yards, stables, kennels, and coach-house. Of course she was not implicitly obeyed; but indulgent as she had hitherto been, when once her spirit was roused her temper was not so gentle as she required that of her governess to be, and her will was not to be thwarted with impunity. After many a scene of contention between mother and daughter, many a violent outbreak which I was ashamed to witness, in which the father's authority was often called in to confirm with oaths and threats the mother's slighted prohibitions—for even *he* could see that " Tilly, though she would have made a fine lad, was not quite what a young lady ought to be "—Matilda at length found that her easiest plan was to keep clear of the forbidden regions, unless she could now and then steal a visit without her watchful mother's knowledge.

Amid all this, let it not be imagined that I escaped without many a reprimand and many an implied reproach, that lost none of its sting from not being openly worded, but rather wounded the more deeply because, from that very reason, it seemed to preclude self-defence. Frequently I was told to amuse Miss Matilda with other things, and to *remind* her of her mother's precepts and prohibitions. I did so to the best of my power; but she would not be amused against her will, and could not against her taste; and though I went beyond mere reminding, such gentle remonstrances as I could use were utterly ineffectual.

" *Dear* Miss Grey, it is the *strangest* thing. I suppose you can't help it, if it's not in your nature, but I *wonder* you can't win the confidence of that girl, and make your society at *least* as agreeable to her as that of Robert or Joseph."

"They can talk the best about the things in which she is most interested," I replied.

"Well, that is a strange confession, *however*, to come from her *governess!* Who is to form a young lady's tastes, I wonder, if the governess doesn't do it? I *have* known governesses who have so completely identified themselves with the reputation of their young ladies for elegance and propriety of mind and manners that they would *blush* to speak a word against them, and to hear the slightest blame imputed to their pupils was worse than to be censured in their own persons. And I really think it very natural, for my part."

"Do you, ma'am?"

"Yes, of course. The young lady's proficiency and elegance is of more consequence to the governess than her own, as well as to the world. If she wishes to prosper n her vocation she must devote all her energies to her business; all her ideas and all her ambition will tend to the accomplishment of that one object. When we wish to decide upon the merits of a governess, we naturally ook at the young ladies she professes to have educated, nd judge accordingly. The *judicious* governess knows his. She knows that, while she lives in obscurity herelf, her pupil's virtues and defects will be open to every ye, and that, unless she loses sight of herself in their ultivation, she need not hope for success. You see, Miss Grey, it is just the same as any other trade or proession: they that wish to prosper must devote themelves body and soul to their calling, and if they begin o yield to indolence or self-indulgence they are speedily istanced by wiser competitors. There is little to choose etween a person that ruins her pupils by neglect and ne that corrupts them by her example. You will exuse my dropping these little hints; you know it is all or your own good. Many ladies would speak to you uch more strongly, and many would not trouble themselves to speak at all, but quietly look out for a substitute. That, of course, would be the *easiest* plan. But I know the advantages of a place like this to a person in your situation, and I have no desire to part with you, as I am sure you would do very well if you will only think of these things and try to exert yourself a *little* more. Then, I am convinced, you would *soon* acquire that delicate tact which alone is wanting to give you a proper influence over the mind of your pupil."

I was about to give the lady some idea of the fallacy of her expectations, but she sailed away as soon as she had concluded her speech. Having said what she wished, it was no part of her plan to await my answer. It was my business to hear, and not to speak.

However, as I have said, Matilda at length yielded in some degree to her mother's authority (pity it had not been exerted before), and being thus deprived of almost every source of amusement, there was nothing for it but to take long rides with the groom and long walks with the governess, and to visit the cottages and farm-houses on her father's estate, to kill time in chatting with the old men and women that inhabited them. In one of these walks it was our chance to meet Mr. Weston. This was what I had long desired; but now, for a moment, I wished either he or I were away. I felt my heart throb so violently that I dreaded lest some outward signs of emotion should appear; but I think he hardly glanced at me, and I was soon calm enough. After a brief salutation to both, he asked Matilda if she had lately heard from her sister.

"Yes," replied she. "She was at Paris when she wrote, and very well, and very happy."

She spoke the last word emphatically, and with a glance impertinently sly. He did not seem to notice it, but replied, with equal emphasis, and very seriously,—

"I hope she will continue to be so."

"Do you think it likely?" I ventured to inquire—for Matilda had started off in pursuit of her dog, that was chasing a leveret.

"I cannot tell," replied he. "Sir Thomas may be a better man than I suppose, but from all I have heard and seen it seems a pity that one so young and gay and —and *interesting* (to express many things by one word), whose greatest, if not her only fault, appears to be thoughtlessness—no trifling fault, to be sure, since it renders the possessor liable to almost every other, and exposes him to so many temptations—but it seems a pity that she should be thrown away on such a man. It was her mother's wish, I suppose?"

"Yes; and her own too, I think, for she always laughed at my attempts to dissuade her from the step."

"You did attempt it? Then, at least you will have the satisfaction of knowing that it is no fault of yours if any harm should come of it. As for Mrs. Murray, I don't know how she can justify her conduct. If I had sufficient acquaintance with her I'd ask her."

"It seems unnatural; but some people think rank and wealth the chief good, and if they can secure that for their children they think they have done their duty."

"True; but is it not strange that persons of experience, who have been married themselves, should judge so falsely?"

Matilda now came panting back, with the lacerated body of the young hare in her hand.

"Was it your intention to kill that hare, or to save it, Miss Murray?" asked Mr. Weston, apparently puzzled at her gleeful countenance.

"I pretended to want to save it," she answered, honestly enough, "as it was so glaringly out of season, but I was better pleased to see it killed. However, you can both witness that I couldn't help it. Prince was determined to have her, and he clutched her by the back, and killed her in a minute. Wasn't it a noble chase?"

"Very—for a young lady after a leveret."

There was a quiet sarcasm in the tone of his reply which was not lost upon her. She shrugged her shoulders, and turning away with a significant "Humph!" asked me how I had enjoyed the fun. I replied that I saw no fun in the matter, but admitted that I had not observed the transaction very narrowly.

"Didn't you see how it doubled—just like an old hare? and didn't you hear it scream?"

"I'm happy to say I did not."

"It cried out just like a child."

"Poor little thing! What will you do with it?"

"Come along. I shall leave it in the first house we come to. I don't want to take it home, for fear papa should scold me for letting the dog kill it."

Mr. Weston was now gone, and we too went on our way; but as we returned, after having deposited the hare in a farm-house, and demolished some spice-cake and currant wine in exchange, we met him returning also from the execution of his mission, whatever it might be. He carried in his hand a cluster of beautiful bluebells, which he offered to me, observing, with a smile, that though he had seen so little of me for the last two months, he had not forgotten that bluebells were numbered among my favourite flowers. It was done as a simple act of good-will, without compliment or remarkable courtesy, or any look that could be construed into "reverential, tender adoration" (*vide* Rosalie Murray); but still it was something to find my unimportant saying so well remembered, it was something that he had noticed so accurately the time I had ceased to be visible.

"I was told," said he, "that you were a perfect bookworm, Miss Grey—so completely absorbed in your studies that you were lost to every other pleasure."

"Yes, and it's quite true!" cried Matilda.

"No, Mr. Weston; don't believe it. It's a scandalous libel. These young ladies are too fond of making random assertions at the expense of their friends, and you ought to be careful how you listen to them."

"I hope *this* assertion is groundless, at any rate."

"Why? Do you particularly object to ladies studying?"

"No; but I object to any one so devoting himself or herself to study as to lose sight of everything else. Except under peculiar circumstances, I consider very close and constant study as a waste of time, and an injury to the mind as well as the body."

"Well, I have neither the time nor the inclination for such transgressions."

We parted again.

Well, what is there remarkable in all this? Why have I recorded it? Because, reader, it was important enough to give me a cheerful evening, a night of pleasing dreams, and a morning of felicitous hopes. Shallow-brained cheerfulness, foolish dreams, unfounded hopes, you would say; and I will not venture to deny it. Suspicions to that effect arose too frequently in my own mind. But our wishes are like tinder. The flint and steel of circumstances are continually striking out sparks, which vanish immediately, unless they chance to fall upon the tinder of our wishes; then they instantly ignite, and the flame of hope is kindled in a moment.

But, alas! that very morning my flickering flame of hope was dismally quenched by a letter from my mother, which spoke so seriously of my father's increasing illness that I feared there was little or no chance of his recovery; and close at hand as the holidays were, I almost trembled lest they should come too late for me to meet him in this world. Two days after, a letter from Mary told me his life was despaired of, and his end seemed fast approaching. Then, immediately, I sought permission to anticipate the vacation, and go without delay. Mrs. Murray stared, and wondered at the unwonted energy and boldness with which I urged the request, and thought there was no occasion to hurry, but finally gave me leave, stating, however, that there was "no need to be in such agitation about the matter—it might prove a false alarm after all; and if not, why, it was only in the common course of nature—we must all die sometime—and I was not to suppose myself the only afflicted person in the world," and concluding with saying I might have the phaeton to take me to O——. "And instead of *repining*, Miss Grey, be thankful for the *privileges* you enjoy. There's many a poor clergyman whose family would be plunged into ruin by the event of his death; but *you*, you see, have influential friends ready to continue their patronage, and to show you every consideration."

I thanked her for her "consideration," and flew to my room to make some hurried preparations for my departure. My bonnet and shawl being on, and a few things hastily crammed into my largest trunk, I descended. But I might have done the work more leisurely, for no one else was in a hurry, and I had still a considerable time to wait for the phaeton. At length it came to the door, and I was off. But, oh, what a dreary journey was that! how utterly different from my former passages homewards! Being too late for the last coach to ——, I had to hire a cab for ten miles, and then a car to take me over the rugged hills. It was half-past ten before I reached home. They were not in bed.

My mother and sister both met me in the passage, sad, silent, pale. I was so much shocked and terror-stricken that I could not speak, to ask the information I so much longed yet dreaded to obtain.

"Agnes!" said my mother, struggling to repress some strong emotion.

"O Agnes!" cried Mary, and burst into tears.

"How is he?" I asked, gasping for the answer.

"Dead!"

It was the reply I had anticipated, but the shock seemed none the less tremendous.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LETTER.

My father's mortal remains had been consigned to the tomb, and we, with sad faces and sombre garments, sat lingering over the frugal breakfast-table, revolving plans for our future life. My mother's strong mind had not given way beneath even this affliction; her spirit, though crushed, was not broken. Mary's wish was that I should go back to Horton Lodge, and that our mother should come and live with her and Mr. Richardson at the vicarage. She affirmed that he wished it no less than herself, and that such an arrangement could not fail to benefit all parties; for my mother's society and experience would be of inestimable value to them, and they would do all they could to make her happy. But no arguments or entreaties could prevail; my mother was determined not to go. Not that she questioned, for a moment, the kind wishes and intentions of her daughter, but she affirmed that so long as God spared her health and strength she would make use of them to earn her own livelihood, and be chargeable to no one, whether her dependence would be felt as a burden or not. If she could afford to reside as a lodger in —— vicarage, she would choose that house before all others as the place of her abode; but not being so circumstanced, she would never come under its roof, except as an occasional visitor, unless sickness or calamity should render her assistance really needful, or until age or infirmity made her incapable of maintaining herself.

"No, Mary," said she; "if Richardson and you have anything to spare, you must lay it aside for your family, and Agnes and I must gather honey for ourselves. Thanks to my having had daughters to educate, I have not forgotten my accomplishments. God willing, I will check this vain repining," she said, while the tears coursed one another down her cheeks in spite of her efforts; but she wiped them away, and resolutely shaking back her head, continued, "I will exert myself, and look out for a small house, commodiously situated in some populous but healthy district, where we will take a few young ladies to board and educate—if we can get them—and as many day-pupils as will come, or as we can manage to instruct. Your father's relations and old friends will be able to send us some pupils, or to assist us with their recommendations, no doubt. I shall not apply to my own. What say you to it, Agnes? Will you be willing to leave your present situation and try?"

"Quite willing, mamma; and the money I have saved will do to furnish the house. It shall be taken from the bank directly."

"When it is wanted. We must get the house and settle on preliminaries first."

Mary offered to lend the little she possessed, but my mother declined it, saying that we must begin on an economical plan, and she hoped that the whole or part of mine, added to what we could get by the sale of the furniture, and what little our dear papa had contrived to lay aside for her since the debts were paid, would be sufficient to last us till Christmas, when, it was hoped, something would accrue from our united labours. It was finally settled that this should be our plan, and that inquiries and preparations should immediately be set on foot; and while my mother busied herself with these, I should return to Horton Lodge at the close of my four weeks' vacation, and give notice for my final departure when things were in train for the speedy commencement of our school.

We were discussing these affairs on the morning I have mentioned, about a fortnight after my father's death, when a letter was brought in for my mother, on beholding which the colour mounted to her face, lately pale enough with anxious watchings and excessive sorrow. "From my father!" murmured she, as she hastily tore off the cover. It was many years since she had heard from any of her own relations before. Naturally wondering what the letter might contain, I watched her countenance while she read it, and was somewhat surprised to see her bite her lip and knit her brows as if in anger. When she had done she somewhat irreverently cast it on the table, saying with a scornful smile,—

"Your grandpapa has been so kind as to write to me. He says he has no doubt I have long repented of my 'unfortunate marriage,' and if I will only acknowledge this, and confess I was wrong in neglecting his advice, and that I have justly suffered for it, he will make a lady of me once again—if that be possible, after my long degradation—and remember my girls in his will. Get my desk, Agnes, and send these things away. I will answer the letter directly. But, first, as I may be depriving you both of a legacy, it is just that I should tell you what I mean to say. I shall say that he is mistaken in supposing that I can regret the birth of my daughters (who have been the pride of my life, and are likely to be the comfort of my old age), or the thirty years I have passed in the company of my best and dearest friend; that, had our misfortunes been three times as great as they were (unless they had been of my bringing on), I should still the more rejoice to have shared them with your father, and administered what consolation I was able; and had his sufferings in illness been ten times what they were, I could not regret having watched over and laboured to relieve them; that, if he had married a richer wife, misfortunes and trials would no doubt have come upon him still; while I am egotist enough to imagine that no other woman could have cheered him through them so well—not that I am superior to the rest, but I was made for him, and he for me; and I can no more repent the hours, days, years of happiness we have spent together, and which neither could have had without the other, than I can the privilege of having been his nurse in sickness and his comfort in affliction.

"Will this do, children? or shall I say we are all very sorry for what has happened during the last thirty years, and my daughters wish they had never been born; but since they have had that misfortune, they will be thankful for any trifle their grandpapa will be kind enough to bestow?"

Of course we both applauded our mother's resolution. Mary cleared away the breakfast things, I brought the desk; the letter was quickly written and dispatched; and from that day we heard no more of our grandfather, till we saw his death announced in the newspaper a considerable time after—all his worldly possessions, of course, being left to our wealthy, unknown cousins.

CHAPTER XX

THE FAREWELL.

A HOUSE in A——, the fashionable watering-place, was hired for our seminary, and a promise of two or three pupils was obtained to commence with. I returned to Horton Lodge about the middle of July, leaving my mother to conclude the bargain for the house, to obtain more pupils, to sell off the furniture of our old abode, and to fit out the new one.

We often pity the poor because they have no leisure to mourn their departed relatives, and necessity obliges them to labour through their severest afflictions; but is not active employment the best remedy for overwhelming sorrow, the surest antidote for despair? It may be a rough comforter, it may seem hard to be harassed with the cares of life when we have no relish for its enjoyments, to be goaded to labour when the heart is ready to break, and the vexed spirit implores for rest only to weep in silence; but is not labour better than the rest we covet? and are not those petty, tormenting cares less hurtful than a continual brooding over the great affliction that oppresses us? Besides, we cannot have cares, and anxieties, and toil, without hope—if it be but the hope of fulfilling our joyless task, accomplishing some needful project, or escaping some further annoyance. At any rate, I was glad my mother had so much employment for every faculty of her action-loving frame. Our kind neighbours lamented that she, once so exalted in wealth and station, should be reduced to such extremity in her time of sorrow; but I am persuaded that she would have suffered thrice as much had she been left in affluence, with liberty to remain in that house, the scene of her early happiness and late affliction, and no stern necessity to prevent her from incessantly brooding over and lamenting her bereavement.

I will not dilate upon the feelings with which I left the old house, the well-known garden, the little village church—then doubly dear to me, because my father, who, for thirty years, had taught and prayed within its walls, lay slumbering now beneath its flags—and the old bare hills, delightful in their very desolation, with the narrow vales between, smiling in green wood and sparkling water, the house where I was born, the scene of all my early associations, the place where throughout life my earthly affections had been centred,—and left them to return no more. True, I was going back to Horton Lodge, where, amid many evils, one source of pleasure yet remained; but it was pleasure mingled with excessive pain, and my stay, alas! was limited to six weeks. And even of that precious time day after day slipped by and I did not see him. Except at church, I never saw him for a fortnight after my return. It seemed a long time to me; and as I was often out with my rambling pupil, of course hopes would keep rising, and disappointments would ensue; and then I would say to my own heart, "Here is a convincing proof—if you would but have the sense to see it or the candour to acknowledge it—that he does not care for you. If he only thought *half* as much about you as you do about him, he would have contrived to meet you many times ere this. You must know that by consulting your own feelings. Therefore have done with this nonsense. You have no ground for hope. Dismiss at once these hurtful thoughts and foolish wishes from your mind, and turn to your own duty and the dull, blank life that lies before you. You might have *known* such happiness was not for you."

But I saw him at last. He came suddenly upon me as I was crossing a field in returning from a visit to Nancy Brown, which I had taken the opportunity of paying while Matilda Murray was riding her matchless mare. He must have heard of the heavy loss I had sustained.

He expressed no sympathy, offered no condolence, but almost the first words he uttered were, "How is your mother?" And this was no matter-of-course question, for I never told him that I *had* a mother. He must have learned the fact from others, if he knew it at all; and besides, there was sincere good-will, and even deep, touching, unobtrusive sympathy in the tone and manner of the inquiry. I thanked him with due civility, and told him she was as well as could be expected. "What will she do?" was the next question. Many would have deemed it an impertinent one, and given an evasive reply; but such an idea never entered my head, and I gave a brief but plain statement of mother's plans and prospects.

"Then you will leave this place shortly?" said he.

"Yes, in a month."

He paused a minute, as if in thought. When he spoke again, I hoped it would be to express his concern at my departure, but it was only to say, "I should think you will be willing enough to go?"

"Yes—for some things," I replied.

"For *some* things only. I wonder what should make you regret it!"

I *was* annoyed at this in some degree, because it embarrassed me. I had only one reason for regretting it, and that was a profound secret, which he had no business to trouble me about.

"Why," said I—"why should you suppose that I dislike the place?"

"You told me so yourself," was the decisive reply. "You said, at least, that you could not live contentedly without a friend, and that you had no friend here, and no possibility of making one; and besides, I know you *must* dislike it."

"But if you remember rightly I said, or meant to say, I could not live contentedly without a friend in the *world*. I was not so unreasonable as to require one always near me. I think I could be happy in a house full of enemies, if——" But no, that sentence must not be continued. I paused, and hastily added, "And besides, we cannot well leave a place where we have lived for two or three years without some feeling of regret."

"Will you regret to part with Miss Murray, your sole remaining pupil and companion?"

"I dare say I shall in some degree. It was not without sorrow I parted with her sister."

"I can imagine that."

"Well, Miss Matilda is quite as good—better, in one respect."

"What is that?"

"She's honest."

"And the other is not?

"I should not call her *dis*honest; but it must be confessed she's a little artful."

"*Artful* is she? I saw she was giddy and vain. And now," he added, after a pause, "I can well believe she was artful too, but so excessively so as to assume an aspect of extreme simplicity and unguarded openness. Yes," continued he musingly, "that accounts for some little things that puzzled me a trifle before."

After that he turned the conversation to more general subjects. He did not leave me till we had nearly reached the park gates. He had certainly stepped a little cut of his way to accompany me so far, for he now went back and disappeared down Moss Lane, the entrance of which we had passed some time before. Assuredly I did not regret this circumstance. If sorrow had any place in my heart, it was that he was gone at last, that he was no longer walking by my side, and that that short interval of delightful intercourse was at an end. He had not breathed a word of love, or dropped one hint of tenderness or affection, and yet I had been supremely happy. To be near him, to hear him talk as he did talk, and to feel that he thought me worthy to be so spoken to—capable of understanding and duly appreciating such discourse—was enough.

"Yes, Edward Weston, I could indeed be happy in a house full of enemies if I had but one friend who truly, deeply, and faithfully loved me; and if that friend were you, though we might be far apart, seldom to hear from each other, still more seldom to meet, though toil, and trouble, and vexation might surround me, still—— It would be too much happiness for me to dream of! Yet who can tell," said I within myself, as I proceeded up the park—"who can tell what this one month may bring forth? I have lived nearly three-and-twenty years, and I have suffered much, and tasted little pleasure yet. Is it likely my life all through will be so clouded? Is it not possible that God may hear my prayers, disperse these gloomy shadows, and grant me some beams of heaven's sunshine yet? Will He entirely deny to me those blessings which are so freely given to others, who neither ask them nor acknowledge them when received? May I not still hope and trust?" I did hope and trust for a while, but alas, alas! the time ebbed away. One week followed another, and, excepting one distant glimpse and two transient meetings—during which scarcely anything was said—while I was walking with Miss Matilda, I saw nothing of him, except, of course, at church.

And now the last Sunday was come, and the last service. I was often on the point of melting into tears during the sermon—the last I was to hear from him, the best I should hear from any one, I was well assured. It was over; the congregation were departing, and I must follow. I had then seen him, and heard his voice too, probably for the last time. In the churchyard Matilda was pounced upon by the two Misses Green. They had many inquiries to make about her sister, and I know not what besides. I only wished they would have done, that we might hasten back to Horton Lodge. I longed to seek the retirement of my own room, or some sequestered nook in the grounds, that I might deliver myself up to my feelings—to weep my last farewell, and lament my false hopes and vain delusions. Only this once, and then adieu to fruitless dreaming; thenceforth only sober, solid, sad reality should occupy my mind. But while I thus resolved, a low voice close beside me said, "I suppose you are going this week, Miss Grey?"

"Yes," I replied.

I was very much startled, and had I been at all hysterically inclined, I certainly should have committed myself in some way then. Thank God I was not.

"Well," said Mr. Weston, "I want to bid you good-bye. It is not likely I shall see you again before you go."

"Good-bye, Mr. Weston," I said. Oh, how I struggled to say it calmly! I gave him my hand. He retained it a few seconds in his.

"It is possible we may meet again," said he. "Will it be of any consequence to you whether we do or not?"

"Yes, I should be very glad to see you again."

I *could* say no less. He kindly pressed my hand, and went. Now I was happy again, though more inclined to burst into tears than ever. If I had been forced to speak at that moment, a succession of sobs would have inevitably ensued; and as it was, I could not keep the water out of my eyes. I walked along with Miss Murray, turning aside my face, and neglecting to notice several successive remarks, till she bawled out that I was either deaf or stupid; and then, having recovered my self-possession, as one awakened from a fit of abstraction, I suddenly looked up and asked what she had been saying.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SCHOOL.

I LEFT Horton Lodge, and went to join my mother in our new abode at A——. I found her well in health, resigned in spirit, and even cheerful, though subdued and sober, in her general demeanour. We had only three boarders and half a dozen day-pupils to commence with, but by due care and diligence we hoped ere long to increase the number of both.

I set myself with befitting energy to discharge the duties of this new mode of life. I call it *new*, for there was, indeed, a considerable difference between working with my mother in a school of our own and working as a hireling among strangers, despised and trampled upon by old and young; and for the first few weeks I was by no means unhappy. "It is possible we may meet again," and "Will it be of any consequence to you whether we do or not?" Those words still rang in my ear and rested on my heart; they were my secret solace and support. "I shall see him again. He will come, or he will write." No promise, in fact, was too bright or too extravagant for Hope to whisper in my ear. I did not believe half of what she told me—I pretended to laugh at it all; but I was far more credulous than I myself supposed. Otherwise, why did my heart leap up when a knock was heard at the front door, and the maid, who opened it, came to tell my mother a gentleman wished to see her? and why was I out of humour for the rest of the day because it proved to be a music-master come to offer his services to our school? and what stopped my breath for a moment when the postman, having brought a couple of letters, my mother said, "Here, Agnes; this is for you," and threw one of them to me? and what made the hot blood rush into my face when I saw it was directed in a gentleman's hand? and why, oh why, did that cold, sickening sense of disappointment fall upon me when I had torn open the cover and found it was *only* a letter from Mary, which, for some reason or other, her husband had directed for her?

Was it then come to this—that I should be *disappointed* to receive a letter from my only sister, and because it was not written by a comparative stranger? Dear Mary! And she had written it so kindly, and thinking I should be so pleased to have it! I was not worthy to read it. And I believe, in my indignation against myself, I should have put it aside till I had schooled myself into a better frame of mind, and was become more deserving of the honour and privilege of its perusal. But there was my mother looking on, and wishful to know what news it contained; so I read it and delivered it to her, and then went into the schoolroom to attend to the pupils. But amidst the cares of copies and sums, in the intervals of correcting errors here and reproving derelictions of duty there, I was inwardly taking myself to task with far sterner severity. "What a fool you must be!" said my head to my heart, or my sterner to my softer self. "How could you ever dream that he would write to *you?* What grounds have you for such a hope, or that he will see you, or give himself any trouble about you, or even think of you again?" "What grounds?" And then Hope set before me that last short interview, and repeated the words I had so faithfully treasured in my memory. "Well, and what was there in that? Who ever hung his hopes upon so frail a twig? What was there in those words that any common acquaintance might not say to another? Of course it was possible you might meet again. He might have said so if you had been going to New Zealand; but that did not imply any *intention* of seeing you. And then, as to the question that followed, any one might ask that. And how did you answer? Merely with a stupid, commonplace reply, such as you would have given to Master Murray, or any one else you had been on tolerably civil terms with." "But then," persisted Hope, "the tone and manner in which he spoke." "Oh, that is nonsense! He always speaks impressively; and at that moment there were the Greens and Miss Matilda Murray just before, and other people passing by, and he was obliged to stand close beside you, and to speak very low, unless he wished everybody to hear what he said, which, though it was nothing at all particular, of course he would rather not." "But then, above all, that emphatic yet gentle pressure of the hand, which seemed to say, '*Trust me*,' and many other things besides, too delightful, almost too flattering, to be repeated, even to one's self." "Egregious folly—too absurd to require contradiction—mere inventions of the imagination, which you ought to be ashamed of. If you would but consider your own unattractive exterior, your unamiable reserve, your foolish diffidence—

which must make you appear cold, dull, awkward, and perhaps ill-tempered too—if you had but rightly considered these from the beginning, you would never have harboured such presumptuous thoughts; and now that you have been so foolish, pray repent and amend, and let us have no more of it."

I cannot say that I implicitly obeyed my own injunctions, but such reasoning as this became more and more effective as time wore on, and nothing was seen or heard of Mr. Weston, until at last I gave up hoping, for even my heart acknowledged it was all in vain. But still I would think of him; I would cherish his image in my mind, and treasure every word, look, and gesture that my memory could retain, and brood over his excellences and his peculiarities, and, in fact, all I had seen, heard, or imagined respecting him.

"Agnes, this sea air and change of scene do *you* no good, I think; I never saw you look so wretched. It must be that you sit too much, and allow the cares of the schoolroom to worry you. You must learn to take things easy, and to be more active and cheerful. You must take exercise whenever you can get it, and leave the most tiresome duties to me. They will only serve to exercise my patience, and, perhaps, try my temper a little."

So said my mother as we sat at work one morning during the Easter holidays. I assured her that my employments were not at all oppressive, that I was well, or, if there was anything amiss, it would be gone as soon as the trying months of spring were over. When summer came I should be as strong and hearty as she could wish to see me; but inwardly her observation startled me. I knew my strength was declining, my appetite had failed, and I was grown listless and desponding; and if, indeed, he could never care for me, and I could never see him more—if I was forbidden to minister to his happiness, forbidden for ever to taste the joys of love, to bless and to be blessed—then life must be a burden; and if my Heavenly Father would call me away, I should be glad to rest. But it would not do to die and leave my mother. Selfish, unworthy daughter, to forget her for a moment! Was not her happiness committed in a great measure to my charge, and the welfare of our young pupils too? Should I shrink from the work that God had set before me, because it was not fitted to my taste? Did not He know best what I should do, and where I ought to labour? and should I long to quit His service before I had finished my task, and expect to enter into His rest without having laboured to earn it? "No; by His help I will arise and address myself diligently to my appointed duty. If happiness in this world is not for me, I will endeavour to promote the welfare of those around me, and my reward shall be hereafter." So said I in my heart; and from that hour I only permitted my thoughts to wander to Edward Weston—or at least to dwell upon him now and then—as a treat for rare occasions; and whether it was really the approach of summer, or the effect of these good resolutions, or the lapse of time, or all together, tranquillity of mind was soon restored, and bodily health and vigour began likewise slowly but surely to return.

Early in June I received a letter from Lady Ashby, late Miss Murray. She had written to me twice or thrice before, from the different stages of her bridal tour, always in good spirits, and professing to be very happy. I wondered every time that she had not forgotten me, in the midst of so much gaiety and variety of scene. At length, however, there was a pause; and it seemed she had forgotten me, for upwards of seven months passed away, and no letter. Of course I did not break my heart about *that*, though I often wondered how she was getting on; and when this last epistle so unexpectedly arrived, I was glad enough to receive it. It was dated from Ashby Park, where she was come to settle down at last, having previously divided her time between the Continent and the metropolis. She made many apologies for having neglected me so long, assured me she had not forgotten me, and had often intended to write, etc., but had always been prevented by something. She acknowledged that she had been leading a very dissipated life, and I should think her very wicked and very thoughtless; but notwithstanding that, she thought a great deal, and, among other things, that she should vastly like to see me. "We have been several days here already," wrote she. "We have not a single friend with us, and are likely to be very dull. You know I never had a fancy for living with my husband like two turtles in a nest, were he the most delightful creature that ever wore a coat; so do take pity upon me and come. I suppose your midsummer holidays commence in June, the same as other people's, therefore you cannot plead want of time; and you must and shall come—in fact, I shall die if you don't. I want you to visit me as a *friend*, and stay a long time. There is nobody with me, as I told you before, but Sir Thomas and old Lady Ashby; but you needn't mind them—they'll trouble us but little with their company. And you shall have a room to yourself, whenever you like to retire to it, and plenty of books to read when my company is not sufficiently amusing. I forget whether you like babies. If you do, you may have the pleasure of seeing mine—the most charming child in the world, no doubt, and all the more so that I am not troubled with nursing it. I was determined I wouldn't be bothered with that. Unfortunately it is a girl, and Sir Thomas has never forgiven me; but, however, if you will only come, I promise you shall be its governess as soon as it can speak, and you shall bring it up in the way it should go, and make a better woman of it than its mamma. And you shall see my poodle, too—a splendid little charmer imported from Paris; and two fine Italian paintings of great value (I forget the artist)—doubtless you will be able to discover prodigious beauties in them, which you must point out to me, as I only admire by hearsay; and many elegant curiosities besides, which I purchased at Rome and elsewhere; and finally, you shall see my new home—the splendid house and grounds I used to covet so greatly. Alas! how far the promise of anticipation exceeds the pleasure of possession! There's a fine sentiment! I assure you I am become quite a grave old matron. Pray come, if it be only to witness the wonderful change. Write by return of post, and tell me when your vacation commences, and say that you will come the day after, and stay till the day before it closes—in mercy to Yours affectionately,

"ROSALIE ASHBY."

I showed this strange epistle to my mother, and consulted her on what I ought to do. She advised me to go; and I went, willing enough to see Lady Ashby, and her baby too, and to do anything I could to benefit her, by consolation or advice—for I imagined she must be unhappy, or she would not have applied to me thus—but feeling, as may readily be conceived, that, in accepting the invitation, I made a great sacrifice for her, and did violence to my feelings in many ways, instead of being delighted with the honourable distinction of being entreated by the baronet's lady to visit her as a friend. However, I determined my visit should be only for a few days at most; and I will not deny that I derived some consolation from the idea that, as Ashby Park was not very far from Horton, I might possibly see Mr. Weston, or, at least, hear something about him.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE VISIT.

ASHBY PARK was certainly a very delightful residence. The mansion was stately without, commodious and elegant within; the park was spacious and beautiful, chiefly on account of its magnificent old trees, its stately herds of deer, its broad sheet of water, and the ancient woods that stretched beyond it—for there was no broken ground to give variety to the landscape, and but very little of that undulating swell which adds so greatly to the charm of park scenery. And so this was the place Rosalie Murray had so longed to call her own, that she must have a share of it, on whatever terms it might be offered, whatever price was to be paid for the title of mistress, and whoever was to be her partner in the honour and bliss of such a possession! Well, I am not disposed to censure her now.

She received me very kindly; and though I was a poor clergyman's daughter, a governess, and a schoolmistress, she welcomed me with unaffected pleasure to her home, and, what surprised me rather, took some pains to make my visit agreeable. I could see, it is true, that she expected me to be greatly struck with the magnificence that surrounded her; and I confess I was rather annoyed at her evident efforts to reassure me, and prevent me from being overwhelmed by so much grandeur—too much awed at the idea of encountering her husband and mother-in-law, or too much ashamed of my own humble appearance. I was not ashamed of it at all; for, though plain, I had taken good care not to be shabby or mean, and should have been pretty considerably at my ease, if my condescending hostess had not taken such manifest pains to make me so; and as for the magnificence that surrounded her, nothing that met my eyes struck me or affected me half so much as her own altered appearance. Whether from the influence of fashionable dissipation, or some other evil, a space of little more than twelve months had had the effect that might be expected from as many years, in reducing the plumpness of her form, the freshness of her complexion, the vivacity of her movements, and the exuberance of her spirits.

I wished to know if she was unhappy, but I felt it was not my province to inquire. I might endeavour to win her confidence, but if she chose to conceal her matrimonial cares from me, I would trouble her with no obtrusive questions. I therefore, at first, confined myself to a few general inquiries about her health and welfare, and a few commendations on the beauty of the park, and of the little girl that should have been a boy—a small, delicate infant of seven or eight weeks old, whom its mother seemed to regard with no remarkable degree of interest or affection, though full as much as I expected her to show.

Shortly after my arrival she commissioned her maid to conduct me to my room and see that I had everything I wanted. It was a small, unpretending, but sufficiently comfortable apartment. When I descended thence—having divested myself of all travelling encumbrances, and arranged my toilet with due consideration for the feelings of my lady hostess—she conducted me herself to the room I was to occupy when I chose to be alone, or when she was engaged with visitors, or obliged to be with her mother-in-law, or otherwise prevented, as she said, from enjoying the pleasure of my society. It was a quiet, tidy little sitting-room, and I was not sorry to be provided with such a harbour of refuge.

"And some time," said she, "I will show you the library. I never examined its shelves, but I dare say it is full of wise books; and you may go and burrow among them whenever you please. And now you shall have some tea. It will soon be dinner-time, but I thought, as you were accustomed to dine at one, you would perhaps like better to have a cup of tea about this time, and to dine when we lunch; and then, you know, you can have your tea in this room, and that will save you from having to dine with Lady Ashby and Sir Thomas, which would be rather awkward—at least, not awkward, but rather—a—you know what I mean. I thought you mightn't like it so well—especially as we may have other ladies and gentlemen to dine with us occasionally.

"Certainly," said I, "I would much rather have it as you say; and if you have no objection I should prefer having all my meals in this room."

"Why so?"

"Because, I imagine, it would be more agreeable to Lady Ashby and Sir Thomas."

"Nothing of the kind."

"At any rate, it would be more agreeable to me."

She made some faint objections, but soon conceded; and I could see that the proposal was a considerable relief to her.

"Now, come into the drawing-room," said she. "There's the dressing-bell; but I won't go yet. It's no use dressing when there's no one to see you; and I want to have a little discourse."

The drawing-room was certainly an imposing apartment, and very elegantly furnished; but I saw its young mistress glance towards me as we entered, as if to notice how I was impressed by the spectacle, and accordingly I determined to preserve an aspect of stony indifference, as if I saw nothing at all remarkable. But this was only for a moment. Immediately conscience whispered, "Why should I disappoint her to save my pride? No, rather let me sacrifice my pride to give her a little innocent gratification." And I honestly looked round, and told her it was a noble room, and very tastefully furnished. She said little, but I saw she was pleased.

She showed me her fat French poodle, that lay curled up on a silk cushion, and the two fine Italian paintings—which, however, she would not give me time to examine, but, saying I must look at them some other day, insisted upon my admiring the little jewelled watch she had purchased in Geneva; and then she took me round the room to point out sundry articles of *vertu* she had brought from Italy—an elegant little timepiece, and several busts, small graceful figures, and vases, all beautifully carved in white marble. She spoke of these with animation, and heard my admiring comments with a smile of pleasure. That soon, however, vanished, and was followed by a melancholy sigh, as if in consideration of the insufficiency of all such baubles to the happiness of the human heart, and their woeful inability to supply its insatiate demands.

Then, stretching herself upon a couch, she motioned me to a capacious easy-chair that stood opposite—not before the fire, but before a wide-open window (for it was summer, be it remembered—a sweet, warm evening in the latter half of June). I sat for a moment in silence, enjoying the still, pure air and the delightful prospect of the park that lay before me, rich in verdure and foliage, and basking in yellow sunshine, relieved by the long shadows of declining day. But I must take advantage of this pause. I had inquiries to make, and, like the substance of a lady's postscript, the most important must come last. So I began with asking after Mr. and Mrs. Murray, and Miss Matilda, and the young gentlemen.

I was told that papa had the gout, which made him very ferocious, and that he would not give up his choice wines and his substantial dinners and suppers, and had quarrelled with his physician, because the latter had dared to say that no medicine could cure him while he lived so freely; that mamma and the rest were well. Matilda was still wild and reckless, but she had got a fashionable governess, and was considerably improved in her manners, and soon to be introduced to the world; and John and Charles (now at home for the holidays) were, by all accounts, "fine, bold, unruly, mischievous boys."

"And how are the other people getting on?" said I—"the Greens, for instance?"

"Ah! Mr. Green is heartbroken, you know," replied she, with a languid smile. "He hasn't got over his disappointment yet, and never will, I suppose. He's doomed to be an old bachelor; and his sisters are doing their best to get married."

"And the Melthams?"

"Oh, they're jogging on as usual, I suppose; but I know very little about any of them, except Harry," said she, blushing slightly, and smiling again. "I saw a great deal of him while we were in London; for, as soon as he heard we were there, he came up under pretence of visiting his brother, and either followed me like a shadow wherever I went, or met me, like a reflection, at every turn. You needn't look so shocked, Miss Grey. I was very discreet, I assure you; but, you know, one can't help being admired. Poor fellow! He was not my only worshipper, though he was certainly the most conspicuous, and, I think, the most devoted among them all. And that detestable—ahem—and Sir Thomas chose to take offence at him, or my profuse expenditure, or something—I don't exactly know what—and hurried me down to the country at a moment's notice, where I'm to play the hermit, I suppose, for life."

And she bit her lip, and frowned vindictively upon the fair domain she had once so coveted to call her own.

"And Mr. Hatfield," said I—"what is become of him?"

Again she brightened up, and answered gaily,—

"Oh, he made up to an elderly spinster, and married her, not long since, weighing her heavy purse against her faded charms, and expecting to find that solace in gold which was denied him in love—ha, ha!"

"Well, and I think that's all, except Mr. Weston. What is he doing?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. He's gone from Horton."

"How long since? and where is he gone to?"

"I know nothing about him," replied she, yawning, "except that he went about a month ago. I never asked where." (I would have asked whether it was to a living, or merely another curacy, but thought it better not.) "And the people made a great rout about his leaving," continued she, "much to Mr. Hatfield's displeasure; for Hatfield didn't like him, because he had too much influence with the common people, and because he was not sufficiently tractable and submissive to him, and for some other unpardonable sins—I don't know what. But now I positively must go and dress. The second bell will ring directly, and if I come to dinner in this guise I shall never hear the end of it from Lady Ashby. It's a strange thing one can't be mistress in one's own house! Just ring the bell, and I'll send for my maid, and tell them to get you some tea. Only think of that intolerable woman——"

"Who? Your maid?"

"No; my mother-in-law. And my unfortunate mistake! Instead of letting her take herself off to some other house, as she offered to do when I married, I was fool enough to ask her to live here still, and direct the affairs of the house for me, because, in the first place, I hoped we should spend the greater part of the year in town, and in the second place, being so young and inexperienced, I was frightened at the idea of having a houseful of servants to manage, and dinners to order, and parties to entertain, and all the rest of it, and I thought she might assist me with her experience—never dreaming she would prove a usurper, a tyrant, an incubus, a spy, and everything else that's detestable. I wish she was dead!"

She then turned to give her orders to the footman, who had been standing bolt upright within the door for the last half minute, and had heard the latter part of her animadversions, and, of course, made his own reflections upon them, notwithstanding the inflexible, wooden countenance he thought proper to preserve in the drawing-room. On my remarking afterwards that he must have heard her, she replied,—

"Oh, no matter! I never care about the footmen; they're mere automatons. It's nothing to them what their superiors say or do; they won't dare to repeat it. And as to what they think—if they presume to think at all—of course nobody cares for that. It would be a pretty thing indeed if we were to be tongue-tied by our servants."

So saying, she ran off to make her hasty toilet, leaving me to pilot my way back to my sitting-room, where, in due time, I was served with a cup of tea. After that I sat musing on Lady Ashby's past and present condition, and on what little information I had obtained respecting Mr. Weston, and the small chance there was of ever seeing or hearing anything more of him throughout my quiet, drab-colour life, which henceforth seemed to offer no alternative between positive rainy days and days of dull gray clouds without downfall. At length, however, I began to weary of my thoughts, and to wish I knew where to find the library my hostess had spoken of, and to wonder whether I was to remain there doing nothing till bedtime.

As I was not rich enough to possess a watch, I could not tell how time was passing, except by observing the slowly lengthening shadows from the window, which presented a side view, including a corner of the park, a clump of trees, whose topmost branches had been colonized by an innumerable company of noisy rooks, and a high wall with a massive wooden gate, no doubt communicating with the stable-yard, as a broad carriage-road swept up to it from the park. The shadow of this wall soon took possession of the whole of the ground as far as I could see, forcing the golden sunlight to retreat inch by inch, and at last take refuge in the very tops of the trees. Ere long even they were left in shadow—the shadow of the distant hills, or of the earth itself; and in sympathy for the busy citizens of the rookery, I regretted to see their habitation, so lately bathed in glorious light, reduced to the sombre, workaday hue of the lower world, or of my own world within. For a moment such birds as soared above the rest might still receive the lustre on their wings, which imparted to their sable plumage the hue and brilliance of deep red gold. At last that too departed. Twilight came stealing on; the rooks became more quiet; I became more weary, and wished I were going home to-morrow. At length it grew dark, and I was thinking of ringing for a candle, and betaking myself to bed, when my hostess appeared, with many apologies for having neglected me so long, and laying all the blame upon that "nasty old woman," as she called her mother-in-law.

"If I didn't sit with her in the drawing-room while Sir Thomas is taking his wine," said she, "she would never forgive me; and then, if I leave the room the instant he comes—as I have done once or twice—it is an unpardonable offence against her dear Thomas. *She* never showed such disrespect to *her* husband; and as for affection, wives never think of that nowadays, she supposes. But things were different in *her* time. As if there was any good to be done by staying in the room, when he does nothing but grumble and scold when he's in a bad humour, talk disgusting nonsense when he's in a good one, and go to sleep on the sofa when he's too stupid for either, which is most frequently the case now, when he has nothing to do but to sot over his wine."

"But could you not try to occupy his mind with something better, and engage him to give up such habits? I'm sure you have powers of persuasion and qualifications for amusing a gentleman which many ladies would be glad to possess."

"And so you think I would lay myself out for his amusement! No; that's not *my* idea of a wife. It's the husband's part to please the wife, not hers to please him; and if he isn't satisfied with her as she is, and thankful to possess her too, he isn't worthy of her—that's all. And as for persuasion, I assure you I shan't trouble myself with that. I've enough to do to bear with him as he is, without attempting to work a reform. But I'm sorry I left you so long alone, Miss Grey. How have you passed the time?"

"Chiefly in watching the rooks."

"Mercy! how dull you must have been! I really must show you the library; and you must ring for everything you want, just as you would in an inn, and make yourself comfortable. I have selfish reasons for wishing to make you happy, because I want you to stay with me, and not fulfil your horrid threat of running away in a day or two."

"Well, don't let me keep you out of the drawing-room any longer to-night, for at present I am tired, and wish to go to bed."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PARK.

I CAME down a little before eight next morning, as I knew by the striking of a distant clock. There was no appearance of breakfast. I waited above an hour before it came, still vainly longing for access to the library; and after that lonely repast was concluded, I waited again about an hour and a half in great suspense and discomfort, uncertain what to do. At length Lady Ashby came to bid me good-morning. She informed me she had only just breakfasted, and now wanted me to take an early walk with her in the park. She asked how long I had been up, and on receiving my answer expressed the deepest regret, and again promised to show me the library. I suggested she had better do so at once, and then there would be no further trouble either with remembering or forgetting. She complied, on condition that I would not think of reading, or bothering with the books now; for she wanted to show me the gardens, and take a walk in the park with me, before it became too hot for enjoyment—which, indeed, was nearly the case already. Of course I readily assented, and we took our walk accordingly.

As we were strolling in the park, talking of what my companion had seen and heard during her travelling experience, a gentleman on horseback rode up and passed us. As he turned, in passing, and stared me full in the face, I had a good opportunity of seeing what he was like. He was tall, thin, and wasted, with a slight stoop in the shoulders, a pale face, but somewhat blotchy and disagreeably red about the eyelids, plain features, and a general appearance of languor and flatness, relieved by a sinister expression in the mouth and the dull, soulless eyes.

"I detest that man!" whispered Lady Ashby, with bitter emphasis as he slowly trotted by.

"Who is it?" I asked, unwilling to suppose that she should so speak of her husband.

"Sir Thomas Ashby," she replied, with dreary composure.

"And do you *detest* him, Miss Murray?" said I, for I was too much shocked to remember her name at the moment.

"Yes, I do, Miss Grey, and despise him too; and if you knew him you would not blame me."

"But you knew what he was before you married him."

"No; I only thought so. I did not half know him really. I know you warned me against it, and I wish I had listened to you; but it's too late to regret that now. And besides, mamma ought to have known better than either of us, and she never said anything against it—quite the contrary. And then I thought he adored me, and would let me have my own way. He did pretend to do so at first, but now he does not care a bit about me. Yet I should not care for that. He might do as he pleased, if I might only be free to amuse myself and to stay in London, or have a few friends down here. But *he will* do as he pleases, and I must be a prisoner and a slave. The moment he saw I could enjoy myself without him, and that others knew my value better than himself, the selfish wretch began to accuse me of coquetry and extravagance, and to abuse Harry Meltham, whose shoes he was not worthy to clean. And then he must needs have me down in the country, to lead the life of a nun, lest I should dishonour him or bring him to ruin, —as if he had not been ten times worse every way, with his betting-book, and his gaming-table, and his opera girls, and his Lady This and Mrs. That—yes, and his bottles of wine, and glasses of brandy and water too! Oh, I would give ten thousand worlds to be Miss Murray again! It is *too* bad to feel life, health, and beauty wasting away, unfelt and unenjoyed, for such a brute as that!" exclaimed she, fairly bursting into tears in the bitterness of her vexation.

Of course I pitied her exceedingly, as well for her false idea of happiness and disregard of duty as for the wretched partner with whom her fate was linked. I said what I could to comfort her, and offered such counsels as I thought she most required—advising her, first, by gentle reasoning, by kindness, example, and persuasion, to try to ameliorate her husband; and then, when she had done all she could, if she still found him incorrigible, to endeavour to abstract herself from him—to wrap herself up in her own integrity, and trouble herself as little about him as possible. I exhorted her to seek consolation in doing her duty to God and man, to put her trust in Heaven, and solace herself with the care and nurture of her little daughter, assuring her she would be amply rewarded by witnessing its progress in strength and wisdom, and receiving its genuine affection.

"But I can't devote myself entirely to a child," said she. "It may die—which is not at all improbable."

"But, with care, many a delicate infant has become a strong man or woman."

"But it may grow so intolerably like its father that I shall hate it."

"That is not likely. It is a little girl, and strongly resembles its mother."

"No matter; I should like it better if it were a boy—only that its father will leave it no inheritance that he can possibly squander away. What pleasure can I have in seeing a girl grow up to eclipse me, and enjoy those pleasures that I am for ever debarred from? But supposing I could be so generous as to take delight in this, still it is *only* a child; and I can't centre all my hopes in a child. That is only one degree better than devoting oneself to a dog. And as for all the wisdom and goodness you have been trying to instil into me, that is all very right and proper, I dare say, and if I were some twenty years older I might fructify by it; but people must enjoy themselves when they are young, and if others won't let them, why, they must hate them for it."

"The best way to enjoy yourself is to do what is right and hate nobody. The end of religion is not to teach us how to die, but how to live; and the earlier you become wise and good the more of happiness you secure. And now, Lady Ashby, I have one more piece of advice to offer you, which is, that you will not make an enemy of your mother-in-law. Don't get into the way of holding her at arm's length and regarding her with jealous distrust. I never saw her, but I have heard good as well as evil respecting her, and I imagine that, though cold and haughty in her general demeanour, and even exacting in her requirements, she has strong affections for those who can reach them; and though so blindly attached to her son, she is not without good principles, or incapable of hearing reason. If you would but conciliate her a little, and adopt a friendly, open manner, and even confide your grievances to her—*real* grievances, such as you have a right to complain of—it is my firm belief that she would in time become your faithful friend, and a comfort and support to you, instead of the incubus you describe her."

But I fear my advice had little effect upon the unfortunate young lady; and finding I could render myself so little serviceable, my residence at Ashby Park became doubly painful. But still I must stay out that day and the following one, as I had promised to do, though, resisting all entreaties and inducements to prolong my visit further, I insisted upon departing the next morning, affirming that my mother would be lonely without me, and that she impatiently expected my return. Nevertheless, it was with a heavy heart that I bade adieu to poor Lady Ashby, and left her in her princely home. It was no slight additional proof of her unhappiness that she should so cling to the consolation of my presence, and earnestly desire the company of one whose general tastes and ideas were so little congenial to her own—whom she had completely forgotten in her hours of prosperity, and whose presence would be rather a nuisance than a pleasure, if she could but have half her heart's desire.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SANDS.

OUR school was not situated in the heart of the town. On entering A—— from the north-west there is a row of respectable-looking houses on each side of the broad, white road, with narrow slips of garden-ground before them, Venetian blinds to the windows, and a flight of steps leading to each trim brass-handled door. In one of the largest of these habitations dwelt my mother and I, with such young ladies as our friends and the public chose to commit to our charge. Consequently we were a considerable distance from the sea, and divided from it by a labyrinth of streets and houses. But the sea was my delight, and I would often gladly pierce the town to obtain the pleasure of a walk beside it, whether with the pupils, or alone with my mother during the vacations. It was delightful to me at all times and seasons, but especially in the wild commotion of a rough sea-breeze and in the brilliant freshness of a summer morning.

I awoke early on the third morning after my return from Ashby Park. The sun was shining through the blind, and I thought how pleasant it would be to pass through the quiet town and take a solitary ramble on the sands while half the world was in bed. I was not long in forming the resolution nor slow to act upon it. Of course I would not disturb my mother, so I stole noiselessly downstairs, and quietly unfastened the door. I was dressed and out when the church clock struck a quarter to six. There was a feeling of freshness and vigour in the very streets, and when I got free of the town, when my foot was on the sands and my face towards the broad, bright bay, no language can describe the effect of the deep, clear azure of the sky and ocean, the bright morning sunshine on the semicircular barrier of craggy cliffs surmounted by green, swelling hills, and on the smooth, wide sands, and the low rocks out at sea, looking, with their clothing of weeds and moss, like little grass-grown islands, and, above all, on the brilliant, sparkling waves. And then the unspeakable purity and freshness of the air! There was just enough heat to enhance the value of the breeze, and just enough wind to keep the whole sea in motion, to make the waves come bounding to the shore, foaming and sparkling, as if wild with glee. Nothing else was stirring; no living creature was visible besides myself. My footsteps were the first to press the firm, unbroken sands. Nothing before had trampled them since last night's flowing tide had obliterated the deepest marks of yesterday, and left t fair and even, except where the subsiding water had eft behind it the traces of dimpled pools and little running streams.

Refreshed, delighted, invigorated, I walked along, forgetting all my cares, feeling as if I had wings to my feet, and could go at least forty miles without fatigue, and xperiencing a sense of exhilaration to which I had been n entire stranger since the days of early youth. About alf-past six, however, the grooms began to come down o air their masters' horses—first one, and then another, ill there were some dozen horses and five or six riders. But that need not trouble me, for they would not come s far as the low rocks which I was now approaching. When I had reached these, and walked over the moist, ippery seaweed (at the risk of floundering into one of e numerous pools of clear, salt water that lay between em) to a little mossy promontory with the sea splash- g round it, I looked back again to see who next was irring. Still there were only the early grooms with eir horses, and one gentleman with a little dark speck a dog running before him, and one water-cart coming t of the town to get water for the baths. In another inute or two the distant bathing-machines would begin move, and then the elderly gentlemen of regular bits, and sober Quaker ladies, would be coming to ke their salutary morning walks. But however in- esting such a scene might be, I could not wait to tness it, for the sun and the sea so dazzled my eyes in that direction that I could but afford one glance; and then I turned again to delight myself with the sight and the sound of the sea dashing against my promontory, with no prodigious force, for the swell was broken by the tangled seaweed and the unseen rocks beneath; otherwise I should soon have been deluged with spray. But the tide was coming in; the water was rising; the gulfs and lakes were filling; the straits were widening. It was time to seek some safer footing; so I walked, skipped, and stumbled back to the smooth, wide sands, and resolved to proceed to a certain bold projection in the cliffs, and then return.

Presently I heard a snuffling sound behind me, and then a dog came frisking and wriggling to my feet. It was my own Snap—the little, dark, wire-haired terrier! When I spoke his name he leapt up in my face and yelled for joy. Almost as much delighted as himself, I caught the little creature in my arms, and kissed him repeatedly. But how came he to be there? He could not have dropped from the sky or come all that way alone. It must be either his master, the rat-catcher, or somebody else that had brought him. So, repressing my extravagant caresses, and endeavouring to repress his likewise, I looked round, and beheld—Mr. Weston!

"Your dog remembers you well, Miss Grey," said he, warmly grasping the hand I offered him without clearly knowing what I was about. "You rise early."

"Not often so early as this," I replied, with amazing composure, considering all the circumstances of the case.

"How far do you purpose to extend your walk?"

"I was thinking of returning. It must be almost time, I think."

He consulted his watch—a gold one now—and told me it was only five minutes past seven.

"But doubtless you have had a long enough walk," said he, turning towards the town, to which I now proceeded leisurely to retrace my steps; and he walked beside me.

"In what part of the town do you live?" asked he. "I never could discover."

Never could discover! Had he endeavoured to do so, then? I told him the place of our abode. He asked how we prospered in our affairs. I told him we were doing very well—that we had had a considerable addition to our pupils after the Christmas vacation, and expected a still further increase at the close of this.

"You must be an accomplished instructor," he observed.

"No, it is my mother," I replied. "She manages things so well, and is so active, and clever, and kind."

"I should like to know your mother. Will you introduce me to her some time, if I call?"

"Yes, willingly."

"And will you allow me the privilege of an old friend, of looking in upon you now and then?"

"Yes, if—— I suppose so."

This was a very foolish answer, but the truth was, I considered that I had no right to invite any one to my mother's house without her knowledge; and if I had said, "Yes, if my mother does not object," it would appear as if by his question I understood more than was expected. So, *supposing* she would not, I added, "I suppose so." But of course I should have said something more sensible and more polite, if I had had my wits about me. We continued our walk for a minute in silence, which, however, was shortly relieved (no small relief to me) by Mr. Weston commenting upon the brightness of the morning and the beauty of the bay, and then upon the advantages A—— possessed over many other fashionable places of resort.

"You don't ask what brings me to A——," said he. "You can't suppose I'm rich enough to come for my own pleasure."

"I heard you had left Horton."

"You didn't hear, then, that I had got the living of F——?"

F—— was a village about two miles distant from A——.

"No," said I. "We live so completely out of the world, even here, that news seldom reaches me through any quarter, except through the medium of the —— *Gazette*. But I hope you like your new parish, and that I may congratulate you on the acquisition."

"I expect to like my parish better a year or two hence, when I have worked certain reforms I have set my heart upon—or, at least, progressed some steps towards such an achievement. But you may congratulate me now, for I find it very agreeable to *have* a parish all to myself, with nobody to interfere with me, to thwart my plans or cripple my exertions; and besides, I have a respectable house in a rather pleasant neighbourhood, and three hundred pounds a year; and, in fact, I have nothing but solitude to complain of, and nothing but a companion to wish for."

He looked at me as he concluded, and the flash of his dark eyes seemed to set my face on fire, greatly to my own discomfiture—for to evince confusion at such a juncture was intolerable. I made an effort, therefore, to remedy the evil, and disclaim all personal application of the remark by a hasty, ill-expressed reply to the effect that, if he waited till he was well known in the neighbourhood, he might have numerous opportunities for supplying his want among the residents of F—— and its vicinity, or the visitors of A——, if he required so ample a choice, not considering the compliment implied by such an assertion till his answer made me aware of it.

"I am not so presumptuous as to believe that," said he, "though you tell it me; but if it were so, I am rather particular in my notions of a companion for life, and perhaps I might not find one to suit me among the ladies you mention."

"If you require perfection, you never will."

"I do not. I have no right to require it, as being so far from perfect myself."

Here the conversation was interrupted by a water-cart lumbering past us, for we were now come to the busy part of the sands; and for the next eight or ten minutes, between carts and horses, and asses, and men, there was little room for social intercourse till we had turned our backs upon the sea, and began to ascend the precipitous road leading into the town. Here my companion offered me his arm, which I accepted, though not with the intention of using it as a support.

"You don't often come on to the sands, I think," said he, "for I have walked there many times, both morning and evening, since I came, and never seen you till now; and several times, in passing through the town, too, I have looked about for your school, but I did not think of the —— Road; and once or twice I made inquiries, but without obtaining the requisite information."

When we had surmounted the acclivity I was about to withdraw my arm from his, but by a slight tightening of the elbow was tacitly informed that such was not his will, and accordingly desisted. Discoursing on different ubjects, we entered the town, and passed through several treets. I saw that he was going out of his way to accompany me, notwithstanding the long walk that was yet before him, and fearing that he might be inconveniencing himself from motives of politeness, I observed,—

"I fear I am taking you out of your way, Mr. Weston. believe the road to F—— lies quite in another direction."

"I'll leave you at the end of the next street," said he.

"And when will you come to see mamma?"

"To-morrow, God willing."

The end of the next street was nearly the conclusion f my journey. He stopped there, however, bade me ood-morning, and called Snap, who seemed a little oubtful whether to follow his old mistress or his new master, but trotted away upon being summoned by the tter.

"I won't offer to restore him to you, Miss Grey," aid Mr. Weston, smiling, "because I like him."

"Oh, I don't want him," replied I, "now that he has a good master. I'm quite satisfied."

"You take it for granted that I *am* a good one, then?"

The man and the dog departed, and I returned home, full of gratitude to Heaven for so much bliss, and praying that my hopes might not again be crushed.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCLUSION.

"WELL, Agnes, you must not take such long walks again before breakfast," said my mother, observing that I drank an extra cup of coffee and ate nothing, pleading the heat of the weather and the fatigue of my long walk as an excuse. I certainly did feel feverish, and tired too.

"You always do things by extremes. Now, if you had taken a *short* walk every morning, and would continue to do so, it would do you good."

"Well, mamma, I will."

"But this is worse than lying in bed or bending over your books. You have quite put yourself into a fever."

"I won't do it again," said I.

I was racking my brains with thinking how to tell her about Mr. Weston, for she must know he was coming to-morrow. However, I waited till the breakfast things were removed, and I was more calm and cool; and then, having sat down to my drawing, I began,—

"I met an old friend on the sands to-day, mamma."

"An old friend! Who could it be?"

"Two old friends, indeed. One was a dog." And then I reminded her of Snap, whose history I had recounted before, and related the incident of his sudden appearance and remarkable recognition. "And the other," continued I, "was Mr. Weston, the curate of Horton."

"Mr. Weston! I never heard of him before."

"Yes, you have. I've mentioned him several times, I believe; but you don't remember."

"I've heard you speak of Mr. Hatfield."

"Mr. Hatfield was the rector, and Mr. Weston the curate. I used to mention him sometimes in contradistinction to Mr. Hatfield, as being a more efficient clergyman. However, he was on the sands this morning with the dog—he had bought it, I suppose, from the rat-catcher; and he knew me as well as it did—probably through its means. And I had a little conversation with him, in the course of which, as he asked about our school, I was led to say something about you and your good management; and he said he should like to know you, and asked if I would introduce him to you, if he should take the liberty of calling to-morrow; so I said I would. Was I right?"

"Of course. What kind of a man is he?"

"A very *respectable* man, I think; but you will see him to-morrow. He is the new vicar of F——, and as he has only been there a few weeks, I suppose he has made no friends yet, and wants a little society."

The morrow came. What a fever of anxiety and expectation I was in from breakfast till noon—at which time he made his appearance! Having introduced him to my mother, I took my work to the window, and sat down to await the result of the interview. They got on extremely well together, greatly to my satisfaction, for I had felt very anxious about what my mother would think of him. He did not stay long that time; but when he rose to take leave, she said she should be happy to see him whenever he might find it convenient to call again; and when he was gone I was gratified by hearing her say,—

"Well, I think he's a very sensible man. But why did you sit back there, Agnes," she added, "and talk so little?"

"Because you talked so well, mamma, I thought you required no assistance from me; and besides, he was your visitor, not mine."

After that he often called upon us, several times in the course of a week. He generally addressed most of his conversation to my mother; and no wonder, for she *could* converse. I almost envied the unfettered, vigorous fluency of her discourse, and the strong sense evinced by everything she said; and yet I did not, for though I occasionally regretted my own deficiencies for his sake, it gave me very great pleasure to sit and hear the two beings I loved and honoured above every one else in the world discoursing together so amicably, so wisely, and so well. I was not always silent, however, nor was I at all neglected. I was quite as much noticed as I would wish to be. There was no lack of kind words and kinder looks, no end of delicate attentions, too fine and subtle to be grasped by words, and therefore indescribable, but deeply felt at heart.

Ceremony was quickly dropped between us. Mr. Weston came as an expected guest, welcome at all times, and never deranging the economy of our household affairs. He even called me "Agnes." The name had been timidly spoken at first, but finding it gave no offence in any quarter, he seemed greatly to prefer that appellation to "Miss Grey," and so did I. How tedious and gloomy were those days in which he did not come! And yet not miserable; for I had still the remembrance of the last visit and the hope of the next to cheer me. But when two or three days passed without my seeing him, I certainly felt very anxious—absurdly, unreasonably so; for of course he had his own business and the affairs of his parish to attend to. And I dreaded the close of the holidays, when *my* business also would begin, and I should be sometimes unable to see him, and sometimes, when my mother was in the schoolroom, obliged to be with him alone—a position I did not at all desire, in the house, though to meet him out of doors, and walk beside him, had proved by no means disagreeable.

One evening, however, in the last week of the vacation, he arrived, unexpectedly, for a heavy and protracted thunder-shower during the afternoon had almost detroyed my hopes of seeing him that day; but now the torm was over, and the sun was shining brightly.

"A beautiful evening, Mrs. Grey," said he as he ntered.—"Agnes, I want you to take a walk with me o ——." (He named a certain part of the coast—a bold ill on the land side, and towards the sea a steep preciice, from the summit of which a glorious view is to be ad.) "The rain has laid the dust, and cooled and leared the air, and the prospect will be magnificent. Vill you come?"

"Can I go, mamma?"

"Yes; to be sure."

I went to get ready, and was down again in a few mintes, though, of course, I took a little more pains with y attire than if I had merely been going out on some opping expedition alone. The thunder-shower had ertainly had a most beneficial effect upon the weather, nd the evening was most delightful. Mr. Weston would ave me to take his arm. He said little during our passage rough the crowded streets, but walked very fast, and ppeared grave and abstracted. I wondered what was e matter, and felt an indefinite dread that something npleasant was on his mind, and vague surmises conerning what it might be troubled me not a little, and ade me grave and silent enough. But these fantasies anished upon reaching the quiet outskirts of the town; r as soon as we came within sight of the venerable old urch, and the —— hill, with the deep blue sea beyond , I found my companion was cheerful enough.

"I'm afraid I've been walking too fast for you, Agnes," id he. "In my impatience to be rid of the town, I rgot to consult your convenience; but now we'll walk slowly as you please. I see, by those light clouds in e west, there will be a brilliant sunset, and we shall in time to witness its effect upon the sea, at the most oderate rate of progression."

When we had got about halfway up the hill, we fell into ence again, which, as usual, he was the first to break.

"My house is desolate yet, Miss Grey," he smilingly observed, "and I am acquainted now with all the ladies in my parish, and several in this town too, and many others I know by sight and report, but not one of them will suit me for a companion. In fact, there is only one person in the world that will, and that is yourself, and I want to know your decision."

"Are you in earnest, Mr. Weston?"

"In earnest! How could you think I should jest on such a subject?"

He laid his hand on mine that rested on his arm. He must have felt it tremble, but it was no great matter now.

"I hope I have not been too precipitate," he said in a serious tone. "You must have known that it was not my way to flatter and talk soft nonsense, or even to speak the admiration that I felt, and that a single word or glance of mine meant more than the honeyed phrases and fervent protestations of most other men."

I said something about not liking to leave my mother, and doing nothing without her consent.

"I settled everything with Mrs. Grey while you were putting on your bonnet," replied he. "She said I might have her consent if I could obtain yours; and I asked her, in case I should be so happy, to come and live with us, for I was sure you would like it better. But she refused, saying she could now afford to employ an assistant, and would continue the school till she could purchase an annuity sufficient to maintain her in comfortable lodgings; and meantime she would spend her vacations alternately with us and your sister, and should be quite contented if you were happy. And so now I have overruled your objections on her account. Have you any other?"

"No—none."

"You love me, then?" said he, fervently pressing my hand.

"Yes."

* * * * *

Here I pause. My diary, from which I have compiled these pages, goes but little further. I could go on for years; but I will content myself with adding that I shall never forget that glorious summer evening, and always remember with delight that steep hill, and the edge of the precipice where we stood together, watching the splendid sunset mirrored in the restless world of waters at our feet, with hearts filled with gratitude to Heaven, and happiness and love almost too full for speech.

A few weeks after that, when my mother had supplied herself with an assistant, I became the wife of Edward Weston, and never have found cause to repent it, and am certain that I never shall. We have had trials, and we know that we must have them again; but we bear them well together, and endeavour to fortify ourselves and each other against the final separation—that greatest of all afflictions to the survivor. But if we keep in mind the glorious heaven beyond, where both may meet again, and sin and sorrow are unknown, surely that too may be borne; and meantime we endeavour to live to the glory of Him who has scattered so many blessings in our path.

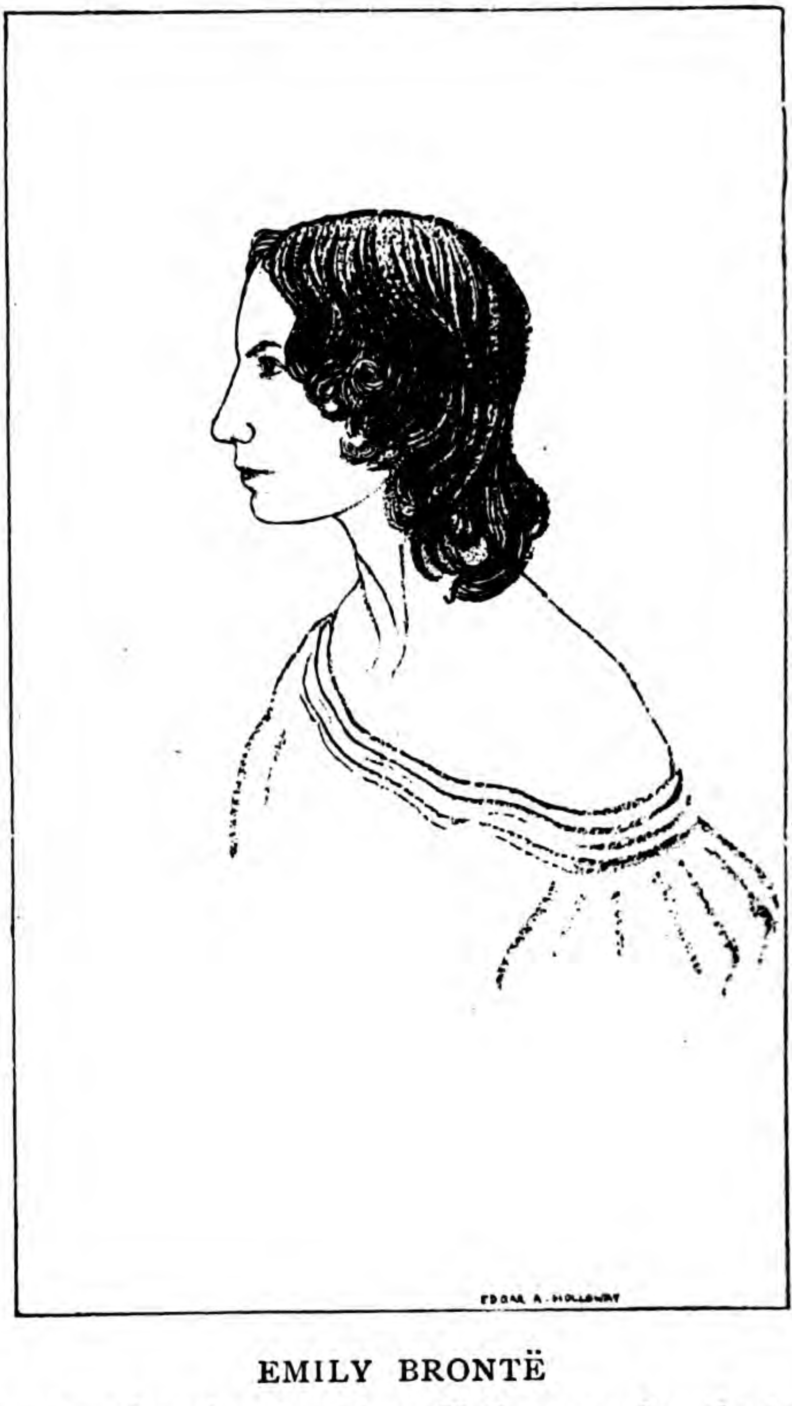
Edward, by his strenuous exertions, has worked surprising reforms in his parish, and is esteemed and loved by its inhabitants—as he deserves; for whatever his faults may be as a man (and no one is entirely without), I defy anybody to blame him as a pastor, a husband, or a father.

Our children, Edward, Agnes, and little Mary, promise well. Their education, for the time being, is chiefly committed to me, and they shall want no good thing that a mother's care can give. Our modest income is amply sufficient for our requirements, and by practising the economy we learned in harder times, and never attempting to imitate our richer neighbours, we manage not only to enjoy comfort and contentment ourselves, but to have every year something to lay by for our children, and something to give to those who need it.

And now I think I have said sufficient.

THE END.

POEMS


EDGAR A. HOLLOWAY

EMILY BRONTË

From a pen drawing by Edgar Holloway, after the painting by Patrick Branwell Brontë in the National Portrait Gallery.

POEMS

By

CHARLOTTE, EMILY & ANNE
BRONTË

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The first three sections of these poems appeared in *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*, London, 1846, with the exceptions of " Watching and Wishing " and " When Thou Sleepest," by Charlotte Brontë, which were first published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in December 1860 and August 1861 respectively ; and " The Outcast Mother," by Emily Brontë, which was first published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in May 1860.

The " Selections from Poems by Emily Brontë " and " Selections from Poems by Anne Brontë," which were made by Charlotte, appeared in " *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, by Ellis and Acton Bell. A New Edition, revised, with a Bibliographical Notice of the authors, a Selection from their Literary Remains, and a Preface, by Currer Bell, London, 1850,"—with the exception of " The Three Guides," by Anne Brontë, which was published in *Fraser's Magazine* in August 1848. It will be noted that, under the title of " Lines Written from Home," Charlotte includes a poem of Anne's which had appeared previously in the volume of 1846 with the title "The Consolation." The Introductory Notes to the poems in these Selections were written by Charlotte Brontë.

POEMS

by CHARLOTTE BRONTË

("CURRER BELL")

PILATE'S WIFE'S DREAM.

I'VE quenched my lamp—I struck it in that start
  Which every limb convulsed; I heard it fall—
The crash blent with my sleep; I saw depart
  Its light, even as I woke, on yonder wall;
Over against my bed there shone a gleam
Strange, faint, and mingling also with my dream.

It sank, and I am wrapt in utter gloom.
  How far is night advanced, and when will day
Retinge the dusk and livid air with bloom,
  And fill this void with warm, creative ray?
Would I could sleep again till, clear and red,
Morning shall on the mountain-tops be spread!

I'd call my women, but to break their sleep,
  Because my own is broken, were unjust.
They've wrought all day, and well-earned slumbers steep
  Their labours in forgetfulness, I trust.
Let me my feverish watch with patience bear,
Thankful that none with me its sufferings share.

Yet, oh for light! one ray would tranquillize
  My nerves, my pulses, more than effort can;
I'll draw my curtain and consult the skies.
  These trembling stars at dead of night look wan,
Wild, restless, strange, yet cannot be more drear
Than this my couch, shared by a nameless fear.

All black—one great cloud, drawn from east to west,
Conceals the heavens, but there are lights below;
Torches burn in Jerusalem, and cast
On yonder stony mount a lurid glow.
I see men stationed there, and gleaming spears;
A sound, too, from afar invades my ears.

Dull, measured strokes of axe and hammer ring
From street to street, not loud, but through the night
Distinctly heard, and some strange spectral thing
Is now upreared; and fixed against the light
Of the pale lamps, defined upon that sky
It stands up like a column, straight and high.

I see it all—I know the dusky sign—
A cross on Calvary, which Jews uprear
While Romans watch; and when the dawn shall shine
Pilate, to judge the victim, will appear,
Pass sentence, yield Him up to crucify;
And on that cross the spotless Christ must die.

Dreams, then, are true—for thus my vision ran.
Surely some oracle has been with me;
The gods have chosen me to reveal their plan,
To warn an unjust judge of destiny.
I, slumbering, heard and saw; awake, I know
Christ's coming death, and Pilate's life of woe.

I do not weep for Pilate. Who could prove
Regret for him whose cold and crushing sway
No prayer can soften, no appeal can move;
Who tramples hearts as others trample clay,
Yet with a faltering, an uncertain tread,
That might stir up reprisal in the dead:

Forced to sit by his side and see his deeds;
Forced to behold that visage hour by hour,
In whose gaunt lines the abhorrent gazer reads
A triple lust of gold, and blood, and power—

A soul whom motives fierce, yet abject, urge—
Rome's servile slave, and Judah's tyrant scourge?

How can I love, or mourn, or pity him—
I who so long my fettered hands have wrung,
I who for grief have wept my eyesight dim,
Because, while life for me was bright and young,
He robbed my youth, he quenched my life's fair ray,
He crushed my mind, and did my freedom slay?

And at this hour, although I be his wife,
He has no more of tenderness from me
Than any other wretch of guilty life—
Less, for I know his household privacy,
I see him as he is, without a screen;
And, by the gods, my soul abhors his mien!

Has he not sought my presence, dyed in blood—
Innocent, righteous blood, shed shamelessly?
And have I not his red salute withstood?
Ay, when, as erst, he plunged all Galilee
In dark bereavement, in affliction sore,
Mingling their very offerings with their gore.

Then came he—in his eyes a serpent smile,
Upon his lips some false, endearing word,
And through the streets of Salem clanged the while
His slaughtering, hacking, sacrilegious sword;
And I, to see a man cause men such woe,
Trembled with ire I did not fear to show.

And now the envious Jewish priests have brought
Jesus—whom they in mockery call their king—
To have, by this grim power, their vengeance wrought,
By this mean reptile innocence to sting.
Oh, could I but the purposed doom avert,
And shield the blameless head from cruel hurt!

Accessible is Pilate's heart to fear,
Omens will shake his soul like autumn leaf.

Could he this night's appalling vision hear,
This just man's bonds were loosed, his life were safe,
Unless that bitter priesthood should prevail,
And make even terror to their malice quail.

Yet if I tell the dream— But let me pause.
What dream? Erewhile the characters were clear,
Graved on my brain; at once some unknown cause
Has dimmed and razed the thoughts, which now appear,
Like a vague remnant of some by-past scene—
Not what will be, but what, long since, has been.

I suffered many things. I heard foretold
A dreadful doom for Pilate,—lingering woes,
In far, barbarian climes, where mountains cold
Built up a solitude of trackless snows—
There he and grisly wolves prowled side by side—
There he lived famished—there, methought, he died;

But not of hunger, nor by malady.
I saw the snow around him stained with gore;
I said I had no tears for such as he;
And, lo! my cheek is wet, mine eyes run o'er;
I weep for mortal suffering, mortal guilt,
I weep the impious deed, the blood self-spilt.

More I recall not, yet the vision spread
Into a world remote, an age to come;
And still the illumined name of Jesus shed
A light, a clearness, through the unfolding gloom;
And still I saw that sign, which now I see—
That cross on yonder brow of Calvary.

What is this Hebrew Christ? To me unknown
His lineage, doctrine, mission; yet how clear
Is God-like goodness in his actions shown!
How straight and stainless is his life's career!

The ray of Deity that rests on Him
In my eyes makes Olympian glory dim.

The world advances; Greek or Roman rite
  Suffices not the inquiring mind to stay.
The searching soul demands a purer light
  To guide it on its upward, onward way.
Ashamed of sculptured gods, Religion turns
To where the unseen Jehovah's altar burns.

Our faith is rotten, all our rites defiled,
  Our temples sullied, and, methinks, this man,
With his new ordinance, so wise and mild,
  Is come, even as He says, the chaff to fan
And sever from the wheat; but will His faith
Survive the terrors of to-morrow's death?

* * * * *

I feel a firmer trust, a higher hope
  Rise in my soul; it dawns with dawning day.
Lo! on the Temple's roof, on Moriah's slope
  Appears at length that clear and crimson ray
Which I so wished for when shut in by night.
Oh, opening skies, I hail, I bless your light!

Part, clouds and shadows! Glorious sun, appear!
  Part, mental gloom! Come, insight from on high!
Dusk dawn in heaven still strives with daylight clear,
  The longing soul doth still uncertain sigh.
Oh! to behold the truth, that sun divine,
How doth my bosom pant, my spirit pine!

This day Time travails with a mighty birth;
This day Truth stoops from heaven and visits earth.
Ere night descends I shall more surely know
What guide to follow, in what path to go.
I wait in hope, I wait in solemn fear,
The oracle of God—the sole, true God—to hear.

MEMENTOS.

ARRANGING long-locked drawers and shelves
  Of cabinets, shut up for years,
What a strange task we've set ourselves!
  How still the lonely room appears!
How strange this mass of ancient treasures,
Mementos of past pains and pleasures;
These volumes, clasped with costly stone,
With print all faded, gilding gone;

These fans of leaves, from Indian trees;
These crimson shells, from Indian seas;
These tiny portraits, set in rings,
Once, doubtless, deemed such precious things—
Keepsakes bestowed by Love on Faith,
And worn till the receiver's death,
Now stored with cameos, china, shells,
In this old closet's dusty cells.

I scarcely think, for ten long years,
  A hand has touched these relics old;
And, coating each, slow-formed, appears
  The growth of green and antique mould.

All in this house is mossing over;
  All is unused, and dim, and damp;
Nor light nor warmth the rooms discover,
  Bereft for years of fire and lamp.

The sun sometimes in summer enters
  The casements with reviving ray,
But the long rains of many winters
  Moulder the very walls away.

And outside all is ivy, clinging
  To chimney, lattice, gable gray;
Scarcely one little red rose springing
  Through the green moss can force its way.

Unscared the daw and starling nestle
  Where the tall turret rises high,
And winds alone come near to rustle
  The thick leaves where their cradles lie.

I sometimes think when, late at even,
  I climb the stair reluctantly,
Some shape that should be well in heaven,
  Or ill elsewhere, will pass by me.

I fear to see the very faces,
  Familiar thirty years ago,
Even in the old accustomed places
  Which look so cold and gloomy now.

I've come to close the window hither
  At twilight, when the sun was down,
And fear my very soul would wither,
  Lest something should be dimly shown,

Too much the buried form resembling
  Of her who once was mistress here;
Lest doubtful shade, or moonbeam trembling,
  Might take her aspect, once so dear.

Hers was this chamber; in her time
  It seemed to me a pleasant room,
For then no cloud of grief or crime
  Had cursed it with a settled gloom.

I had not seen death's image laid
In shroud and sheet, on yonder bed.
  Before she married, she was blest—
Blest in her youth, blest in her worth;
  Her mind was calm, its sunny rest
Shone in her eyes more clear than mirth.

And when attired in rich array,
  Light, lustrous hair about her brow,

She yonder sat, a kind of day
  Lit up what seems so gloomy now.
These grim oak walls even then were grim;
  That old carved chair was then antique;
But what around looked dusk and dim
  Served as a foil to her fresh cheek;
Her neck and arms, of hue so fair,
  Eyes of unclouded, smiling light;
Her soft, and curled, and floating hair,
  Gems and attire, as rainbow bright.

Reclined in yonder deep recess,
  Ofttimes she would, at evening, lie
Watching the sun; she seemed to bless
  With happy glance the glorious sky.
She loved such scenes, and as she gazed
  Her face evinced her spirit's mood;
Beauty or grandeur ever raised
  In her a deep-felt gratitude.
But of all lovely things she loved
  A cloudless moon, on summer night.
Full oft have I impatience proved
  To see how long her still delight
Would find a theme in reverie,
  Out on the lawn, or where the trees
Let in the lustre fitfully,
As their boughs parted momently
  To the soft, languid, summer breeze.
Alas that she should e'er have flung
  Those pure though lonely joys away!
Deceived by false and guileful tongue,
She gave her hand, then suffered wrong;
Oppressed, ill-used, she faded young,
  And died of grief by slow decay.

Open that casket—look how bright
Those jewels flash upon the sight;
The brilliants have not lost a ray
Of lustre since her wedding day.
But see, upon that pearly chain,

How dim lies Time's discolouring stain!
I've seen that by her daughter worn;
For, ere she died, a child was born—
A child that ne'er its mother knew,
That lone and almost friendless grew;
For, ever, when its step drew nigh,
Averted was the father's eye;
And then a life impure and wild
Made him a stranger to his child.
Absorbed in vice, he little cared
On what she did or how she fared.
The love withheld she never sought;
She grew uncherished, learnt untaught;
To her the inward life of thought
  Full soon was open laid.
I know not if her friendlessness
Did sometimes on her spirit press,
  But plaint she never made.
The book-shelves were her darling treasure;
She rarely seemed the time to measure
  While she could read alone.
And she too loved the twilight wood,
And often, in her mother's mood,
  Away to yonder hill would hie,
Like her, to watch the setting sun,
Or see the stars born, one by one,
  Out of the darkening sky.
Nor would she leave that hill till night
Trembled from pole to pole with light.
  Even then, upon her homeward way,
Long, long her wandering steps delayed
To quit the sombre forest shade,
  Through which her eerie pathway lay.
You ask if she had beauty's grace?
I know not, but a nobler face
  My eyes have seldom seen;
A keen and fine intelligence,
And, better still, the truest sense
  Were in her speaking mien.

But bloom or lustre was there none;
Only at moments fitful shone
  An ardour in her eye
That kindled on her cheek a flush,
Warm as a red sky's passing blush,
  And quick with energy.
Her speech, too, was not common speech:
No wish to shine, or aim to teach,
  Was in her words displayed.
She still began with quiet sense,
But oft the force of eloquence
  Came to her lips in aid;
Language and voice unconscious changed,
And thoughts, in other words arranged,
  Her fervid soul transfused
Into the hearts of those who heard,
And transient strength and ardour stirred
  In minds to strength unused.
Yet in gay crowd or festal glare
Grave and retiring was her air;
'Twas seldom, save with me alone,
That fire of feeling freely shone.
She loved not awe's nor wonder's gaze,
Nor even exaggerated praise,
Nor even notice, if too keen
The curious gazer searched her mien.
Nature's own green expanse revealed
  The world, the pleasures, she could prize.
On free hillside, in sunny field,
In quiet spots by woods concealed,
  Grew wild and fresh her chosen joys;
Yet Nature's feelings deeply lay
  In that endowed and youthful frame;
Shrined in her heart and hid from day,
  They burned unseen with silent flame.
In youth's first search for mental light,
  She lived but to reflect and learn;
But soon her mind's maturer might
  For stronger task did pant and yearn:

And stronger task did fate assign—
  Task that a giant's strength might strain—
To suffer long and ne'er repine,
  Be calm in frenzy, smile at pain.

Pale with the secret war of feeling,
  Sustained with courage, mute, yet high—
The wounds at which she bled revealing
  Only by altered cheek and eye—

She bore in silence ; but when passion
  Surged in her soul with ceaseless foam,
The storm at last brought desolation,
  And drove her exiled from her home.

And silent still, she straight assembled
  The wrecks of strength her soul retained ;
For though the wasted body trembled,
  The unconquered mind to quail disdained.

She crossed the sea ; now lone she wanders
  By Seine's, or Rhine's, or Arno's flow :
Fain would I know if distance renders
  Relief or comfort to her woe.

Fain would I know if, henceforth, ever
  These eyes shall read in hers again
That light of love which faded never,
  Though dimmed so long with secret pain.

She will return, but cold and altered,
  Like all whose hopes too soon depart ;
Like all on whom have beat, unsheltered,
  The bitter blasts that blight the heart.

No more shall I behold her lying
  Calm on a pillow, smoothed by me ;
No more that spirit, worn with sighing,
  Will know the rest of infancy.

If still the paths of lore she follow,
'Twill be with tired and goaded will;
She'll only toil the aching hollow,
The joyless blank of life to fill.

And, oh! full oft, quite spent and weary,
Her hand will pause, her head decline;
That labour seems so hard and dreary
On which no ray of hope may shine.

Thus the pale blight of time and sorrow
Will shade with gray her soft, dark hair;
Then comes the day that knows no morrow,
And death succeeds to long despair.

So speaks experience, sage and hoary;
I see it plainly, know it well,
Like one who, having read a story,
Each incident therein can tell.

Touch not that ring; 'twas his, the sire
Of that forsaken child;
And nought his relics can inspire
Save memories, sin-defiled.

I, who sat by his wife's death-bed,
I, who his daughter loved,
Could almost curse the guilty dead,
For woes the guiltless proved.

And heaven did curse: they found him laid,
When crime for wrath was ripe,
Cold, with the suicidal blade
Clutched in his desperate gripe.

'Twas near that long-deserted hut
Which in the wood decays;
Death's axe, self-wielded, struck his root,
And lopped his desperate days.

You know the spot, where three black trees
  Lift up their branches fell,
And moaning, ceaseless as the seas,
Still seem, in every passing breeze,
  The deed of blood to tell.

They named him mad, and laid his bones
  Where holier ashes lie;
Yet doubt not that his spirit groans
  In hell's eternity.

But, lo! night, closing o'er the earth,
  Infects our thoughts with gloom;
Come, let us strive to rally mirth
Where glows a clear and tranquil hearth
  In some more cheerful room.

THE WIFE'S WILL.

Sit still; a word, a breath may break
(As light airs stir a sleeping lake)
The glassy calm that soothes my woes—
The sweet, the deep, the full repose.
Oh, leave me not! For ever be
Thus—more than life itself to me!

Yes, close beside thee let me kneel.
Give me thy hand, that I may feel
The friend so true, so tried, so dear—
My heart's own chosen—indeed is near;
And check me not; this hour divine
Belongs to me—is fully mine.

'Tis thy own hearth thou sitt'st beside,
After long absence, wandering wide;
'Tis thy own wife reads in thine eyes
A promise clear of stormless skies;

For faith and true love light the rays
Which shine responsive to her gaze.

Ay, well that single tear may fall;
Ten thousand might mine eyes recall,
Which from their lids ran blinding fast,
In hours of grief, yet scarcely past;
Well mayest thou speak of love to me,
For, oh, most truly I love thee!

Yet smile, for we are happy now.
Whence, then, that sadness on thy brow?
What sayest thou? "We must once again.
Ere long, be severed by the main!"
I knew not this; I deemed no more
Thy step would err from Britain's shore.

"Duty commands!" 'Tis true, 'tis just;
Thy slightest word I wholly trust,
Nor by request, nor faintest sigh,
Would I to turn thy purpose try;
But, William, hear my solemn vow—
Hear and confirm! With thee I go.

"Distance and suffering," didst thou say?
"Danger by night and toil by day?"
Oh, idle words and vain are these!
Hear me! I cross with thee the seas.
Such risk as thou must meet and dare,
I, thy true wife, will duly share.

Passive at home I will not pine;
Thy toils, thy perils shall be mine.
Grant this, and be hereafter paid
By a warm heart's devoted aid.
'Tis granted. With that yielding kiss
Entered my soul unmingled bliss.

Thanks, William, thanks! Thy love has joy,
Pure, undefiled with base alloy.
'Tis not a passion false and blind
Inspires, enchains, absorbs my mind;
Worthy, I feel, art thou to be
Loved with my perfect energy.

This evening now shall sweetly flow,
Lit by our clear fire's happy glow;
And parting's peace-embittering fear
Is warned our hearts to come not near;
For faith admits my soul's decree,
In bliss or bale, to go with thee!

THE WOOD.

But two miles more, and then we rest!
  Well, there is still an hour of day,
And long the brightness of the west
  Will light us on our devious way.
Sit then awhile here in this wood;
So total is the solitude,
    We safely may delay.

These massive roots afford a seat
  Which seems for weary travellers made.
There rest. The air is soft and sweet
  In this sequestered forest glade,
And there are scents of flowers around,
The evening dew draws from the ground.
    How soothingly they spread!

Yes; I was tired, but not at heart.
  No; that beats full of sweet content;
For now I have my natural part
  Of action with adventure blent—
Cast forth on the wide world with thee,
And all my once waste energy
    To weighty purpose bent.

Yet, sayst thou spies around us roam,
  Our aims are termed conspiracy;
Haply, no more our English home
  An anchorage for us may be;
That there is risk our mutual blood
May redden in some lonely wood
    The knife of treachery?

Sayst thou that where we lodge each night,
  In each lone farm, or lonelier hall
Of Norman peer, ere morning light
  Suspicion must as duly fall
As day returns—such vigilance
Presides and watches over France,
    Such rigour governs all?

I fear not, William. Dost thou fear?
  So that the knife does not divide,
It may be ever hovering near.
  I could not tremble at thy side;
And strenuous love—like mine for thee—
Is buckler strong 'gainst treachery,
    And turns its stab aside.

I am resolved that thou shalt learn
  To trust my strength as I trust thine;
I am resolved our souls shall burn
  With equal, steady, mingling shine.
Part of the field is conquered now—
Our lives in the same channel flow,
    Along the self-same line:

And while no groaning storm is heard,
  Thou seem'st content it should be so;
But soon as comes a warning word
  Of danger, straight thine anxious brow
Bends over me a mournful shade,
As doubting if my powers are made
    To ford the floods of woe.

Know, then it is my spirit swells,
And drinks, with eager joy, the air
Of freedom; where at last it dwells
Chartered, a common task to share
With thee; and then it stirs alert,
And pants to learn what menaced hurt
Demands for thee its care.

Remember, I have crossed the deep,
And stood with thee on deck to gaze
On waves that rose in threatening heap,
While stagnant lay a heavy haze,
Dimly confusing sea with sky,
And baffling even the pilot's eye,
Intent to thread the maze

Of rocks on Bretagne's dangerous coast,
And find a way to steer our band
To the one point obscure, which, lost,
Flung us, as victims, on the strand.
All elsewhere gleamed the Gallic sword,
And not a wherry could be moored
Along the guarded land.

I feared not then, I fear not now.
The interest of each stirring scene
Wakes a new sense, a welcome glow
In every nerve and bounding vein.
Alike on turbid Channel sea,
Or in still wood of Normandy,
I feel as born again.

The rain descended that wild morn
When, anchoring in the cove at last,
Our band, all weary and forlorn,
Ashore, like wave-worn sailors, cast,
Sought for a sheltering roof in vain,
And scarce could scanty food obtain
To break their morning fast.

Thou didst thy crust with me divide,
Thou didst thy cloak around me fold;
And, sitting silent by thy side,
I ate the bread in peace untold.
Given kindly from thy hand, 'twas sweet
As costly fare or princely treat
On royal plate of gold.

Sharp blew the sleet upon my face,
And, rising wild, the gusty wind
Drove on those thundering waves apace
Our crew so late had left behind;
But, spite of frozen shower and storm,
So close to thee, my heart beat warm,
And tranquil slept my mind.

So now, nor foot-sore nor opprest
With walking all this August day,
I taste a heaven in this brief rest,
This gipsy halt beside the way.
England's wild flowers are fair to view;
Like balm is England's summer dew,
Like gold her sunset ray.

But the white violets growing here
Are sweeter than I yet have seen,
And ne'er did dew so pure and clear
Distil on forest mosses green,
As now, called forth by summer heat,
Perfumes our cool and fresh retreat,
These fragrant limes between.

That sunset! Look beneath the boughs,
Over the copse, beyond the hills.
How soft yet deep and warm it glows,
And heaven with rich suffusion fills,
With hues where still the opal's tint
Its gleam of prisoned fire is blent,
Where flame through azure thrills!

Depart we now, for fast will fade
  That solemn splendour of decline;
And deep must be the after-shade,
  As stars alone to-night will shine.
No moon is destined, pale, to gaze
On such a day's vast Phœnix blaze,
    A day in fires decayed!

There, hand in hand, we tread again
  The mazes of this varying wood,
And soon, amid a cultured plain,
  Girt in with fertile solitude,
We shall our resting-place descry,
Marked by one roof-tree, towering high
    Above a farmstead rude.

Refreshed, ere long, with rustic fare,
  We'll seek a couch of dreamless ease.
Courage will guard thy heart from fear,
  And love give mine divinest peace.
To-morrow brings more dangerous toil,
And through its conflict and turmoil
    We'll pass as God shall please.

[The preceding composition refers, doubtless, to the scenes acted in France during the last year of the Consulate.]

FRANCES.

She will not sleep for fear of dreams,
  But, rising, quits her restless bed,
And walks where some beclouded beams
  Of moonlight through the hall are shed.

Obedient to the goad of grief,
  Her steps, now fast, now lingering slow,
In varying motion seek relief
  From the Eumenides of woe.

Wringing her hands at intervals,
  But long as mute as phantom dim,
She glides along the dusky walls,
  Under the black oak rafters grim.

The close air of the grated tower
  Stifles a heart that scarce can beat,
And, though so late and lone the hour,
  Forth pass her wandering, faltering feet;

And on the pavement spread before
  The long front of the mansion gray
Her steps imprint the night-frost hoar,
  Which pale on grass and granite lay.

Not long she stayed where misty moon
  And shimmering stars could on her look,
But through the garden archway soon
  Her strange and gloomy path she took.

Some firs, coeval with the tower,
  Their straight black boughs stretched o'er her
    head;
Unseen, beneath this sable bower,
  Rustled her dress and rapid tread.

There was an alcove in that shade,
  Screening a rustic seat and stand;
Weary she sat her down, and laid
  Her hot brow on her burning hand.

To solitude and to the night
  Some words she now in murmurs said;
And trickling through her fingers white
  Some tears of misery she shed.

"God help me in my grievous need,
  God help me in my inward pain,
Which cannot ask for pity's meed,
  Which has no license to complain,

"Which must be borne; yet who can bear
Hours long, days long, a constant weight—
The yoke of absolute despair,
A suffering wholly desolate?

"Who can for ever crush the heart,
Restrain its throbbing, curb its life,
Dissemble truth with ceaseless art,
With outward calm mask inward strife?"

She waited, as for some reply;
The still and cloudy night gave none.
Ere long, with deep-drawn, trembling sigh,
Her heavy plaint again begun.

"Unloved, I love; unwept, I weep;
Grief I restrain, hope I repress.
Vain is this anguish, fixed and deep;
Vainer desires and dreams of bliss.

"My love awakes no love again,
My tears collect and fall unfelt,
My sorrow touches none with pain,
My humble hopes to nothing melt.

"For me the universe is dumb,
Stone-deaf, and blank, and wholly blind;
Life I must bound, existence sum
In the straight limits of one mind—

"That mind my own. Oh! narrow cell—
Dark, imageless, a living tomb!
There must I sleep, there wake and dwell
Content, with palsy, pain, and gloom."

Again she paused; a moan of pain,
A stifled sob, alone was heard;
Long silence followed, then again
Her voice the stagnant midnight stirred.

" Must it be so ? Is this my fate ?
Can I nor struggle, nor contend ?
And am I doomed for years to wait,
Watching death's lingering axe descend ?

" And when it falls, and when I die,
What follows ? Vacant nothingness,
The blank of lost identity,
Erasure both of pain and bliss ?

" I've heard of heaven. I would believe ;
For if this earth indeed be all,
Who longest lives may deepest grieve,
Most blest whom sorrows soonest call.

" Oh ! leaving disappointment here,
Will man find hope on yonder coast—
Hope which on earth shines never clear,
And oft in clouds is wholly lost ?

" Will he hope's source of light behold,
Fruition's spring, where doubts expire,
And drink, in waves of living gold,
Contentment full for long desire ?

" Will he find bliss, which here he dreamed ;
Rest, which was weariness on earth ;
Knowledge which, if o'er life it beamed,
Served but to prove it void of worth ?

" Will he find love without lust's leaven,
Love fearless, tearless, perfect, pure,
To all with equal bounty given,
In all unfeigned, unfailing, sure ?

" Will he, from penal sufferings free,
Released from shroud and wormy clod,
All calm and glorious, rise and see
Creation's Sire, Existence' God ?

"Then, glancing back on time's brief woes,
Will he behold them, fading, fly,
Swept from eternity's repose
Like sullying cloud from pure blue sky?

"If so, endure, my weary frame;
And when thy anguish strikes too deep,
And when all troubled burns life's flame,
Think of the quiet, final sleep;

"Think of the glorious waking-hour,
Which will not dawn on grief and tears,
But on a ransomed spirit's power,
Certain, and free from mortal fears.

"Seek now thy couch, and lie till morn;
Then from thy chamber calm descend,
With mind nor tossed, nor anguish-torn,
But tranquil, fixed, to wait the end.

"And when thy opening eyes shall see
Mementos, on the chamber wall,
Of one who has forgotten thee,
Shed not the tear of acrid gall—

"The tear which, welling from the heart,
Burns where its drop corrosive falls,
And makes each nerve in torture start
At feelings it too well recalls:

"When the sweet hope of being loved
Threw Eden sunshine on life's way,
When every sense and feeling proved
Expectancy of brightest day:

"When the hand trembled to receive
A thrilling clasp, which seemed so near,
And the heart ventured to believe
Another heart esteemed it dear:

" When words, half love, all tenderness,
Were hourly heard, as hourly spoken;
When the long, sunny days of bliss
Only by moonlight nights were broken;

" Till, drop by drop, the cup of joy
Filled full, with purple light was glowing,
And faith, which watched it, sparkling high,
Still never dreamt the overflowing.

" It fell not with a sudden crashing,
It poured not out like open sluice;
No, sparkling still, and redly flashing,
Drained, drop by drop, the generous juice.

" I saw it sink, and strove to taste it;
My eager lips approached the brim:
The movement only seemed to waste it;
It sank to dregs, all harsh and dim.

" These I have drunk, and they for ever
Have poisoned life and love for me;
A draught from Sodom's lake could never
More fiery, salt, and bitter be.

" Oh, love was all a thin illusion;
Joy but the desert's flying stream;
And glancing back on long delusion
My memory grasps a hollow dream.

BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA

" Yet whence that wondrous change of feeling
I never knew, and cannot learn;
Nor why my lover's eye, congealing,
Grew cold and clouded, proud and stern;

" Nor wherefore, friendship's forms forgetting,
He careless left, and cool withdrew;
Nor spoke of grief, nor fond regretting,
Nor ev'n one glance of comfort threw;

" And neither word nor token sending
Of kindness, since the parting day,
His course for distant regions bending,
Went, self-contained and calm, away.

" Oh, bitter, blighting, keen sensation,
Which will not weaken, cannot die,
Hasten thy work of desolation,
And let my tortured spirit fly!

" Vain as the passing gale my crying;
Though lightning-struck, I must live on.
I know at heart there is no dying
Of love and ruined hope alone.

" Still strong and young, and warm with vigour,
Though scathed, I long shall greenly grow;
And many a storm of wildest rigour
Shall yet break o'er my shivered bough.

" Rebellious now to blank inertion,
My unused strength demands a task;
Travel, and toil, and full exertion
Are the last, only boon I ask.

" Whence, then, this vain and barren dreaming
Of death and dubious life to come?
I see a nearer beacon gleaming
Over dejection's sea of gloom.

" The very wildness of my sorrow
Tells me I yet have innate force;
My track of life has been too narrow—
Effort shall trace a broader course.

" The world is not in yonder tower,
Earth is not prisoned in that room,
'Mid whose dark panels, hour by hour,
I've sat, the slave and prey of gloom.

"One feeling, turned to utter anguish,
Is not my being's only aim;
When, lorn and loveless, life will languish,
But courage can revive the flame.

"He, when he left me, went a-roving
To sunny climes beyond the sea;
And I, the weight of woe removing,
Am free and fetterless as he.

"New scenes, new language, skies less clouded,
May once more wake the wish to live;
Strange, foreign towns, astir and crowded,
New pictures to the mind may give.

"New forms and faces, passing ever,
May hide the one I still retain,
Defined, and fixed, and fading never,
Stamped deep on vision, heart, and brain.

"And we might meet—time may have changed him;
Chance may reveal the mystery,
The secret influence which estranged him;
Love may restore him yet to me.

"False thought, false hope, in scorn be banished!
I am not loved, nor loved have been.
Recall not, then, the dreams scarce vanished;
Traitors, mislead me not again!

"To words like yours I bid defiance—
'Tis such my mental wreck have made;
Of God alone, and self-reliance,
I ask for solace, hope for aid.

"Morn comes; and ere meridian glory
O'er these, my natal woods, shall smile,
Both lonely wood and mansion hoary
I'll leave behind full many a mile."

GILBERT.

I.—THE GARDEN.

Above the city hung the moon,
  Right o'er a plot of ground
Where flowers and orchard trees were fenced
  With lofty walls around.
'Twas Gilbert's garden: there to-night
  Awhile he walked alone;
And, tired with sedentary toil,
  Mused where the moonlight shone.

This garden, in a city-heart,
  Lay still as houseless wild,
Though many-windowed mansion fronts
  Were round it closely piled;
But thick their walls, and those within
  Lived lives by noise unstirred;
Like wafting of an angel's wing
  Time's flight by them was heard.

Some soft piano-notes alone
  Were sweet as faintly given,
Where ladies, doubtless, cheered the hearth
  With song that winter even.
The city's many-mingled sounds
  Rose like the hum of ocean;
They rather lulled the heart than roused
  Its pulse to faster motion.

Gilbert has paced the single walk
  An hour, yet is not weary;
And, though it be a winter night,
  He feels nor cold nor dreary.
The prime of life is in his veins,
  And sends his blood fast flowing,
And fancy's fervour warms the thoughts
  Now in his bosom glowing.

Those thoughts recur to early love,
Or what he love would name,
Though haply Gilbert's secret deeds
Might other title claim.
Such theme not oft his mind absorbs;
He to the world clings fast,
And too much for the present lives
To linger o'er the past.

But now the evening's deep repose
Has glided to his soul;
That moonlight falls on Memory,
And shows her fading scroll.
One name appears on every line
The gentle rays shine o'er,
And still he smiles and still repeats
That one name—Elinor.

There is no sorrow in his smile,
No kindness in his tone;
The triumph of a selfish heart
Speaks coldly there alone.
He says, "She loved me more than life;
And truly it was sweet
To see so fair a woman kneel
In bondage at my feet.

"There was a sort of quiet bliss
To be so deeply loved,
To gaze on trembling eagerness,
And sit myself unmoved.
And when it pleased my pride to grant
At last some rare caress,
To feel the fever of that hand
My fingers deigned to press.

"'Twas sweet to see her strive to hide
What every glance revealed,
Endowed, the while, with despot might
Her destiny to wield.

I knew myself no perfect man,
Nor, as she deemed, divine;
I knew that I was glorious but
By her reflected shine.

"Her youth, her native energy,
Her powers, new-born and fresh—
'Twas these with Godhead sanctified
My sensual frame of flesh.
Yet, like a god did I descend
At last to meet her love;
And, like a god, I then withdrew
To my own heaven above.

"And never more could she invoke
My presence to her sphere;
No prayer, no plaint, no cry of hers
Could win my awful ear.
I knew her blinded constancy
Would ne'er my deeds betray,
And, calm in conscience, whole in heart,
I went my tranquil way.

"Yet sometimes I still feel a wish
The fond and flattering pain
Of passion's anguish to create
In her young breast again.
Bright was the lustre of her eyes
When they caught fire from mine;
If I had power, this very hour
Again I'd light their shine.

"But where she is, or how she lives,
I have no clue to know;
I've heard she long my absence pined
And left her home in woe.
But busied then in gathering gold,
As I am busied now,
I could not turn from such pursuit
To weep a broken vow.

"Nor could I give to fatal risk
The fame I ever prized.
Even now I fear that precious fame
Is too much compromised."
An inward trouble dims his eye,
Some riddle he would solve;
Some method to unloose a knot
His anxious thoughts revolve.

He, pensive, leans against a tree,
A leafy evergreen;
The boughs the moonlight intercept,
And hide him like a screen.
He starts—the tree shakes with his tremor,
Yet nothing near him passed;
He hurries up the garden alley
In strangely sudden haste.

With shaking hand he lifts the latchet,
Steps o'er the threshold stone;
The heavy door slips from his fingers—
It shuts, and he is gone.
What touched, transfixed, appalled his soul?
A nervous thought—no more;
'Twill sink like stone in placid pool,
And calm close smoothly o'er.

II.—THE PARLOUR.

Warm is the parlour atmosphere,
Serene the lamp's soft light;
The vivid embers, red and clear,
Proclaim a frosty night.
Books, varied, on the table lie,
Three children o'er them bend,
And all, with curious, eager eye,
The turning leaf attend.

Picture and tale alternately
  Their simple hearts delight,
And interest deep, and tempered glee,
  Illume their aspects bright.
The parents, from their fireside place,
  Behold that pleasant scene,
And joy is on the mother's face,
  Pride in the father's mien.

As Gilbert sees his blooming wife,
  Beholds his children fair,
No thought has he of transient strife,
  Or past, though piercing fear.
The voice of happy infancy
  Lisps sweetly in his ear.
His wife, with pleased and peaceful eye,
  Sits, kindly smiling, near.

The fire glows on her silken dress,
  And shows its ample grace,
And warmly tints each hazel tress
  Curled soft around her face.
The beauty that in youth he wooed
  Is beauty still, unfaded;
The brow of ever placid mood
  No churlish grief has shaded.

Prosperity, in Gilbert's home,
  Abides the guest of years;
There Want or Discord never come,
  And seldom Toil or Tears.
The carpets bear the peaceful print
  Of comfort's velvet tread,
And golden gleams, from plenty sent,
  In every nook are shed.

The very silken spaniel seems
  Of quiet ease to tell,
As near its mistress' feet it dreams,
  Sunk in a cushion's swell;

And smiles seem native to the eyes
  Of those sweet children three;
They have but looked on tranquil skies,
  And know not misery.

Alas that Misery should come
  In such an hour as this!
Why could she not so calm a home
  A little longer miss?
But she is now within the door;
  Her steps advancing glide;
Her sullen shade has crossed the floor;
  She stands at Gilbert's side.

She lays her hand upon his heart—
  It bounds with agony;
His fireside chair shakes with the start
  That shook the garden tree.
His wife towards the children looks—
  She does not mark his mien;
The children, bending o'er their books,
  His terror have not seen.

In his own home, by his own hearth,
  He sits in solitude,
And circled round with light and mirth,
  Cold horror chills his blood.
His mind would hold with desperate clutch
  The scene that round him lies;
No—changed as by some wizard's touch,
  The present prospect flies.

A tumult vague, a viewless strife,
  His futile struggles crush;
'Twixt him and his an unknown life
  And unknown feelings rush.
He sees, but scarce can language paint
  The tissue fancy weaves,
For words oft give but echo faint
  Of thoughts the mind conceives.

Noise, tumult strange, and darkness dim
  Efface both light and quiet ;
No shape is in those shadows grim,
  No voice in that wild riot.
Sustained and strong, a wondrous blast
  Above and round him blows ;
A greenish gloom, dense overcast,
  Each moment denser grows.

He nothing knows, nor clearly sees ;
  Resistance checks his breath.
The high, impetuous, ceaseless breeze
  Blows on him cold as death.
And still the undulating gloom
  Mocks sight with formless motion.
Was such sensation Jonah's doom,
  Gulphed in the depths of ocean ?

Streaking the air, the nameless vision,
  Fast-driven, deep-sounding, flows ;
Oh ! whence its source, and what its mission ?
  How will its terrors close ?
Long-sweeping, rushing, vast and void,
  The universe it swallows ;
And still the dark, devouring tide
  A typhoon tempest follows.

More slow it rolls ; its furious race
  Sinks to its solemn gliding ;
The stunning roar, the wind's wild chase,
  To stillness are subsiding.
And, slowly borne along, a form
  The shapeless chaos varies ;
Poised in the eddy to the storm,
  Before the eye it tarries.

A woman drowned—sunk in the deep,
  On a long wave reclining ;
The circling waters' crystal sweep,
  Like glass, her shape enshrining.

Her pale dead face, to Gilbert turned,
Seems as in sleep reposing,
A feeble light, now first discerned,
The features well disclosing.

No effort from the haunted air
The ghastly scene could banish;
That hovering wave, arrested there,
Rolled, throbbed, but did not vanish.
If Gilbert upward turned his gaze,
He saw the ocean shadow;
If he looked down, the endless seas
Lay green as summer meadow.

And straight before the pale corpse lay,
Upborne by air or billow,
So near he could have touched the spray
That churned around its pillow.
The hollow anguish of the face
Had moved a fiend to sorrow;
Not death's fixed calm could raze the trace
Of suffering's deep-worn furrow.

All moved; a strong returning blast,
The mass of waters raising,
Bore wave and passive carcass past,
While Gilbert yet was gazing.
Deep in her isle-conceiving womb
It seemed the ocean thundered,
And soon by realms of rushing gloom
Were seer and phantom sundered.

Then swept some timbers from a wreck,
On following surges riding;
Then seaweed, in the turbid rack
Uptorn, went slowly gliding.
The horrid shade, by slow degrees,
A beam of light defeated,
And then the roar of raving seas
Fast, far, and faint retreated.

And all was gone—gone like a mist—
  Corse, billows, tempest, wreck;
Three children close to Gilbert prest
  And clung around his neck.
Good-night! good-night! the prattlers said,
  And kissed their father's cheek;
'Twas now the hour their quiet bed
  And placid rest to seek.

The mother with her offspring goes
  To hear their evening prayer;
She nought of Gilbert's vision knows,
  And nought of his despair.
Yet, pitying God, abridge the time
  Of anguish, now his fate!
Though, haply, great has been his crime,
  Thy mercy, too, is great.

Gilbert at length uplifts his head,
  Bent for some moments low,
And there is neither grief nor dread
  Upon his subtle brow.
For well can he his feelings task,
  And well his looks command;
His features well his heart can mask,
  With smiles and smoothness bland.

Gilbert has reasoned with his mind—
  He says 'twas all a dream;
He strives his inward sight to blind
  Against truth's inward beam.
He pitied not that shadowy thing,
  When it was flesh and blood;
Nor now can pity's balmy spring
  Refresh his arid mood.

"And if that dream has spoken truth,"
  Thus musingly he says;
"If Elinor be dead, in sooth,
  Such chance the shock repays.

A net was woven round my feet,
I scarce could further go;
Ere shame had forced a fast retreat
Dishonour brought me low.

"Conceal her, then, deep, silent sea;
Give her a secret grave.
She sleeps in peace, and I am free—
No longer terror's slave;
And homage still, from all the world,
Shall greet my spotless name,
Since surges break and waves are curled
Above its threatened shame."

III.—THE WELCOME HOME.

Above the city hangs the moon,
Some clouds are boding rain;
Gilbert, erewhile on journey gone,
To-night comes home again.
Ten years have passed above his head—
Each year has brought him gain;
His prosperous life has smoothly sped
Without or tear or stain.

'Tis somewhat late; the city clocks
Twelve deep vibrations toll,
As Gilbert at the portal knocks,
Which is his journey's goal.
The street is still and desolate,
The moon hid by a cloud;
Gilbert, impatient, will not wait—
His second knock peals loud.

The clocks are hushed; there's not a light
In any window nigh,
And not a single planet bright
Looks from the clouded sky.
The air is raw, the rain descends,
A bitter north wind blows;

His cloak the traveller scarce defends.
Will not the door unclose?

He knocks the third time, and the last:
His summons now they hear;
Within, a footstep, hurrying fast,
Is heard approaching near.
The bolt is drawn, the clanking chain
Falls to the floor of stone,
And Gilbert to his heart will strain
His wife and children soon.

The hand that lifts the latchet holds
A candle to his sight,
And Gilbert, on the step, beholds
A woman, clad in white.
Lo! water from her dripping dress
Runs on the streaming floor;
From every dark and clinging tress
The drops incessant pour.

There's none but her to welcome him;
She holds the candle high,
And, motionless in form and limb,
Stands cold and silent nigh.
There's sand and seaweed on her robe,
Her hollow eyes are blind;
No pulse in such a frame can throb,
No life is there defined.

Gilbert turned ashy-white, but still
His lips vouchsafed no cry;
He spurred his strength and master-will
To pass the figure by:
But, moving slow, it faced him straight;
It would not flinch nor quail.
Then first did Gilbert's strength abate,
His stony firmness quail.

He sank upon his knees and prayed—
The shape stood rigid there;
He called aloud for human aid—
No human aid was near.
An accent strange did thus repeat
Heaven's stern but just decree:
"The measure thou to her didst mete,
To thee shall measured be!"

Gilbert sprang from his bended knees,
By the pale spectre pushed,
And, wild as one whom demons seize,
Up the hall staircase rushed,
Entered his chamber. Near the bed
Sheathed steel and firearms hung.
Impelled by maniac purpose dread
He chose those stores among.

Across his throat a keen-edged knife
With vigorous hand he drew;
The wound was wide—his outraged life
Rushed rash and redly through.
And thus died, by a shameful death,
A wise and worldly man,
Who never drew but selfish breath
Since first his life began.

LIFE.

LIFE, believe, is not a dream
So dark as sages say.
Oft a little morning rain
Foretells a pleasant day.
Sometimes there are clouds of gloom,
But these are transient all.
If the shower will make the roses bloom,
Oh, why lament its fall?

Rapidly, merrily,
Life's sunny hours flit by,
Gratefully, cheerily,
Enjoy them as they fly.

What though Death at times steps in,
And calls our best away?
What though Sorrow seems to win,
O'er Hope, a heavy sway?
Yet Hope again elastic springs,
Unconquered, though she fell;
Still buoyant are her golden wings,
Still strong to bear us well.
Manfully, fearlessly,
The day of trial bear,
For gloriously, victoriously,
Can courage quell despair.

THE LETTER.

WHAT is she writing? Watch her now.
How fast her fingers move!
How eagerly her youthful brow
Is bent in thought above!
Her long curls, drooping, shade the light;
She puts them quick aside,
Nor knows that band of crystals bright
Her hasty touch untied.
It slips adown her silken dress,
Falls glittering at her feet;
Unmarked it falls, for she no less
Pursues her labour sweet.

The very loveliest hour that shines
Is in that deep blue sky;
The golden sun of June declines—
It has not caught her eye.
The cheerful lawn, and unclosed gate,
The white road, far away,

In vain for her light footsteps wait;
  She comes not forth to-day.
There is an open door of glass
  Close by that lady's chair;
From thence, to slopes of mossy grass,
  Descends a marble stair.

Tall plants of bright and spicy bloom
  Around the threshold grow;
Their leaves and blossoms shade the room
  From that sun's deepening glow.
Why does she not a moment glance
  Between the clustering flowers,
And mark in heaven the radiant dance
  Of evening's rosy hours?
Oh, look again! Still fixed her eye,
  Unsmiling, earnest still,
And fast her pen and fingers fly,
  Urged by her eager will.

Her soul is in th' absorbing task.
  To whom, then, does she write?
Nay, watch her still more closely; ask
  Her own eyes' serious light;
Where do they turn, as now her pen
  Hangs o'er th' unfinished line?
Whence fell the tearful gleam that then
  Did in their dark spheres shine?
The summer-parlour looks so dark,
  When from that sky you turn,
And from th' expanse of that green park
  You scarce may aught discern.

Yet o'er the piles of porcelain rare,
  O'er flower-stand, couch, and vase,
Sloped, as if leaning on the air,
  One picture meets the gaze.
'Tis there she turns; you may not see
  Distinct what form defines

The clouded mass of mystery
Yon broad gold frame confines.
But look again ; inured to shade
Your eyes now faintly trace
A stalwart form, a massive head,
A firm, determined face.

Black Spanish locks, a sunburnt cheek,
A brow high, broad, and white,
Where every furrow seems to speak
Of mind and moral might.
Is that her god ? I cannot tell.
Her eye a moment met
Th' impending picture, then it fell
Darkened and dimmed and wet.
A moment more, her task is done,
And sealed the letter lies ;
And now, towards the setting sun
She turns her tearful eyes.

Those tears flow over ; wonder not,
For by the inscription see
In what a strange and distant spot
Her heart of hearts must be !
Three seas and many a league of land
That letter must pass o'er,
Ere read by him to whose loved hand
'Tis sent from England's shore.
Remote colonial wilds detain
Her husband, loved though stern ;
She, 'mid that smiling English scene,
Weeps for his wished return.

REGRET.

Long ago I wished to leave
"The house where I was born;"
Long ago I used to grieve,
My home seemed so forlorn.
In other years its silent rooms
Were filled with haunting fears;
Now their very memory comes
O'ercharged with tender tears.

Life and marriage I have known—
Things once deemed so bright;
Now, how utterly is flown
Every ray of light!
'Mid the unknown sea of life
I no blest isle have found;
At last, through all its wild waves' strife,
My bark is homeward bound.

Farewell, dark and rolling deep!
Farewell, foreign shore!
Open, in unclouded sweep,
Thou glorious realm before!
Yet, though I had safely passed
That weary, vexèd main,
One loved voice, through surge and blast
Could call me back again.

Though the soul's bright morning rose
O'er paradise for me,
William, even from heaven's repose
I'd turn, invoked by thee!
Storm nor surge should e'er arrest
My soul, exulting then.
All my heaven was once thy breast—
Would it were mine again!

PRESENTIMENT.

"Sister, you've sat there all the day;
Come to the hearth awhile.
The wind so wildly sweeps away,
The clouds so darkly pile.
That open book has lain, unread,
For hours upon your knee;
You've never smiled nor turned your head.
What can you, sister, see?"

"Come hither, Jane; look down the field.
How dense a mist creeps on!
The path, the hedge, are both concealed—
Ev'n the white gate is gone;
No landscape through the fog I trace,
No hill with pastures green;
All featureless is Nature's face,
All masked in clouds her mien.

"Scarce is the rustle of a leaf
Heard in our garden now;
The year grows old, its days wax brief,
The tresses leave its brow.
The rain drives fast before the wind,
The sky is blank and gray;
O Jane, what sadness fills the mind
On such a dreary day!"

"You think too much, my sister dear;
You sit too long alone.
What though November days be drear?
Full soon will they be gone.
I've swept the hearth, and placed your chair;
Come, Emma, sit by me.
Our own fireside is never drear,
Though late and wintry wane the year,
Though rough the night may be."

"The peaceful glow of our fireside
Imparts no peace to me.
My thoughts would rather wander wide
Than rest, dear Jane, with thee.
I'm on a distant journey bound,
And if, about my heart,
Too closely kindred ties were bound,
'Twould break when forced to part.

"'Soon will November days be o'er.'
Well have you spoken, Jane.
My own forebodings tell me more:
For me, I know, by presage sure,
They'll ne'er return again.
Ere long, nor sun nor storm to me
Will bring or joy or gloom;
They reach not that eternity
Which soon will be my home."

Eight months are gone: the summer sun
Sets in a glorious sky;
A quiet field, all green and lone,
Receives its rosy dye.
Jane sits upon a shaded stile—
Alone she sits there now;
Her head rests on her hand the while,
And thought o'ercasts her brow.

She's thinking of one winter's day,
A few short months ago,
When Emma's bier was borne away
O'er wastes of frozen snow.
She's thinking how that drifted snow
Dissolved in spring's first gleam,
And how her sister's memory now
Fades, even as fades a dream.

The snow will whiten earth again,
But Emma comes no more.
She left, 'mid winter's sleet and rain,
This world for heaven's far shore.

On Beulah's hills she wanders now,
  On Eden's tranquil plain;
To her shall Jane hereafter go—
  She ne'er shall come to Jane.

THE TEACHER'S MONOLOGUE.

THE room is quiet; thoughts alone
  People its mute tranquillity.
The yoke put off, the long task done,
  I am, as it is bliss to be,
Still and untroubled. Now I see,
  For the first time, how soft the day
O'er waveless water, stirless tree,
  Silent and sunny, wings its way.
Now, as I watch that distant hill,
  So faint, so blue, so far removed,
Sweet dreams of home my heart may fill—
  That home where I am known and loved.
It lies beyond. Yon azure brow
  Parts me from all earth holds for me;
And, morn and eve, my yearnings flow
  Thitherward tending, changelessly.
My happiest hours—ay, all the time—
  I love to keep in memory,
Lapsed among moors, ere life's first prime
  Decayed to dark anxiety.

Sometimes I think a narrow heart
  Makes me thus mourn those far away,
And keeps my love so far apart
  From friends and friendships of to-day.
Sometimes I think 'tis but a dream
  I treasure up so jealously;
All the sweet thoughts I live on seem
  To vanish into vacancy.
And then this strange, coarse world around
  Seems all that's palpable and true;

And every sight and every sound
  Combines my spirit to subdue
To aching grief, so void and lone
  Is life and earth, so worse than vain
The hopes that, in my own heart sown,
  And cherished by such sun and rain
As joy and transient sorrow shed,
  Have ripened to a harvest there.
Alas! methinks I hear it said,
"Thy golden sheaves are empty air."

All fades away. My very home
  I think will soon be desolate.
I hear, at times, a warning come
  Of bitter partings at its gate;
And if I should return and see
  The hearth-fire quenched, the vacant chair,
And hear it whispered mournfully
  That farewells have been spoken there,
What shall I do, and whither turn?
Where look for peace? When cease to mourn?

* * * *

'Tis not the air I wished to play,
  The strain I wished to sing;
My wilful spirit slipped away
  And struck another string.
I neither wanted smile nor tear,
  Bright joy nor bitter woe,
But just a song that, sweet and clear,
  Though haply sad, might flow—

A quiet song, to solace me
  When sleep refused to come;
A strain to chase despondency
  When sorrowful for home.
In vain I try; I cannot sing,
  All feels so cold and dead—
No wild distress, no gushing spring
  Of tears in anguish shed;

But all the impatient gloom of one
Who waits a distant day,
When, some great task of suffering done,
Repose shall toil repay.
For youth departs, and pleasure flies,
And life consumes away,
And youth's rejoicing ardour dies
Beneath this drear delay;

And Patience, weary with her yoke,
Is yielding to despair,
And Health's elastic spring is broke
Beneath the strain of care.
Life will be gone ere I have lived.
Where now is life's first prime?
I've worked and studied, longed and grieved,
Through all that rosy time.

To toil, to think, to long, to grieve—
Is such my future fate?
The morn was dreary; must the eve
Be also desolate?
Well, such a life at least makes Death
A welcome, wished-for friend.
Then aid me, Reason, Patience, Faith,
To suffer to the end!

PASSION.

Some have won a wild delight
By daring wilder sorrow;
Could I gain thy love to-night,
I'd hazard death to-morrow.

Could the battle-struggle earn
One kind glance from thine eye,
How this withering heart would burn
The heady fight to try!

Welcome nights of broken sleep,
  And days of carnage cold,
Could I deem that thou wouldst weep
  To hear my perils told.

Tell me, if with wandering bands
  I roam full far away,
Wilt thou to those distant lands
  In spirit ever stray?

Wild, long, a trumpet sounds afar;
  Bid me—bid me go
Where Seik and Briton meet in war,
  On Indian Sutlej's flow.

Blood has dyed the Sutlej's waves
  With scarlet stain, I know;
Indus' borders yawn with graves,
  Yet, command me go!

Though rank and high the holocaust
  Of nations steams to heaven,
Glad I'd join the death-doomed host,
  Were but the mandate given.

Passion's strength should nerve my arm,
  Its ardour stir my life,
Till human force to that dread charm
Should yield and sink in wild alarm,
  Like trees to tempest-strife.

If, hot from war, I seek thy love,
  Darest thou turn aside?
Darest thou then my fire reprove
  By scorn and maddening pride?

No; my will shall yet control
  Thy will, so high and free,
And love shall tame that haughty soul—
  Yes, tenderest love for me.

I'll read my triumph in thine eyes,
  Behold and prove the change,
Then leave, perchance, my noble prize,
  Once more in arms to range.

I'd die when all the foam is up,
  The bright wine sparkling high,
Nor wait till in the exhausted cup
  Life's dull dregs only lie.

Then love thus crowned with sweet reward,
  Hope blest with fullness large,
I'd mount the saddle, draw the sword,
  And perish in the charge.

PREFERENCE.

Not in scorn do I reprove thee,
  Not in pride thy vows I waive,
But, believe, I could not love thee
  Wert thou prince and I a slave.
These, then, are thine oaths of passion ?
  This thy tenderness for me ?
Judged even by thine own confession
  Thou art steeped in perfidy.
Having vanquished, thou wouldst leave me—
  Thus I read thee long ago ;
Therefore dared I not deceive thee,
  Even with friendship's gentle show.
Therefore, with impassive coldness
  Have I ever met thy gaze,
Though, full oft, with daring boldness,
  Thou thine eyes to mine didst raise.
Why that smile ? Thou now art deeming
  This my coldness all untrue—
But a mask of frozen seeming
  Hiding secret fires from view.
Touch my hand, thou self-deceiver.
  Nay ; be calm, for I am so.

Does it burn ? Does my lip quiver ?
  Has mine eye a troubled glow ?
Canst thou call a moment's colour
  To my forehead, to my cheek ?
Canst thou tinge their tranquil pallor
  With one flattering, feverish streak ?
Am I marble ? What ! no woman
  Could so calm before thee stand ?
Nothing living, sentient, human,
  Could so coldly take thy hand ?
Yes, a sister might, a mother.
  My good-will is sisterly.
Dream not, then, I strive to smother
  Fires that inly burn for thee.
Rave not, rage not ; wrath is fruitless.
  Fury cannot change my mind:
I but deem the feeling rootless
  Which so whirls in passion's wind.
Can I love ? Oh, deeply, truly,
  Warmly, fondly—but not thee ;
And my love is answered duly
  With an equal energy.
Wouldst thou see thy rival ? Hasten,
  Draw that curtain soft aside,
Look where yon thick branches chasten
  Noon with shades of eventide.
In that glade, where foliage blending
  Forms a green arch overhead,
Sits thy rival, thoughtful bending
  O'er a stand with papers spread,
Motionless, his fingers plying
  That untired, unresting pen ;
Time and tide unnoticed flying,
  There he sits, the first of men,—
Man of conscience, man of reason,
  Stern, perchance, but ever just ;
Foe to falsehood, wrong, and treason,
  Honour's shield, and virtue's trust ;

Worker, thinker, firm defender
  Of Heaven's truth—man's liberty;
Soul of iron, proof to slander,
  Rock where founders tyranny.
Fame he seeks not; but full surely
  She will seek him, in his home.
This I know, and wait securely
  For the atoning hour to come.
To that man my faith is given;
  Therefore, soldier, cease to sue.
While God reigns in earth and heaven
  I to him will still be true.

EVENING SOLACE.

THE human heart has hidden treasures,
  In secret kept, in silence sealed—
The thoughts, the hopes, the dreams, the pleasures,
  Whose charms were broken if revealed.
And days may pass in gay confusion,
  And nights in rosy riot fly,
While, lost in fame's or wealth's illusion,
  The memory of the past may die.

But there are hours of lonely musing,
  Such as in evening silence come,
When, soft as birds their pinions closing,
  The heart's best feelings gather home.
Then in our souls there seems to languish
  A tender grief that is not woe,
And thoughts that once wrung groans of anguish
  Now cause but some mild tears to flow.

And feelings, once as strong as passions,
  Float softly back—a faded dream;
Our own sharp griefs and wild sensations
  The tale of others' sufferings seem.

Oh! when the heart is freshly bleeding,
How longs it for that time to be
When, through the mist of years receding,
Its woes but live in reverie!

And it can dwell on moonlight glimmer,
On evening shade and loneliness,
And, while the sky grows dim and dimmer,
Feel no untold and strange distress—
Only a deeper impulse given
By lonely hour and darkened room
To solemn thoughts that soar to heaven,
Seeking a life and world to come.

STANZAS.

If thou be in a lonely place,
If one hour's calm be thine,
As Evening bends her placid face
O'er this sweet day's decline;
If all the earth and all the heaven
Now look serene to thee,
As o'er them shuts the summer even,
One moment—think of me!

Pause, in the lane, returning home;
'Tis dusk, it will be still.
Pause near the elm; a sacred gloom
Its breezeless boughs will fill.
Look at that soft and golden light,
High in the unclouded sky;
Watch the last bird's belated flight
As it flits silent by.

Hark for a sound upon the wind—
A step, a voice, a sigh.
If all be still, then yield thy mind,
Unchecked, to memory.

If thy love were like mine, how blest
  That twilight hour would seem,
When, back from the regretted past
  Returned our early dream!

If thy love were like mine, how wild
  Thy longings, even to pain,
For sunset soft, and moonlight mild,
  To bring that hour again!
But oft when, in thine arms I lay,
  I've seen thy dark eyes shine,
And deeply felt their changeful ray
  Spoke other love than mine.

My love is almost anguish now,
  It beats so strong and true;
'Twere rapture could I deem that thou
  Such anguish ever knew.
I have been but thy transient flower;
  Thou wert my god divine.
Till checked by death's congealing power,
  This heart must throb for thine.

And well my dying hour were blest
  If life's expiring breath
Should pass as thy lips gently prest
  My forehead cold in death;
And sound my sleep would be, and sweet,
  Beneath the churchyard tree,
If sometimes in thy heart should beat
  One pulse still true to me.

WATCHING AND WISHING.

Oh, would I were the golden light
  That shines around thee now,
As slumber shades the spotless white
  Of that unclouded brow!

It watches through each changeful dream
  Thy features' varied play;
It meets thy waking eyes' soft gleam
  By dawn, by op'ning day.

Oh, would I were the crimson veil
  Above thy couch of snow,
To dye that cheek so soft, so pale,
  With my reflected glow!
Oh, would I were the cord of gold
  Whose tassel, set with pearls,
Just meets the silken cov'ring's fold
  And rests upon thy curls,

Dishevelled in thy rosy sleep,
  And shading soft thy dreams!
Across their bright and raven sweep
  The golden tassel gleams.
I would be anything for thee,
  My love, my radiant love—
A flower, a bird, for sympathy,
  A watchful star above.

WHEN THOU SLEEPEST.

When thou sleepest, lulled in night,
  Art thou lost in vacancy?
Does no silent inward light,
  Softly breaking, fall on thee?
Does no dream on quiet wing
  Float a moment 'mid that ray,
Touch some answering mental string,
  Wake a note, and pass away?

When thou watchest, as the hours
  Mute and blind are speeding on
O'er that rayless path where lowers
  Muffled midnight, black and lone,

Comes there nothing hovering near,
  Thought or half reality,
Whispering marvels in thine ear,
  Every word a mystery,

Chanting low an ancient lay,
  Every plaintive note a spell,
Clearing memory's clouds away,
  Showing scenes thy heart loves well ?
Songs forgot, in childhood sung,
  Airs in youth beloved and known,
Whispered by that airy tongue,
  Once again are made thine own.

Be it dream in haunted sleep,
  Be it thought in vigil lone,
Drink'st thou not a rapture deep
  From the feeling, 'tis thine own ?
All thine own ; thou need'st not tell
  What bright form thy slumber blest :
All thine own ; remember well
  Night and shade were round thy rest.

Nothing looked upon thy bed
  Save the lonely watch-light's gleam ;
Not a whisper, not a tread
  Scared thy spirit's glorious dream.
Sometimes, when the midnight gale
  Breathed a moan and then was still,
Seemed the spell of thought to fail,
  Checked by one ecstatic thrill—

Felt as all external things,
  Robed in moonlight, smote thine eye ;
Then thy spirit's waiting wings
  Quivered, trembled, spread to fly ;
Then th' aspirer, wildly swelling,
  Looked where 'mid transcendency
Star to star was mutely telling
  Heaven's resolve and fate's decree.

Oh! it longed for holier fire
  Than this spark in earthly shrine;
Oh! it soared, and higher, higher,
  Sought to reach a home divine.
Hopeless quest! Soon weak and weary
  Flagged the pinion, drooped the plume:
And again in sadness dreary
  Came the baffled wanderer home.

And again it turned for soothing
  To th' unfinished, broken dream;
While, the ruffled current smoothing,
  Thought rolled on her startled stream.
I have felt this cherished feeling,
  Sweet and known to none but me;
Still I felt it nightly healing
  Each dark day's despondency.

PARTING.

THERE's no use in weeping,
  Though we are condemned to part:
There's such a thing as keeping
  A remembrance in one's heart;

There's such a thing as dwelling
  On the thought ourselves have nursed,
And with scorn and courage telling
  The world to do its worst.

We'll not let its follies grieve us—
  We'll just take them as they come;
And then every day will leave us
  A merry laugh for home.

When we've left each friend and brother,
  When we're parted wide and far,
We will think of one another
  As even better than we are.

Every glorious sight above us,
  Every pleasant sight beneath,
We'll connect with thóse that love us,
  Whom we truly love till death.

In the evening, when we're sitting
  By the fire, perchance alone,
Then shall heart with warm heart meeting
  Give responsive tone for tone.

We can burst the bonds which chain us,
  Which cold human hands have wrought,
And where none shall dare restrain us
  We can meet again in thought.

So there's no use in weeping;
  Bear a cheerful spirit still;
Never doubt that Fate is keeping
  Future good for present ill.

APOSTASY.

This last denial of my faith,
  Thou, solemn priest, hast heard;
And though upon my bed of death,
  I call not back a word.
Point not to thy Madonna, priest—
  Thy sightless saint of stone;
She cannot, from this burning breast,
  Wring one repentant moan.

Thou say'st that when a sinless child
  I duly bent the knee,
And prayed to what in marble smiled
  Cold, lifeless, mute on me.
I did. But listen. Children spring
  Full soon to riper youth;
And for love's vow and wedlock's ring
  I sold my early truth.

'Twas not a gray, bare head like thine
Bent o'er me when I said,
" That land and God and faith are mine
For which thy fathers bled."
I see thee not—my eyes are dim—
But well I hear thee say,
" O daughter, cease to think of him
Who led thy soul astray.

" Between you lies both space and time;
Let leagues and years prevail
To turn thee from the path of crime
Back to the Church's pale."
And did I need that thou shouldst tell
What mighty barriers rise
To part me from that dungeon-cell
Where my loved Walter lies?

And did I need that thou shouldst taunt
My dying hour at last
By bidding this worn spirit pant
No more for what is past?
Priest, *must* I cease to think of him?
How hollow rings that word!
Can time, can tears, can distance dim
The memory of my lord?

I said before, I saw not thee,
Because, an hour agone,
Over my eyeballs, heavily,
The lids fell down like stone.
But still my spirit's inward sight
Beholds his image beam
As fixed, as clear, as burning bright,
As some red planet's gleam.

Talk not of thy last sacrament,
Tell not thy beads for me;
Both rite and prayer are vainly spent
As dews upon the sea.

Speak not one word of heaven above,
  Rave not of hell's alarms;
Give me but back my Walter's love,
  Restore me to his arms.

Then will the bliss of heaven be won;
  Then will hell shrink away,
As I have seen night's terrors shun
  The conquering steps of day.
'Tis my religion thus to love,
  My creed thus fixed to be;
Not death shall shake nor priestcraft break
  My rock-like constancy.

Now go; for at the door there waits
  Another stranger guest.
He calls—I come; my pulse scarce beats,
  My heart fails in my breast.
Again that voice; how far away,
  How dreary sounds that tone!
And I, methinks, am gone astray
  In trackless wastes and lone.

I fain would rest a little while.
  Where can I find a stay
Till dawn upon the hills shall smile
  And show some trodden way?
I come! I come!" in haste she said;
"'Twas Walter's voice I heard!"
Then up she sprang, but fell back dead—
  His name her latest word.

WINTER STORES.

We take from life one little share,
  And say that this shall be
A space redeemed from toil and care,
  From tears and sadness free.

And, haply, Death unstrings his bow,
  And Sorrow stands apart,
And, for a little while, we know
  The sunshine of the heart.

Existence seems a summer eve,
  Warm, soft, and full of peace;
Our free, unfettered feelings give
  The soul its full release.

A moment, then, it takes the power
  To call up thoughts that throw
Around that charmed and hallowed hour
  This life's divinest glow.

But time, though viewlessly it flies,
  And slowly, will not stay,
Alike through clear and clouded skies
  It cleaves its silent way.

Alike the bitter cup of grief,
  Alike the draught of bliss;
Its progress leaves but moment brief
  For baffled lips to kiss.

The sparkling draught is dried away,
  The hour of rest is gone,
And urgent voices round us say,
  "Ho, lingerer, hasten on!"

And has the soul, then, only gained
  From this brief time of ease
A moment's rest, when overstrained,
  One hurried glimpse of peace?

No; while the sun shone kindly o'er us,
  And flowers bloomed round our feet,
While many a bud of joy before us
  Unclosed its petals sweet,

An unseen work within was plying;
  Like honey-seeking bee
From flower to flower unwearied flying,
  Laboured one faculty.

Thoughtful for winter's future sorrow,
  Its gloom and scarcity;
Prescient to-day of want to-morrow,
  Toiled quiet Memory.

'Tis she that from each transient pleasure
  Extracts a lasting good;
'Tis she that finds, in summer, treasure
  To serve for winter's food.

And when youth's summer day is vanished,
  And age brings winter's stress,
Her stores, with hoarded sweets replenished,
  Life's evening hours will bless.

THE MISSIONARY.

PLOUGH, vessel, plough the British main,
Seek the free ocean's wider plain;
Leave English scenes and English skies,
Unbind, dissever English ties;
Bear me to climes remote and strange,
Where altered life, fast-following change,
Hot action, never-ceasing toil,
Shall stir, turn, dig the spirit's soil;
Fresh roots shall plant, fresh seed shall sow,
Till a new garden there shall grow,
Cleared of the weeds that fill it now—
Mere human love, mere selfish yearning,
  Which, cherished, would arrest me yet.
I grasp the plough; there's no returning.
  Let me, then, struggle to forget.

But England's shores are yet in view,
And England's skies of tender blue
Are arched above her guardian sea.
I cannot yet remembrance flee.
I must again, then, firmly face
That task of anguish, to retrace.
Wedded to home, I home forsake;
Fearful of change, I changes make;
Too fond of ease, I plunge in toil;
Lover of calm, I seek turmoil.
Nature and hostile destiny
  Stir in my heart a conflict wild;
And long and fierce the war will be
  Ere duty both has reconciled.

What other tie yet holds me fast
To the divorced, abandoned past?
Smouldering, on my heart's altar lies
The fire of some great sacrifice,
Not yet half quenched. The sacred steel
But lately struck my carnal will,
My life-long hope, first joy and last,
What I loved well, and clung to fast;
What I wished wildly to retain;
What I renounced with soul-felt pain;
What, when I saw it, axe-struck, perish,
Left me no joy on earth to cherish—
A man bereft; yet sternly now
I do confirm that Jephtha vow.
Shall I retract, or fear, or flee?
Did Christ, when rose the fatal tree
Before Him on Mount Calvary?
'Twas a long fight, hard-fought, but won,
And what I did was justly done.

Yet, Helen, from thy love I turned,
When my heart most for thy heart burned.
I dared thy tears, I dared thy scorn—

Easier the death-pang had been borne.
Helen, thou mightst not go with me;
I could not, dared not stay for thee:
I heard afar in bonds complain
The savage from beyond the main;
And that wild sound rose o'er the cry
Wrung out by passion's agony;
And even when, with the bitterest tear
  I ever shed, mine eyes were dim,
Still, with the spirit's vision clear,
  I saw hell's empire, vast and grim,
Spread on each Indian river's shore,
Each realm of Asia covering o'er.
There the weak, trampled by the strong,
  Live but to suffer, hopeless die;
There pagan priests, whose creed is wrong,
  Extortion, lust, and cruelty,
Crush our lost race, and brimming fill
The bitter cup of human ill.
And I, who have the healing creed,
  The faith benign of Mary's Son,
Shall I behold my brother's need,
  And, selfishly, to aid him shun?
I, who, upon my mother's knees
  In childhood, read Christ's written word,
Received His legacy of peace,
  His holy rule of action heard;
I, in whose heart the sacred sense
  Of Jesus' love was early felt,
Of His pure, full benevolence,
  His pitying tenderness for guilt,
His shepherd care for wandering sheep,
  For all weak, sorrowing, trembling things,
His mercy vast, His passion deep
  Of anguish for man's sufferings;
I, schooled from childhood in such lore,
  Dared I draw back or hesitate
When called to heal the sickness sore
  Of those far off and desolate?

Dark, in the realm and shades of death,
  Nations, and tribes, and empires lie;
But even to them the light of faith
  Is breaking on their sombre sky.
And be it mine to bid them raise
  Their drooped heads to the kindling scene,
And know and hail the sunrise blaze
  Which heralds Christ the Nazarene.
I know how hell the veil will spread
  Over their brows and filmy eyes,
And earthward crush the lifted head
  That would look up and seek the skies.
I know what war the fiend will wage
  Against that soldier of the Cross
Who comes to dare his demon rage
  And work his kingdom shame and loss.
Yes, hard and terrible the toil
Of him who steps on foreign soil,
Resolved to plant the gospel vine,
Where tyrants rule and slaves repine;
Eager to lift religion's light
Where thickest shades of mental night
Screen the false god and fiendish rite;
Reckless that missionary blood,
Shed in wild wilderness and wood,
Has left, upon the unblest air,
The man's deep moan, the martyr's prayer.
I know my lot; I only ask
Power to fulfil the glorious task.
Willing the spirit, may the flesh
Strength for the day receive afresh.
May burning sun or deadly wind
Prevail not o'er an earnest mind;
May torments strange or direst death
Nor trample truth, nor baffle faith.
Though such blood-drops should fall from me
As fell in old Gethsemane,
Welcome the anguish, so it gave
More strength to work, more skill to save.

And, oh ! if brief must be my time,
If hostile hand or fatal clime
Cut short my course, still o'er my grave,
Lord, may Thy harvest whitening wave.
So I the culture may begin,
Let others thrust the sickle in ;
If but the seed will faster grow,
May my blood water what I sow !

What ! have I ever trembling stood,
And feared to give to God that blood ?
What ! has the coward love of life
Made me shrink from the righteous strife ?
Have human passions, human fears
Severed me from those pioneers
Whose task is to march first, and trace
Paths for the progress of our race ?
It has been so ; but grant me, Lord,
Now to stand steadfast by Thy word,
Protected by salvation's helm,
  Shielded by faith, with truth begirt,
To smile when trials seek to whelm,
  And stand 'mid testing fires unhurt,
Hurling hell's strongest bulwarks down,
  Even when the last pang thrills my breast,
When death bestows the martyr's crown,
  And calls me into Jesus' rest.
Then for my ultimate reward,
Then for the world-rejoicing word,
The voice from Father, Spirit, Son—
"Servant of God, well hast thou done !"

POEMS

by EMILY BRONTË

("ELLIS BELL")

FAITH AND DESPONDENCY.

"THE winter wind is loud and wild;
Come close to me, my darling child.
Forsake thy books and mateless play,
And, while the night is gathering gray,
We'll talk its pensive hours away.

"Iernë, round our sheltered hall
November's gusts unheeded call;
Not one faint breath can enter here
Enough to wave my daughter's hair;
And I am glad to watch the blaze
Glance from her eyes with mimic rays—
To feel her cheek, so softly pressed
In happy quiet on my breast.

"But yet even this tranquillity
Brings bitter, restless thoughts to me;
And in the red fire's cheerful glow
I think of deep glens blocked with snow;
I dream of moor, and misty hill,
Where evening closes dark and chill;
For lone among the mountains cold
Lie those that I have loved of old.
And my heart aches, in hopeless pain,
Exhausted with repinings vain,
That I shall greet them ne'er again!"

"Father, in early infancy,
When you were far beyond the sea,
Such thoughts were tyrants over me.
I often sat, for hours together,
Through the long nights of angry weather,
Raised on my pillow, to descry
The dim moon struggling in the sky;
Or, with strained ear, to catch the shock
Of rock with wave, and wave with rock.
So would I fearful vigil keep,
And, all for listening, never sleep.
But this world's life has much to dread.
Not so, my father, with the dead.

"Oh! not for them should we despair.
The grave is drear, but they are not there.
Their dust is mingled with the sod,
Their happy souls are gone to God.
You told me this, and yet you sigh,
And murmur that your friends must die.
Ah! my dear father, tell me why?
For, if your former words were true,
  How useless would such sorrow be!
As wise to mourn the seed which grew
  Unnoticed on its parent tree,
Because it fell in fertile earth,
And sprang up to a glorious birth,
Struck deep its root, and lifted high
Its green boughs in the breezy sky.

"But I'll not fear; I will not weep
For those whose bodies rest in sleep.
I know there is a blessed shore
  Opening its ports for me and mine.
And, gazing time's wide waters o'er,
  I weary for that land divine,
Where we were born, where you and I
Shall meet our dearest when we die.
From suffering and corruption free,
Restored into the Deity."

"Well hast thou spoken, sweet, trustful child,
And wiser than thy sire;
And worldly tempests, raging wild,
Shall strengthen thy desire,
Thy fervent hope, through storm and foam,
Through wind and ocean's roar,
To reach at last the eternal home,
The steadfast, changeless shore."

STARS.

Ah! why, because the dazzling sun
Restored our earth to joy,
Have you departed, every one,
And left a desert sky?

All through the night your glorious eyes
Were gazing down in mine,
And with a full heart's thankful sighs
I blessed that watch divine.

I was at peace, and drank your beams
As they were life to me,
And revelled in my changeful dreams,
Like petrel on the sea.

Thought followed thought, star followed star,
Through boundless regions, on;
While one sweet influence, near and far,
Thrilled through, and proved us one.

Why did the morning dawn to break
So great, so pure a spell,
And scorch with fire the tranquil cheek
Where your cool radiance fell?

Blood-red he rose, and, arrow-straight,
His fierce beams struck my brow;
The soul of nature sprang, elate,
But *mine* sank sad and low.

My lids closed down, yet through their veil
  I saw him, blazing still,
And steep in gold the misty dale,
  And flash upon the hill.

I turned me to the pillow then,
  To call back night, and see
Your worlds of solemn light again
  Throb with my heart and me.

It would not do; the pillow glowed,
  And glowed both roof and floor,
And birds sang loudly in the wood,
  And fresh winds shook the door.

The curtains waved, the wakened flies
  Were murmuring round my room,
Imprisoned there till I should rise
  And give them leave to roam.

O stars, and dreams, and gentle night—
  O night and stars, return,
And hide me from the hostile light
  That does not warm, but burn;

That drains the blood of suffering men,
  Drinks tears instead of dew!
Let me sleep through his blinding reign,
  And only wake with you!

THE PHILOSOPHER.

"Enough of thought, philosopher!
  Too long hast thou been dreaming
Unlightened, in this chamber drear,
  While summer's sun is beaming!
Space-sweeping soul, what sad refrain
Concludes thy musings once again?"

"Oh, for the time when I shall sleep
Without identity,
And never care how rain may steep,
Or snow may cover me!
No promised heaven these wild desires
Could all or half fulfil;
No threatened hell, with quenchless fires,
Subdue this quenchless will!"

"So said I, and still say the same—
Still, to my death, will say,
Three gods within this little frame
Are warring night and day.
Heaven could not hold them all, and yet
They all are held in me,
And must be mine till I forget
My present entity.
Oh for the time when in my breast
Their struggles will be o'er!
Oh for the day when I shall rest
And never suffer more!"

"I saw a spirit standing, man,
Where thou dost stand, an hour ago,
And round his feet three rivers ran,
Of equal depth and equal flow—
A golden stream, and one like blood,
And one like sapphire seemed to be;
But where they joined their triple flood
It tumbled in an inky sea.
The spirit sent his dazzling gaze
Down through that ocean's gloomy night,
Then, kindling all with sudden blaze,
The glad deep sparkled wide and bright,
White as the sun, far, far more fair
Than its divided sources were."

"And even for that spirit, seer,
I've watched and sought my lifetime long—

Sought him in heaven, hell, earth, and air,
An endless search, and always wrong.
Had I but seen his glorious eye
Once light the clouds that 'wilder me,
I ne'er had raised this coward cry
To cease to think, and cease to be ;
I ne'er had called oblivion blest,
Nor, stretching eager hands to death,
Implored to change for senseless rest
This sentient soul, this living breath.
Oh, let me die, that power and will
Their cruel strife may close,
And conquered good and conquering ill
Be lost in one repose ! "

REMEMBRANCE.

COLD in the earth, and the deep snow piled above thee ;
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave !
Have I forgot, my only love, to love thee,
Severed at last by time's all-severing wave ?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains, on that northern shore,
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
Thy noble heart for ever, ever more ?

Cold in the earth, and fifteen wild Decembers
From those brown hills have melted into spring ;
Faithful indeed is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering.

Sweet love of youth, forgive if I forget thee
While the world's tide is bearing me along ;
Other desires and other hopes beset me—
Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong.

No later light has lightened up my heaven,
No second morn has ever shone for me ;

All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
  All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

But when the days of golden dreams had perished,
  And even despair was powerless to destroy,
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
  Strengthened, and fed without the aid of joy.

Then did I check the tears of useless passion,
  Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine,
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
  Down to that tomb already more than mine.

And even yet I dare not let it languish,
  Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain ;
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
  How could I seek the empty world again ?

THE OUTCAST MOTHER.

I'VE seen this dell in July's shine,
  As lovely as an angel's dream :
Above, heaven's depth of blue divine ;
  Around, the evening's golden beam.

I've seen the purple heather-bell
  Look out by many a storm-worn stone ;
And, oh ! I've known such music swell,
  Such wild notes wake these passes lone,

So soft, yet so intensely felt,
  So low, yet so distinctly heard,
My breath would pause, my eyes would melt,
  And tears would dew the green heath-sward.

I'd linger here a summer day,
  Nor care how fast the hours flew by,
Nor mark the sun's departing ray
  Smile sadly from the dark'ning sky.

Then, then I might have laid me down
  And dreamed my sleep would gentle be;
I might have left thee, darling one,
  And thought thy God was guarding thee.

But now there is no wand'ring glow,
  No gleam to say that God is nigh;
And coldly spreads the couch of snow,
  And harshly sounds thy lullaby.

Forests of heather, dark and long,
  Wave their brown branching arms above;
And they must soothe thee with their song,
  And they must shield my child of love.

Alas! the flakes are heavily falling;
  They cover fast each guardian crest;
And chilly white their shroud is palling
  Thy frozen limbs and freezing breast.

Wakes up the storm more madly wild,
  The mountain drifts are tossed on high.
Farewell, unblessed, unfriended child;
  I cannot bear to watch thee die.

A DEATH-SCENE.

"O DAY, he cannot die
  When thou so fair art shining!
O sun, in such a glorious sky,
  So tranquilly declining,

"He cannot leave thee now,
  While fresh west winds are blowing,
And all around his youthful brow
  Thy cheerful light is glowing!

"Edward! awake, awake!
  The golden evening gleams

Warm and bright on Arden's lake—
Arouse thee from thy dreams!

"Beside thee, on my knee,
My dearest friend, I pray
That thou, to cross the eternal sea,
Wouldst yet one hour delay.

"I hear its billows roar,
I see them foaming high;
But no glimpse of a farther shore
Has blest my straining eye.

"Believe not what they urge
Of Eden isles beyond;
Turn back from that tempestuous surge
To thy own native land.

"It is not death, but pain,
That struggles in thy breast.
Nay, rally, Edward; rouse again.
I cannot let thee rest!"

One long look, that sore reproved me
For the woe I could not bear,
One mute look of suffering moved me
To repent my useless prayer;

And, with sudden check, the heaving
Of distraction passed away;
Not a sign of further grieving
Stirred my soul that awful day.

Paled at length, the sweet sun setting,
Sunk to peace the twilight breeze;
Summer dews fell softly, wetting
Glen, and glade, and silent trees.

Then his eyes began to weary,
Weighed beneath a mortal sleep,

And their orbs grew strangely dreary,
Clouded, even as they would weep.

But they wept not, but they changed not,
Never moved, and never closed;
Troubled still, and still they ranged not;
Wandered not, nor yet reposed.

So I knew that he was dying;
Stooped, and raised his languid head;
Felt no breath, and heard no sighing,
So I knew that he was dead.

SONG.

The linnet in the rocky dells,
The moor-lark in the air,
The bee among the heather-bells
That hide my lady fair:

The wild deer browse above her breast,
The wild birds raise their brood;
And they, her smiles of love caressed.
Have left her solitude.

I ween that when the grave's dark wall
Did first her form retain,
They thought their hearts could ne'er recall
The light of joy again.

They thought the tide of grief would flow
Unchecked through future years;
But where is all their anguish now,
And where are all their tears?

Well, let them fight for honour's breath,
Or pleasure's shade pursue:
The dweller in the land of death
Is changed and careless too.

And if their eyes should watch and weep
Till sorrow's source were dry,
She would not, in her tranquil sleep,
Return a single sigh.

Blow, west wind, by the lonely mound.
And murmur, summer streams:
There is no need of other sound
To soothe my lady's dreams.

ANTICIPATION.

How beautiful the earth is still
To thee, how full of happiness!
How little fraught with real ill,
Or unreal phantoms of distress!
How spring can bring thee glory yet,
And summer win thee to forget
December's sullen time!
Why dost thou hold the treasure fast
Of youth's delight, when youth is past,
And thou art near thy prime?

When those who were thy own compeers,
Equals in fortune and in years,
Have seen their morning melt in tears
To clouded, smileless day;
Blest had they died untried and young,
Before their hearts went wandering wrong—
Poor slaves, subdued by passions strong,
A weak and helpless prey!

"Because I hoped while they enjoyed,
And by fulfilment hope destroyed;
As children hope, with trustful breast,
I waited bliss, and cherished rest.
A thoughtful spirit taught me soon
That we must long till life be done;

That every phase of earthly joy
Must always fade, and always cloy.

"This I foresaw, and would not chase
The fleeting treacheries;
But, with firm foot and tranquil face,
Held backward from that tempting race,
Gazed o'er the sands the waves efface
To the enduring seas;
There cast my anchor of desire
Deep in unknown eternity;
Nor ever let my spirit tire
With looking for *what is to be*.

"It is hope's spell that glorifies,
Like youth, to my maturer eyes,
All nature's million mysteries,
The fearful and the fair.
Hope soothes me in the griefs I know,
She lulls my pain for others' woe,
And makes me strong to undergo
What I am born to bear.
Glad comforter! will I not brave,
Unawed, the darkness of the grave—
Nay, smile to hear death's billows rave,
Sustained, my guide, by thee?
The more unjust seems present fate,
The more my spirit swells elate,
Strong in thy strength to anticipate
Rewarding destiny."

THE PRISONER.

A FRAGMENT.

In the dungeon crypts idly did I stray,
Reckless of the lives wasting there away.
"Draw the ponderous bars! Open, warder stern!"
He dared not say me nay; the hinges harshly turn.

"Our guests are darkly lodged," I whispered, gazing through
The vault, whose grated eye showed heaven more gray than blue.
(This was when glad spring laughed in awaking pride.)
"Ay, darkly lodged enough!" returned my sullen guide.

Then—God forgive my youth, forgive my careless tongue—
I scoffed, as the chill chains on the damp flagstones rung:
"Confined in triple walls, art thou so much to fear
That we must bind thee down and clench thy fetters here?"

The captive raised her face. It was as soft and mild
As sculptured marble saint, or slumbering unweaned child;
It was so soft and mild, it was so sweet and fair,
Pain could not trace a line, nor grief a shadow there.

The captive raised her hand and pressed it to her brow.
"I have been struck," she said, "and I am suffering now.
Yet these are little worth—your bolts and irons strong;
And were they forged in steel they could not hold me long."

Hoarse laughed the jailor grim. "Shall I be won to hear?
Dost think, fond, dreaming wretch, that *I* shall grant thy prayer,
Or, better still, wilt melt my master's heart with groans?
Ah! sooner might the sun thaw down these granite stones.

"My master's voice is low, his aspect bland and kind,
But hard as hardest flint the soul that lurks behind;

And I am rough and rude, yet not more rough to see
Than is the hidden ghost that has its home in me."

About her lips there played a smile of almost scorn.
"My friend," she gently said, "you have not heard me mourn.
When you my kindred's lives, *my* lost life, can restore,
Then may I weep and sue, but never, friend, before.

"Still, let my tyrants know I am not doomed to wear
Year after year in gloom and desolate despair.
A messenger of hope comes every night to me,
And offers for short life eternal liberty.

"He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars.
Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire,
And visions rise and change that kill me with desire—

"Desire for nothing known in my maturer years,
When joy grew mad with awe at counting future tears;
When, if my spirit's sky was full of flashes warm,
I knew not whence they came, from sun or thunderstorm.

"But first a hush of peace—a soundless calm descends;
The struggle of distress, and fierce impatience ends;
Mute music soothes my breast—unuttered harmony,
That I could never dream till earth was lost to me.

"Then dawns the invisible; the unseen its truth reveals;
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels.
Its wings are almost free, its home, its harbour found;
Measuring the gulf, it stoops and dares the final bound.

"Oh! dreadful is the check, intense the agony,
When the ear begins to hear and the eye begins to see;

When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again,
The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.

"Yet I would lose no sting, would wish no torture less;
The more that anguish racks, the earlier it will bless;
And robed in fires of hell, or bright with heavenly shine,
If it but herald death, the vision is divine."

She ceased to speak, and we, unanswering, turned to go.
We had no further power to work the captive woe.
Her cheek, her gleaming eye, declared that man had given
A sentence unapproved and overruled by Heaven.

HOPE.

Hope was but a timid friend;
She sat without the grated den,
Watching how my fate would tend,
Even as selfish-hearted men.

She was cruel in her fear.
Through the bars one dreary day
I looked out to see her there,
And she turned her face away.

Like a false guard, false watch keeping,
Still in strife she whispered peace.
She would sing while I was weeping;
If I listened, she would cease.

False she was, and unrelenting.
When my last joys strewed the ground,
Even Sorrow saw, repenting,
Those sad relics scattered round.

Hope, whose whisper would have given
Balm to all my frenzied pain,
Stretched her wings, and soared to heaven—
Went, and ne'er returned again.

A DAY DREAM.

On a sunny brae alone I lay
One summer afternoon;
It was the marriage-time of May
With her young lover June.

From her mother's heart seemed loath to part
That queen of bridal charms,
But her father smiled on the fairest child
He ever held in his arms.

The trees did wave their plumy crests,
The glad birds carolled clear;
And I, of all the wedding-guests,
Was only sullen there.

There was not one but wished to shun
My aspect void of cheer;
The very gray rocks, looking on,
Asked, "What do you here?"

And I could utter no reply;
In sooth, I did not know
Why I had brought a clouded eye
To greet the general glow.

So, resting on a heathy bank,
I took my heart to me;
And we together sadly sank
Into a reverie.

We thought, " When winter comes again,
Where will these bright things be ?
All vanished, like a vision vain,
An unreal mockery.

" The birds that now so blithely sing,
Through deserts, frozen dry,
Poor spectres of the perished spring,
In famished troops will fly.

" And why should we be glad at all ?
The leaf is hardly green
Before a token of its fall
Is on the surface seen."

Now, whether it were really so,
I never could be sure ;
But as in fit of peevish woe,
I stretched me on the moor.

A thousand thousand gleaming fires
Seemed kindling in the air ;
A thousand thousand silvery lyres
Resounded far and near.

Methought the very breath I breathed
Was full of sparks divine,
And all my heather-couch was wreathed
By that celestial shine.

And, while the wide earth echoing rung
To that strange minstrelsy,
The little glittering spirits sung,
Or seemed to sing, to me :

" O mortal, mortal ! let them die ;
Let time and tears destroy,
That we may overflow the sky
With universal joy.

"Let grief distract the sufferer's breast,
And night obscure his way;
They hasten him to endless rest,
And everlasting day.

"To thee the world is like a tomb,
A desert's naked shore;
To us, in unimagined bloom,
It brightens more and more.

"And, could we lift the veil, and give
One brief glimpse to thine eye,
Thou wouldst rejoice for those that live,
Because they live to die."

The music ceased; the noonday dream,
Like dream of night, withdrew;
But Fancy still will sometimes deem
Her fond creation true.

TO IMAGINATION.

When weary with the long day's care,
And earthly change from pain to pain,
And lost, and ready to despair,
Thy kind voice calls me back again.
Oh, my true friend, I am not lone,
While thou canst speak with such a tone!

So hopeless is the world without;
The world within I doubly prize—
Thy world, where guile, and hate, and doubt,
And cold suspicion never rise;
Where thou, and I, and liberty
Have undisputed sovereignty.

What matters it that all around
Danger, and guilt, and darkness lie.

If but within our bosom's bound
  We hold a bright, untroubled sky,
Warm with ten thousand mingled rays
Of suns that know no winter days?

Reason, indeed, may oft complain
  For nature's sad reality,
And tell the suffering heart how vain
  Its cherished dreams must always be;
And truth may rudely trample down
The flowers of fancy, newly-blown:

But thou art ever there, to bring
  The hovering vision back, and breathe
New glories o'er the blighted spring,
  And call a lovelier life from death,
And whisper, with a voice divine,
Of real worlds, as bright as thine.

I trust not to thy phantom bliss,
  Yet, still, in evening's quiet hour,
With never-failing thankfulness,
  I welcome thee, benignant power—
Sure solacer of human cares,
And sweeter hope, when hope despairs.

HOW CLEAR SHE SHINES.

How clear she shines! How quietly
  I lie beneath her guardian light,
While heaven and earth are whispering me,
  "To-morrow wake, but dream to-night."
Yes, Fancy, come, my fairy love;
  These throbbing temples softly kiss;
And bend my lonely couch above,
  And bring me rest, and bring me bliss.

The world is going; dark world, adieu!
Grim world, conceal thee till the day.
The heart thou canst not all subdue
Must still resist, if thou delay.
Thy love I will not, will not share;
Thy hatred only wakes a smile;
Thy griefs may wound, thy wrongs may tear,
But oh, thy lies shall ne'er beguile!
While gazing on the stars that glow
Above me, in that stormless sea,
I long to hope that all the woe
Creation knows is held in thee.

And this shall be my dream to-night:
I'll think the heaven of glorious spheres
Is rolling on its course of light
In endless bliss through endless years;
I'll think, there's not one world above,
Far as these straining eyes can see,
Where wisdom ever laughed at love,
Or virtue crouched to infamy,—

Where, writhing 'neath the strokes of fate,
The mangled wretch was forced to smile,
To match his patience 'gainst her hate,
His heart rebellious all the while,—
Where pleasure still will lead to wrong,
And helpless reason warn in vain;
And truth is weak, and treachery strong;
And joy the surest path to pain;
And peace, the lethargy of grief;
And hope, a phantom of the soul;
And life, a labour, void and brief;
And death, the despot of the whole.

SYMPATHY.

THERE should be no despair for you,
  While nightly stars are burning;
While evening pours its silent dew,
  And sunshine gilds the morning.
There should be no despair, though tears
  May flow down like a river.
Are not the best beloved of years
  Around your heart for ever?

They weep, you weep—it must be so;
  Winds sigh as you are sighing,
And winter sheds its grief in snow
  Where autumn's leaves are lying.
Yet these revive, and from their fate
  Your fate cannot be parted.
Then journey on, if not elate,
  Still, *never* broken-hearted.

PLEAD FOR ME.

OH, thy bright eyes must answer now,
When reason, with a scornful brow,
Is mocking at my overthrow!
Oh, thy sweet tongue must plead for me
And tell why I have chosen thee!

Stern Reason is to judgment come,
Arrayed in all her forms of gloom.
Wilt thou, my advocate, be dumb?
No, radiant angel; speak and say
Why I did cast the world away;

Why I have persevered to shun
The common paths that others run,
And on a strange road journeyed on,
Heedless alike of wealth and power,
Of glory's wreath and pleasure's flower.

These once, indeed, seemed beings divine;
And they, perchance, heard vows of mine,
And saw my offerings on their shrine;
But careless gifts are seldom prized,
And *mine* were worthily despised.

So, with a ready heart, I swore
To seek their altar-stone no more,
And gave my spirit to adore
Thee, ever-present, phantom thing,
My slave, my comrade, and my king,—

A slave, because I rule thee still,
Incline thee to my changeful will,
And make thy influence good or ill,—
A comrade, for by day and night
Thou art my intimate delight,

My darling pain that wounds and sears,
And wrings a blessing out from tears
By deadening me to earthly cares;
And yet a king, though Prudence well
Have taught thy subject to rebel.

And am I wrong to worship where
Faith cannot doubt, nor hope despair,
Since my own soul can grant my prayer?
Speak, God of visions, plead for me,
And tell why I have chosen Thee!

SELF-INTERROGATION.

"THE evening passes fast away;
'Tis almost time to rest.
What thoughts has left the vanished day,
What feelings in thy breast?

" The vanished day ? It leaves a sense
Of labour hardly done,
Of little gained with vast expense—
A sense of grief alone.

" Time stands before the door of death,
Upbraiding bitterly ;
And conscience, with exhaustless breath,
Pours black reproach on me :

" And though I've said that conscience lies,
And time should fate condemn,
Still, sad repentance clouds my eyes,
And makes me yield to them.

" Then art thou glad to seek repose ?
Art glad to leave the sea,
And anchor all thy weary woes
In calm eternity ?

" Nothing regrets to see thee go—
Not one voice sobs ' farewell ; '
And where thy heart has suffered so,
Canst thou desire to dwell ? "

" Alas ! the countless links are strong
That bind us to our clay ;
The loving spirit lingers long,
And would not pass away.

" And rest is sweet, when laurelled fame
Will crown the soldier's crest ;
But a brave heart, with a tarnished name,
Would rather fight than rest.

" Well thou hast fought for many a year,
Hast fought thy whole life through,
Hast humbled falsehood, trampled fear ;
What is there left to do ?

" 'Tis true this arm has hotly striven,
Has dared what few would dare;
Much have I done, and freely given,
But little learnt to bear.

" Look on the grave where thou must sleep,
Thy last and strongest foe;
It is endurance not to weep,
If that repose seem woe.

" The long war closing in defeat—
Defeat serenely borne—
Thy midnight rest may still be sweet,
And break in glorious morn."

DEATH.

DEATH! that struck when I was most confiding
In my certain faith of joy to be,
Strike again, time's withered branch dividing
From the fresh root of eternity!

Leaves upon time's branch were growing brightly,
Full of sap, and full of silver dew;
Birds beneath its shelter gathered nightly;
Daily round its flowers the wild bees flew.

Sorrow passed, and plucked the golden blossom;
Guilt stripped off the foliage in its pride;
But within its parent's kindly bosom
Flowed for ever life's restoring tide.

Little mourned I for the parted gladness,
For the vacant nest and silent song;
Hope was there, and laughed me out of sadness,
Whispering, " Winter will not linger long!"

And, behold! with tenfold increase blessing,
Spring adorned the beauty-burdened spray;

Wind and rain and fervent heat, caressing,
  Lavished glory on that second May.

High it rose—no wingèd grief could sweep it;
  Sin was scared to distance with its shine;
Love, and its own life, had power to keep it
  From all wrong—from every blight but thine.

Cruel death! The young leaves droop and languish;
  Evening's gentle air may still restore.
No! the morning sunshine mocks my anguish;
  Time, for me, must never blossom more.

Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish
  Where that perished sapling used to be;
Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will nourish
  That from which it sprang—eternity.

STANZAS TO ——.

WELL, some may hate, and some may scorn,
  And some may quite forget thy name;
But my sad heart must ever mourn
  Thy ruined hopes, thy blighted fame.
'Twas thus I thought, an hour ago,
Even weeping o'er that wretch's woe.
One word turned back my gushing tears,
And lit my altered eye with sneers.
Then "Bless the friendly dust," I said,
"That hides thy unlamented head!
Vain as thou wert, and weak as vain,
The slave of falsehood, pride, and pain,
My heart has nought akin to thine;
Thy soul is powerless over mine."

But these were thoughts that vanished too—
Unwise, unholy, and untrue.

Do I despise the timid deer,
Because his limbs are fleet with fear?
Or would I mock the wolf's death-howl,
Because his form is gaunt and foul?
Or hear with joy the leveret's cry,
Because it cannot bravely die?
No! Then above his memory
Let pity's heart as tender be;
Say, "Earth, lie lightly on that breast;
And, kind Heaven, grant that spirit rest!"

HONOUR'S MARTYR.

The moon is full this winter night;
  The stars are clear, though few;
And every window glistens bright
  With leaves of frozen dew.

The sweet moon through your lattice gleams,
  And lights your room like day;
And there you pass, in happy dreams,
  The peaceful hours away.

While I, with effort hardly quelling
  The anguish in my breast,
Wander about the silent dwelling,
  And cannot think of rest.

The old clock in the gloomy hall
  Ticks on from hour to hour;
And every time its measured call
  Seems lingering slow and slower.

And oh! how slow that keen-eyed star
  Has tracked the chilly gray!
What! watching yet? How very far
  The morning lies away!

Without your chamber door I stand.
  Love, are you slumbering still ?
My cold heart, underneath my hand,
  Has almost ceased to thrill.

Bleak, bleak the east wind sobs and sighs,
  And drowns the turret bell,
Whose sad note, undistinguished, dies
  Unheard, like my farewell.

To-morrow, scorn will blight my name,
  And hate will trample me,
Will load me with a coward's shame,
  A traitor's perjury.

False friends will launch their covert sneers,
  True friends will wish me dead,
And I shall cause the bitterest tears
  That you have ever shed.

The dark deeds of my outlawed race
  Will then like virtues shine ;
And men will pardon their disgrace,
  Beside the guilt of mine.

For, who forgives the accursèd crime
  Of dastard treachery ?
Rebellion, in its chosen time,
  May freedom's champion be ;

Revenge may stain a righteous sword—
  It may be just to slay ;
But, traitor, traitor !—from *that* word
  All true breasts shrink away.

Oh, I would give my heart to death,
  To keep my honour fair ;
Yet, I'll not give my inward faith
  My honour's *name* to spare.

Not even to keep your priceless love,
Dare I, beloved, deceive;
This treason should the future prove,
Then, only then, believe.

I know the path I ought to go;
I follow fearlessly,
Inquiring not what deeper woe
Stern duty stores for me.

So foes pursue, and cold allies
Mistrust me, every one.
Let me be false in others' eyes,
If faithful in my own.

STANZAS.

I'LL not weep that thou art going to leave me—
There's nothing lovely here;
And doubly will the dark world grieve me,
While thy heart suffers there.

I'll not weep, because the summer's glory
Must always end in gloom;
And, follow out the happiest story—
It closes with a tomb!

And I am weary of the anguish
Increasing winters bear—
Weary to watch the spirit languish
Through years of dead despair.

So, if a tear, when thou art dying,
Should haply fall from me,
It is but that my soul is sighing
To go and rest with thee.

MY COMFORTER.

WELL hast thou spoken, and yet not taught
A feeling strange or new;
Thou hast but roused a latent thought,
A cloud-closed beam of sunshine brought
To gleam in open view.

Deep down, concealed within my soul,
That light lies hid from men;
Yet glows unquenched—though shadows roll,
Its gentle ray cannot control—
About the sullen den.

Was I not vexed in these gloomy ways
To walk alone so long?
Around me, wretches uttering praise,
Or howling o'er their hopeless days,
And each with frenzy's tongue—

A brotherhood of misery,
Their smiles as sad as sighs,
Whose madness daily maddened me,
Distorting into agony
The bliss before my eyes.

So stood I, in heaven's glorious sun,
And in the glare of hell;
My spirit drank a mingled tone,
Of seraph's song, and demon's moan.
What my soul bore, my soul alone
Within itself may tell.

Like a soft air above a sea,
Tossed by the tempest's stir;
A thaw-wind, melting quietly
The snow-drift on some wintry lea:
No; what sweet thing resembles thee,
My thoughtful comforter?

And yet a little longer speak,
  Calm this resentful mood;
And while the savage heart grows meek,
For other token do not seek,
But let the tear upon my cheek
  Evince my gratitude.

THE OLD STOIC.

Riches I hold in light esteem,
  And love I laugh to scorn,
And lust of fame was but a dream
  That vanished with the morn;

And if I pray, the only prayer
  That moves my lips for me
Is, "Leave the heart that now I bear,
  And give me liberty!"

Yes, as my swift days near their goal,
  'Tis all that I implore—
In life and death a chainless soul,
  With courage to endure.

POEMS

by ANNE BRONTË

("ACTON BELL")

A REMINISCENCE.

YES, thou art gone, and never more
  Thy sunny smile shall gladden me;
But I may pass the old church door,
  And pace the floor that covers thee—

May stand upon the cold, damp stone,
  And think that, frozen, lies below
The lightest heart that I have known,
  The kindest I shall ever know.

Yet, though I cannot see thee more,
  'Tis still a comfort to have seen;
And though thy transient life is o'er,
  'Tis sweet to think that thou hast been—

To think a soul so near divine,
  Within a form so angel fair,
United to a heart like thine,
  Has gladdened once our humble sphere.

THE ARBOUR.

I'LL rest me in this sheltered bower,
  And look upon the clear blue sky
That smiles upon me through the trees,
  Which stand so thick clustering by;

And view their green and glossy leaves,
All glistening in the sunshine fair;
And list the rustling of their boughs,
So softly whispering through the air.

And while my ear drinks in the sound,
My wingèd soul shall fly away,
Reviewing long departed years
As one mild, beaming, autumn day;

And soaring on to future scenes,
Like hills, and woods, and valleys green,
All basking in the summer's sun,
But distant still, and dimly seen.

Oh, list! 'tis summer's very breath
That gently shakes the rustling trees.
But look! the snow is on the ground.
How can I think of scenes like these?

'Tis but the *frost* that clears the air,
And gives the sky that lovely blue.
They're smiling in a *winter's* sun,
Those evergreens of sombre hue.

And winter's chill is on my heart:
How can I dream of future bliss?
How can my spirit soar away,
Confined by such a chain as this?

HOME.

How brightly glistening in the sun
The woodland ivy plays!
While yonder beeches from their barks
Reflect his silver rays.

That sun surveys a lovely scene
From softly smiling skies,

And wildly through unnumbered trees
The wind of winter sighs.

Now loud, it thunders o'er my head,
And now in distance dies.
But give me back my barren hills,
Where colder breezes rise;

Where scarce the scattered, stunted trees
Can yield an answering swell,
But where a wilderness of heath
Returns the sound as well.

For yonder garden, fair and wide,
With groves of evergreen,
Long winding walks, and borders trim,
And velvet lawns between,

Restore to me that little spot,
With gray walls compassed round,
Where knotted grass neglected lies,
And weeds usurp the ground.

Though all around this mansion high
Invites the foot to roam,
And though its halls are fair within,
Oh, give me back my HOME!

VANITAS VANITATUM, OMNIA VANITAS.

IN all we do, and hear, and see,
Is restless toil and vanity.
While yet the rolling earth abides,
Men come and go like ocean tides;

And ere one generation dies,
Another in its place shall rise;
That, sinking soon into the grave,
Others succeed, like wave on wave;

And as they rise they pass away.
The sun arises every day,
And hastening onward to the west,
He nightly sinks, but not to rest;

Returning to the eastern skies,
Again to light us, he must rise.
And still the restless wind comes forth—
Now blowing keenly from the north;

Now from the south, the east, the west—
For ever changing, ne'er at rest.
The fountains, gushing from the hills,
Supply the ever-running rills;

The thirsty rivers drink their store,
And bear it rolling to the shore,
But still the ocean craves for more.
'Tis endless labour everywhere:
Sound cannot satisfy the ear,

Light cannot fill the craving eye,
Nor riches half our wants supply;
Pleasure but doubles future pain,
And joy brings sorrow in her train;

Laughter is mad, and reckless mirth—
What does she in this weary earth?
Should wealth or fame our life employ,
Death comes, our labour to destroy;

To snatch the untasted cup away,
For which we toiled so many a day.
What, then, remains for wretched man?
To use life's comforts while he can,

Enjoy the blessings Heaven bestows,
Assist his friends, forgive his foes;
Trust God, and keep His statutes still,
Upright and firm, through good and ill;

Thankful for all that God has given,
Fixing his firmest hopes on heaven;
Knowing that earthly joys decay,
But hoping through the darkest day.

THE PENITENT.

I mourn with thee, and yet rejoice
That thou shouldst sorrow so;
With angel choirs I join my voice
To bless the sinner's woe.

Though friends and kindred turn away,
And laugh thy grief to scorn,
I hear the great Redeemer say,
"Blessed are ye that mourn."

Hold on thy course, nor deem it strange
That earthly cords are riven.
Man may lament the wondrous change,
But "there is joy in heaven."

MUSIC ON CHRISTMAS MORNING.

Music I love; but never strain
Could kindle raptures so divine,
So grief assuage, so conquer pain,
And rouse this pensive heart of mine,
As that we hear on Christmas morn,
Upon the wintry breezes borne.

Though darkness still her empire keep,
And hours must pass ere morning break,
From troubled dreams or slumbers deep
That music *kindly* bids us wake.
It calls us, with an angel's voice,
To wake, and worship, and rejoice;

To greet with joy the glorious morn
  Which angels welcomed long ago,
When our redeeming Lord was born
  To bring the light of heaven below,
The powers of darkness to dispel,
And rescue earth from death and hell.

While listening to that sacred strain,
  My raptured spirit soars on high;
I seem to hear those songs again
  Resounding through the open sky,
That kindled such divine delight
In those who watched their flocks by night.

With them I celebrate His birth.
  Glory to God in highest heaven,
Good-will to men, and peace on earth;
  To us a Saviour-king is given;
Our God is come to claim His own,
And Satan's power is overthrown.

A sinless God, for sinful men,
  Descends to suffer and to bleed:
Hell *must* renounce its empire then.
  The price is paid, the world is freed,
And Satan's self must now confess
That Christ has earned a *right* to bless.

Now holy peace may smile from heaven,
  And heavenly truth from earth shall spring:
The captive's galling bonds are riven,
  For our Redeemer is our king;
And He that gave His blood for men
Will lead us home to God again.

STANZAS.

OH, weep not, love! Each tear that springs
In those dear eyes of thine,
To me a keener suffering brings
Than if they flowed from mine.

And do not droop, however drear
The fate awaiting thee;
For *my* sake combat pain and care,
And cherish life for me.

I do not fear thy love will fail;
Thy faith is true, I know;
But oh, my love, thy strength is frail
For such a life of woe!

Were't not for this, I well could trace
(Though banished long from thee)
Life's rugged path, and boldly face
The storms that threaten me.

Fear not for me: I've steeled my mind
Sorrow and strife to greet;
Joy with my love I leave behind,
Care with my friends I meet.

A mother's sad, reproachful eye,
A father's scowling brow—
But he may frown and she may sigh;
I will not break my vow.

I love my mother, I revere
My sire, but fear not me:
Believe that death alone can tear
This faithful heart from thee.

IF THIS BE ALL.

O God! if this indeed be all
  That life can show to me;
If on my aching brow may fall
  No freshening dew from Thee;

If with no brighter light than this
  The lamp of hope may grow,
And I may only *dream* of bliss,
  And wake to weary woe;

If friendship's solace must decay
  When other joys are gone,
And love must keep so far away,
  While I go wandering on—

Wandering and toiling without gain,
  The slave of others' will,
With constant care, and frequent pain,
  Despised, forgotten still;

Grieving to look on vice and sin,
  Yet powerless to quell
The silent current from within,
  The outward torrent's swell;

While all the good I would impart,
  The feelings I would share,
Are driven backward to my heart,
  And turned to wormwood there;

If clouds must *ever* keep from sight
  The glories of the sun,
And I must suffer winter's blight
  Ere summer is begun;

If life must be so full of care,
  Then call me soon to Thee,
Or give me strength enough to bear
  My load of misery.

MEMORY.

BRIGHTLY the sun of summer shone
Green fields and waving woods upon,
And soft winds wandered by;
Above, a sky of purest blue,
Around, bright flowers of loveliest hue,
Allured the gazer's eye.

But what were all these charms to me,
When one sweet breath of memory
Came gently wafting by?
I closed my eyes against the day,
And called my willing soul away
From earth, and air, and sky,

That I might simply fancy there
One little flower, a primrose fair,
Just opening into sight,
As in the days of infancy
An opening primrose seemed to me
A source of strange delight.

Sweet memory! ever smile on me;
Nature's chief beauties spring from thee;
Oh, still thy tribute bring!
Still make the golden crocus shine
Among the flowers the most divine,
The glory of the spring.

Still in the wallflower's fragrance dwell,
And hover round the slight bluebell,
My childhood's darling flower.
Smile on the little daisy still,
The buttercup's bright goblet fill
With all thy former power.

For ever hang thy dreamy spell
Round mountain star and heather bell,
And do not pass away

From sparkling frost, or wreathèd snow,
And whisper when the wild winds blow,
Or rippling waters play.

Is childhood, then, so all divine?
Or, memory, is the glory thine
That haloes thus the past?
Not *all* divine; its pangs of grief
(Although, perchance, their stay be brief)
Are bitter while they last.

Nor is the glory all thine own,
For on our earliest joys alone
That holy light is cast.
With such a ray, no spell of thine
Can make our later pleasures shine,
Though long ago they passed.

TO COWPER.

Sweet are thy strains, celestial bard;
And oft in childhood's years
I've read them o'er and o'er again,
With floods of silent tears.

The language of my inmost heart
I traced in every line;
My sins, *my* sorrows, hopes, and fears,
Were there—and only mine.

All for myself the sigh would swell,
The tear of anguish start;
I little knew what wilder woe
Had filled the poet's heart.

I did not know the nights of gloom,
The days of misery,
The long, long years of dark despair,
That crushed and tortured thee.

But they are gone; from earth at length
Thy gentle soul is passed,
And in the bosom of its God
Has found its home at last.

It must be so, if God is love,
And answers fervent prayer.
Then surely thou shalt dwell on high.
And I may meet thee there.

Is He the source of every good,
The spring of purity?
Then in thine hours of deepest woe
Thy God was still with thee.

How else, when every hope was fled,
Couldst thou so fondly cling
To holy things and holy men?
And how so sweetly sing

Of things that God alone could teach?
And whence that purity,
That hatred of all sinful ways,
That gentle charity?

Are *these* the symptoms of a heart
Of heavenly grace bereft,
For ever banished from its God,
To Satan's fury left?

Yet, should thy darkest fears be true—
If Heaven be so severe
That such a soul as thine is lost—
Oh, how shall *I* appear?

THE DOUBTER'S PRAYER.

ETERNAL Power of earth and air,
Unseen, yet seen in all around,
Remote, but dwelling everywhere,
Though silent, heard in every sound,

If e'er Thine ear in mercy bent
When wretched mortals cried to Thee,
And if, indeed, Thy Son was sent
To save lost sinners such as me,

Then hear me now while, kneeling here,
I lift to Thee my heart and eye,
And all my soul ascends in prayer—
Oh, give me, give me faith! I cry.

Without some glimmering in my heart,
I could not raise this fervent prayer;
But oh! a stronger light impart,
And in Thy mercy fix it there.

While faith is with me, I am blest;
It turns my darkest night to day;
But while I clasp it to my breast
I often feel it slide away.

Then, cold and dark, my spirit sinks
To see my light of life depart;
And every fiend of hell, methinks,
Enjoys the anguish of my heart.

What shall I do if all my love,
My hopes, my toil, are cast away,
And if there be no God above
To hear and bless me when I pray?

If this be vain delusion all,
If death be an eternal sleep,

And none can hear my secret call,
  Or see the silent tears I weep,

Oh, help me, God, for Thou alone
  Canst my distracted soul relieve.
Forsake it not; it is Thine own—
  Though weak, yet longing to believe.

Oh, drive these cruel doubts away,
  And make me know that thou art God!
A faith that shines by night and day
  Will lighten every earthly load.

If I believe that Jesus died,
  And, waking, rose to reign above,
Then surely sorrow, sin, and pride
  Must yield to peace, and hope, and love.

And all the blessed words He said
  Will strength and holy joy impart—
A shield of safety o'er my head,
  A spring of comfort in my heart.

A WORD TO THE "ELECT."

You may rejoice to think *yourselves* secure;
  You may be grateful for the gift divine—
That grace unsought, which made your black hearts pure,
  And fits your earth-born souls in heaven to shine.

But is it sweet to look around, and view
  Thousands excluded from that happiness
Which they deserved, at least, as much as you—
  Their faults not greater, nor their virtues less?

And wherefore should you love your God the more
  Because to you alone His smiles are given—
Because He chose to pass the *many* o'er,
  And only bring the favoured *few* to heaven?

And wherefore should your hearts more grateful prove
Because for ALL the Saviour did not die?
Is yours the God of justice and of love?
And are your bosoms warm with charity?

Say, does your heart expand to all mankind?
And would you ever to your neighbour do—
The weak, the strong, the enlightened, and the blind—
As you would have your neighbour do to you?

And when you, looking on your fellow-men,
Behold them doomed to endless misery,
How can you talk of joy and rapture then?
May God withhold such cruel joy from me!

That none deserve eternal bliss I know—
Unmerited the grace in mercy given;
But none shall sink to everlasting woe
That have not well deserved the wrath of Heaven.

And oh! there lives within my heart
A hope, long nursed by me
(And should its cheering ray depart,
How dark my soul would be!),

That as in Adam all have died,
In Christ shall all men live,
And ever round His throne abide,
Eternal praise to give.

That even the wicked shall at last
Be fitted for the skies,
And when their dreadful doom is past,
To life and light arise.

I ask not how remote the day,
Nor what the sinners' woe
Before their dross is purged away;
Enough for me to know

That when the cup of wrath is drained,
  The metal purified,
They'll cling to what they once disdained,
  And live by Him that died.

PAST DAYS.

'TIS strange to think there *was* a time
  When mirth was not an empty name,
When laughter really cheered the heart,
  And frequent smiles unbidden came,
And tears of grief would only flow
In sympathy for others' woe;

When speech expressed the inward thought,
  And heart to kindred heart was bare,
And summer days were far too short
  For all the pleasures crowded there;
And silence, solitude, and rest,
Now welcome to the weary breast,

Were all unprized, uncourted then,
  And all the joy one spirit showed
The other deeply felt again;
  And friendship like a river flowed,
Constant and strong its silent course,
For nought withstood its gentle force;

When night, the holy time of peace,
  Was dreaded as the parting hour;
When speech and mirth at once must cease,
  And silence must resume her power;
Though ever free from pains and woes,
She only brought us calm repose.

And when the blessed dawn again
  Brought daylight to the blushing skies,

We woke, and not *reluctant* then,
To joyless *labour* did we rise;
But full of hope, and glad and gay,
We welcomed the returning day.

THE CONSOLATION.

Though bleak these woods, and damp the ground
With fallen leaves so thickly strown,
And cold the wind that wanders round
With wild and melancholy moan,

There *is* a friendly roof, I know,
Might shield me from the wintry blast;
There is a fire, whose ruddy glow
Will cheer me for my wanderings past.

And so, though still, where'er I go,
Cold stranger-glances meet my eye;
Though, when my spirit sinks in woe,
Unheeded swells the unbidden sigh;

Though solitude, endured too long,
Bids youthful joys too soon decay,
Makes mirth a stranger to my tongue,
And overclouds my noon of day;

When kindly thoughts that would have way,
Flow back discouraged to my breast,
I know there *is*, though far away,
A home where heart and soul may rest.

Warm hands are there, that, clasped in mine,
The warmer heart will not belie;
While mirth, and truth, and friendship shine
In smiling lip and earnest eye.

The ice that gathers round my heart
May there be thawed; and sweetly, then,

The joys of youth, that now depart,
Will come to cheer my soul again.

Though far I roam, that thought shall be
My hope, my comfort, everywhere;
While such a home remains to me,
My heart shall never know despair.

LINES COMPOSED IN A WOOD ON A WINDY DAY.

My soul is awakened, my spirit is soaring,
And carried aloft on the wings of the breeze;
For above and around me the wild wind is roaring,
Arousing to rapture the earth and the seas.

The long withered grass in the sunshine is glancing,
The bare trees are tossing their branches on high;
The dead leaves beneath them are merrily dancing,
The white clouds are scudding across the blue sky.

I wish I could see how the ocean is lashing
The foam of its billows to whirlwinds of spray;
I wish I could see how its proud waves are dashing,
And hear the wild roar of their thunder to-day!

VIEWS OF LIFE.

When sinks my heart in hopeless gloom,
And life can show no joy for me,
And I behold a yawning tomb,
Where bowers and palaces should be,

In vain you talk of morbid dreams,
In vain you gaily smiling say
That what to me so dreary seems,
The healthy mind deems bright and gay.

I too have smiled and thought like you,
But madly smiled, and falsely deemed.
Truth led me to the present view.
I'm waking now; 'twas *then* I dreamed.

I lately saw a sunset sky,
And stood enraptured to behold
Its varied hues of glorious dye:
First, fleecy clouds of shining gold;

These, blushing, took a rosy hue;
Beneath them shone a flood of green;
Nor less divine the glorious blue
That smiled above them and between.

I cannot name each lovely shade;
I cannot say how bright they shone;
But one by one I saw them fade;
And what remained when they were gone?

Dull clouds remained, of sombre hue;
And when their borrowed charm was o'er,
The azure sky had faded too,
That smiled so softly bright before.

So, gilded by the glow of youth,
Our varied life looks fair and gay;
And so remains the naked truth
When that false light is past away.

Why blame ye, then, my keener sight,
That clearly sees a world of woes
Through all the haze of golden light
That flattering falsehood round it throws?

When the young mother smiles above
The first-born darling of her heart,
Her bosom glows with earnest love,
While tears of silent transport start.

Fond dreamer! little does she know
The anxious toil, the suffering,
The blasted hopes, the burning woe,
The object of her joy will bring.

Her blinded eyes behold not now
What, soon or late, must be his doom—
The anguish that will cloud his brow,
The bed of death, the dreary tomb.

As little know the youthful pair,
In mutual love supremely blest,
What weariness and cold despair
Ere long will seize the aching breast.

And even should love and faith remain
(The greatest blessings life can show)
Amid adversity and pain
To shine throughout with cheering glow,

They do not see how cruel death
Comes on, their loving hearts to part.
One feels not now the gasping breath,
The rending of the earth-bound heart,

The soul's and body's agony,
Ere she may sink to her repose.
The sad survivor cannot see
The grave above his darling close;

Nor how, despairing and alone,
He then must wear his life away,
And linger, feebly toiling on,
And fainting, sink into decay.

* * * *

Oh, Youth may listen patiently
While sad Experience tells her tale,
But Doubt sits smiling in his eye,
For ardent Hope will still prevail.

He hears how feeble Pleasure dies,
By guilt destroyed, and pain and woe;
He turns to Hope, and she replies,
"Believe it not; it is not so!"

"Oh, heed her not!" Experience says;
"For thus she whispered once to me.
She told me in my youthful days
How glorious manhood's prime would be.

"When, in the time of early spring,
Too chill the winds that o'er me passed,
She said each coming day would bring
A fairer heaven, a gentler blast.

"And when the sun too seldom beamed,
The sky, o'ercast, too darkly frowned,
The soaking rain too constant streamed,
And mists too dreary gathered round,

"She told me summer's glorious ray
Would chase those vapours all away,
And scatter glories round;
With sweetest music fill the trees,
Load with rich scent the gentle breeze,
And strew with flowers the ground.

"But when, beneath that scorching ray,
I languished, weary through the day,
While birds refused to sing,
Verdure decayed from field and tree,
And panting nature mourned with me
The freshness of the spring—

"'Wait but a little while,' she said,
'Till summer's burning days are fled,
And autumn shall restore,
With golden riches of her own,
And summer's glories mellowed down,
The freshness you deplore.'

"And long I waited, but in vain:
That freshness never came again,
Though summer passed away,
Though autumn's mists hung cold and chill,
And drooping nature languished still,
And sank into decay;

'Till wintry blasts foreboding blew
Through leafless trees; and then I knew
That Hope was all a dream.
But thus, fond youth, she cheated me;
And she will prove as false to thee,
Though sweet her words may seem."

Stern prophet, cease thy bodings dire;
Thou canst not quench the ardent fire
That warms the breast of youth.
Oh, let it cheer him while it may,
And gently, gently die away,
Chilled by the damps of truth!

Tell him that earth is not our rest;
Its joys are empty, frail at best,
And point beyond the sky.
But gleams of light may reach us here,
And hope the *roughest* path can cheer;
Then do not bid it fly.

Though hope may promise joys that still
Unkindly time will ne'er fulfil;
Or, if they come at all,
We never find them unalloyed—
Hurtful, perchance, or soon destroyed,
They vanish or they pall;

Yet hope *itself* a brightness throws
O'er all our labours and our woes;
While dark foreboding care

A thousand ills will oft portend
That Providence may ne'er intend
The trembling heart to bear.

Or if they come, it oft appears
Our woes are lighter than our fears,
And far more bravely borne.
Then let us not enhance our doom,
But e'en in midnight's blackest gloom
Expect the rising morn.

Because the road is rough and long,
Shall we despise the skylark's song,
That cheers the wanderer's way;
Or trample down, with reckless feet,
The smiling flowerets, bright and sweet,
Because they soon decay;

Pass pleasant scenes unnoticed by,
Because the next is bleak and drear;
Or not enjoy a smiling sky
Because a tempest may be near?

No. While we journey on our way
We'll smile on every lovely thing;
And ever, as they pass away,
To memory and hope we'll cling.

And though that awful river flows
Before us, when the journey's past,
Perchance of all the pilgrim's woes
Most dreadful—shrink not; 'tis the last.

Though icy cold, and dark, and deep,
Beyond it smiles that blessed shore
Where none shall suffer, none shall weep,
And bliss shall reign for evermore!

APPEAL.

Oh, I am very weary,
Though tears no longer flow;
My eyes are tired of weeping,
My heart is sick of woe;

My life is very lonely,
My days pass heavily,
I'm weary of repining.
Wilt thou not come to me?

Oh, didst thou know my longings
For thee, from day to day,
My hopes, so often blighted,
Thou wouldst not thus delay!

THE STUDENT'S SERENADE.

I have slept upon my couch,
But my spirit did not rest,
For the labours of the day
Yet my weary soul opprest;

And before my dreaming eyes
Still the learned volumes lay;
And I could not close their leaves,
And I could not turn away.

But I oped my eyes at last,
And I heard a muffled sound;
'Twas the night-breeze, come to say
That the snow was on the ground.

Then I knew that there was rest
On the mountain's bosom free;
So I left my fevered couch,
And I flew to waken thee.

I have flown to waken thee;
  For if thou wilt not arise,
Then my soul can drink no peace
  From these holy moonlight skies.

And this waste of virgin snow
  To my sight will not be fair,
Unless thou wilt smiling come,
  Love, to wander with me there.

Then, awake! Maria, wake!
  For if thou couldst only know
How the quiet moonlight sleeps
  On this wilderness of snow,

And the groves of ancient trees,
  In their snowy garb arrayed,
Till they stretch into the gloom
  Of the distant valley's shade—

I know thou wouldst rejoice
  To inhale this bracing air;
Thou wouldst break thy sweetest sleep
  To behold a scene so fair.

O'er these wintry wilds, *alone*,
  Thou wouldst joy to wander free;
And it will not please thee less
  Though that bliss be shared with me.

THE CAPTIVE DOVE.

POOR restless dove, I pity thee;
  And when I hear thy plaintive moan
I mourn for thy captivity,
  And in thy woes forget mine own.

To see thee stand prepared to fly,
  And flap those useless wings of thine,

And gaze into the distant sky,
  Would melt a harder heart than mine.

In vain! in vain! Thou canst not rise;
  Thy prison roof confines thee there.
Its slender wires delude thine eyes,
  And quench thy longings with despair.

Oh, thou wert made to wander free
  In sunny mead and shady grove,
And far beyond the rolling sea,
  In distant climes, at will to rove!

Yet, hadst thou but one gentle mate
  Thy little drooping heart to cheer,
And share with thee thy captive state,
  Thou couldst be happy even there.

Yes, even there, if, listening by,
  One faithful dear companion stood;
While gazing on her full bright eye,
  Thou mightst forget thy native wood.

But thou, poor solitary dove,
  Must make, unheard, thy joyless moan;
The heart that nature formed to love
  Must pine, neglected, and alone.

SELF-CONGRATULATION.

Ellen, you were thoughtless once
  Of beauty or of grace,
Simple and homely in attire,
  Careless of form and face.
Then whence this change? and wherefore now
  So often smooth your hair?
And wherefore deck your youthful form
  With such unwearied care?

Tell us, and cease to tire our ears
With that familiar strain.
Why will you play those simple tunes
So often o'er again ?
" Indeed, dear friends, I can but say
That childhood's thoughts are gone ;
Each year its own new feelings brings,
And years move swiftly on.

" And for these little simple airs,
I love to play them o'er
So much, I dare not promise now
To play them never more."
I answered, and it was enough ;
They turned them to depart.
They could not read my secret thoughts,
Nor see my throbbing heart.

I've noticed many a youthful form,
Upon whose changeful face
The inmost workings of the soul
The gazer well might trace :
The speaking eye, the changing lip,
The ready blushing cheek,
The smiling or beclouded brow,
Their different feelings speak.

But, thank God ! you might gaze on mine
For hours, and never know
The secret changes of my soul
From joy to keenest woe.
Last night, as we sat round the fire
Conversing merrily,
We heard, without, approaching steps
Of one well known to me.

There was no trembling in my voice,
No blush upon my cheek,

No lustrous sparkle in my eyes,
  Of hope or joy to speak;
But oh! my spirit burned within,
  My heart beat full and fast.
He came not nigh—he went away;
  And then my joy was past.

And yet my comrades marked it not—
  My voice was still the same;
They saw me smile, and o'er my face
  No signs of sadness came.
They little knew my hidden thoughts;
  And they will *never* know
The aching anguish of my heart,
  The bitter, burning woe.

FLUCTUATIONS.

What though the sun had left my sky?
  To save me from despair
The blessed moon arose on high,
  And shone serenely there.

I watched her with a tearful gaze
  Rise slowly o'er the hill,
While through the dim horizon's haze
  Her light gleamed faint and chill.

I thought such wan and lifeless beams
  Could ne'er my heart repay
For the bright sun's most transient gleams
  That cheered me through the day.

But as above that mist's control
  She rose, and brighter shone,
I felt her light upon my soul;
  But now—that light is gone.

Thick vapours snatched her from my sight,
And I was darkling left,
All in the cold and gloomy night,
Of light and hope bereft,

Until, methought, a little star
Shone forth with trembling ray,
To cheer me with its light afar;
But that, too, passed away.

Anon, an earthly meteor blazed
The gloomy darkness through:
I smiled, yet trembled while I gazed;
But that soon vanished too.

And darker, drearier fell the night
Upon my spirit then.
But what is that faint, struggling light?
Is it the moon again?

Kind Heaven, increase that silvery gleam,
And bid these clouds depart,
And let her soft celestial beam
Restore my fainting heart!

SELECTIONS FROM POEMS BY EMILY BRONTË

("ELLIS BELL")

by CHARLOTTE BRONTË

("CURRER BELL")

IT would not have been difficult to compile a volume out of the papers left by my sisters, had I, in making the selection, dismissed from my consideration the scruples and the wishes of those whose written thoughts these papers held. But this was impossible. An influence stronger than could be exercised by any motive of expediency necessarily regulated the selection. I have, then, culled from the mass only a little poem here and there. The whole makes but a tiny nosegay, and the colour and perfume of the flowers are not such as fit them for festal uses.

It has been already said that my sisters wrote much in childhood and girlhood. Usually it seems a sort of injustice to expose in print the crude thoughts of the unripe mind—the rude efforts of the unpractised hand; yet I venture to give three little poems of my sister Emily's, written in her sixteenth year, because they illustrate a point in her character.

At that period she was sent to school. Her previous life, with the exception of a single half-year, had been passed in the absolute retirement of a village parsonage amongst the hills bordering Yorkshire and Lancashire. The scenery of these hills is not grand; it is not romantic; it is scarcely striking. Long low moors, dark with heath, shut in little valleys, where a stream waters, here and there, a fringe of stunted copse. Mills and scattered cottages chase romance from these valleys. It is only higher up, deep in amongst the ridges of the moors, that Imagination can find rest for the sole of her foot; and even if she finds it there, she must be a solitude-loving raven—no gentle dove. If she demand beauty to inspire her, she must bring it inborn. These moors are too stern to yield any product so delicate. The eye of the gazer must *itself* brim with a " purple light," intense enough to perpetuate the brief flower-flush of August on the heather, or the rare sunset-smile of June; out of his heart must well the freshness that in later spring and early summer brightens the bracken, nurtures the moss, and cherishes the starry flowers that spangle for a few weeks the pasture of the moor-sheep. Unless that light and freshness are innate and self-sustained, the drear prospect of a Yorkshire moor will be found as barren of poetic as of agricultural interest. Where the love of wild nature is strong, the locality will perhaps be clung to with the more passionate constancy, because from the hill-lover's self comes half its charm.

My sister Emily loved the moors. Flowers brighter than the rose bloomed in the blackest of the heath for her. Out of a sullen hollow in a livid hillside her mind could make an Eden. She found in the bleak solitude many and dear delights, and not the least and best loved was liberty.

Liberty was the breath of Emily's nostrils; without it, she perished. The change from her own home to a school, and from her own very noiseless, very secluded, but unrestricted and inartificial mode of life, to one of disciplined routine (though under the kindliest auspices), was what she failed in enduring. Her nature proved here too strong for her fortitude. Every morning when she woke the vision of home and the moors rushed on her, and darkened and saddened the day that lay before her. Nobody knew what ailed her but me. I knew only too well. In this struggle her health was quickly broken; her white face, attenuated form, and failing strength threatened rapid decline. I felt in my heart she would die if she did not go home, and with this conviction obtained her recall. She had only been three months at school, and it was some years before the experiment of sending her from home was again ventured on. After the age of twenty, having meantime studied alone with diligence and perseverance, she went with me to an establishment on the Continent. The same suffering and conflict ensued, heightened by the strong recoil of her upright heretic and English spirit from the gentle Jesuitry of the foreign and Romish system. Once more she seemed sinking, but this time she rallied through the mere force of resolution. With inward remorse and shame she looked back on her former failure, and resolved to conquer in this second ordeal. She did conquer, but the victory cost her dear. She was never happy till she carried her hard-won knowledge back to the remote English village, the old parsonage-house, and desolate Yorkshire hills. A very few years more, and she looked her last on those hills, and breathed her last in that house, and under the aisle of that obscure village church found her last lowly resting-place. Merciful was the decree that spared her when she was a stranger in a strange land, and guarded her dying bed with kindred love and congenial constancy.

The following pieces were composed at twilight in the schoolroom, when the leisure of the evening play-hour brought back in full tide the thoughts of home.

I.

A LITTLE while, a little while,
The weary task is put away,
And I can sing and I can smile,
Alike, while I have holiday.

Where wilt thou go, my harassed heart ?
What thought, what scene invites thee now ?
What spot, or near or far apart,
Has rest for thee, my weary brow ?

There is a spot, 'mid barren hills,
Where winter howls, and driving rain;
But if the dreary tempest chills,
There is a light that warms again.

The house is old, the trees are bare,
Moonless above bends twilight's dome;
But what on earth is half so dear,
So longed for, as the hearth of home?

The mute bird sitting on the stone,
The dank moss dripping from the wall,
The thorn-trees gaunt, the walks o'ergrown,
I love them—how I love them all!

Still, as I mused, the naked room,
The alien firelight died away,
And from the midst of cheerless gloom
I passed to bright, unclouded day.

A little and a lone green lane
That opened on a common wide,
A distant, dreamy, dim, blue chain
Of mountains circling every side.

A heaven so clear, an earth so calm,
So sweet, so soft, so hushed an air;
And, deepening still the dream-like charm,
Wild moor-sheep feeding everywhere.

That was the scene. I knew it well.
I knew the turfy pathway's sweep,
That, winding o'er each billowy swell,
Marked out the tracks of wandering sheep.

Could I have lingered but an hour,
It well had paid a week of toil;
But truth has banished fancy's power:
Restraint and heavy task recoil.

Even as I stood with raptured eye,
Absorbed in bliss so deep and dear,
My hour of rest had fleeted by,
And back came labour, bondage, care.

II.

THE BLUEBELL.

THE bluebell is the sweetest flower
That waves in summer air.
Its blossoms have the mightiest power
To soothe my spirit's care.

There is a spell in purple heath
Too wildly, sadly dear;
The violet has a fragrant breath,
But fragrance will not cheer.

The trees are bare, the sun is cold,
And seldom, seldom seen;
The heavens have lost their zone of gold,
And earth her robe of green.

And ice upon the glancing stream
Has cast its sombre shade,
And distant hills and valleys seem
In frozen mist arrayed.

The bluebell cannot charm me now;
The heath has lost its bloom;
The violets in the glen below,
They yield no sweet perfume.

But though I mourn the sweet bluebell,
'Tis better far away;
I know how fast my tears would swell
To see it smile to-day.

For, oh! when chill the sunbeams fall
Adown that dreary sky,
And gild yon dank and darkened wall
With transient brilliancy,

How do I weep, how do I pine,
For the time of flowers to come,
And turn me from that fading shine
To mourn the fields of home!

III.

Loud without the wind was roaring
Through th' autumnal sky;
Drenching wet, the cold rain pouring,
Spoke of winter nigh.
All too like that dreary eve
Did my exiled spirit grieve—
Grieved at first, but grieved not long.
Sweet—how softly sweet!—it came—
Wild words of an ancient song,
Undefined, without a name.

"It was spring, and the skylark was singing."
Those words they awakened a spell;
They unlocked a deep fountain, whose springing
Nor absence nor distance can quell.

In the gloom of a cloudy November
They uttered the music of May;
They kindled the perishing ember
Into fervour that could not decay.

Awaken, o'er all my dear moorland,
West wind in thy glory and pride!
Oh! call me from valley and lowland,
To walk by the hill-torrent's side!

It is swelled with the first snowy weather ;
The rocks they are icy and hoar,
And sullenly waves the long heather,
And the fern leaves are sunny no more.

There are no yellow stars on the mountain ;
The bluebells have long died away
From the brink of the moss-bedded fountain,
From the side of the wintry brae.

But lovelier than corn-fields all waving
In emerald, and vermeil, and gold,
Are the heights where the north-wind is raving,
And the crags where I wandered of old.

It was morning ; the bright sun was beaming.
How sweetly it brought back to me
The time when nor labour nor dreaming
Broke the sleep of the happy and free !

But blithely we rose as the dawn-heaven
Was melting to amber and blue,
And swift were the wings to our feet given,
As we traversed the meadows of dew.

For the moors !—for the moors, where the short grass
Like velvet beneath us should lie !
For the moors !—for the moors, where each high pass
Rose sunny against the clear sky !

For the moors, where the linnet was trilling
Its song on the old granite stone ;
Where the lark, the wild skylark, was filling
Every breast with delight like its own !

What language can utter the feeling
Which rose when, in exile afar,
On the brow of a lonely hill kneeling,
I saw the brown heath growing there ?

It was scattered and stunted, and told me
  That soon even that would be gone.
It whispered, " The grim walls enfold me;
  I have bloomed in my last summer's sun."

But not the loved music, whose waking
  Makes the soul of the Swiss die away,
Has a spell more adored and heartbreaking
  Than, for me, in that blighted heath lay.

The spirit which bent 'neath its power,
  How it longed, how it burned to be free!
If I could have wept in that hour,
  Those tears had been heaven to me.

Well, well! the sad minutes are moving,
  Though loaded with trouble and pain,
And some time the loved and the loving
  Shall meet on the mountains again.

The following little piece has no title, but in it the genius of a solitary region seems to address his wandering and wayward votary, and to recall within his influence the proud mind which rebelled at times even against what it most loved.

SHALL earth no more inspire thee,
  Thou lonely dreamer now?
Since passion may not fire thee,
  Shall nature cease to bow?

Thy mind is ever moving,
  In regions dark to thee;
Recall its useless roving;
  Come back, and dwell with me.

I know my mountain breezes
  Enchant and soothe thee still;
I know my sunshine pleases,
  Despite thy wayward will.

When day, with evening blending,
  Sinks from the summer sky,
I've seen thy spirit bending
  In fond idolatry.

I've watched thee every hour;
  I know my mighty sway;
I know my magic power
  To drive thy griefs away.

Few hearts to mortals given,
  On earth so wildly pine;
Yet few would ask a heaven
  More like this earth than thine.

Then let my winds caress thee;
  Thy comrade let me be:
Since nought beside can bless thee,
  Return, and dwell with me.

Here again is the same mind in converse with a like abstraction. "The Night-Wind," breathing through an open window, has visited an ear which discerned language in its whispers.

THE NIGHT-WIND.

In summer's mellow midnight,
  A cloudless moon shone through
Our open parlour window,
  And rose-trees wet with dew.

I sat in silent musing;
  The soft wind waved my hair.
It told me heaven was glorious,
  And sleeping earth was fair.

I needed not its breathing
  To bring such thoughts to me,

But still it whispered lowly—
How dark the woods will be!

"The thick leaves in my murmur
Are rustling like a dream,
And all their myriad voices
Instinct with spirit seem."

I said, "Go, gentle singer;
Thy wooing voice is kind,
But do not think its music
Has power to reach my mind.

"Play with the scented flower,
The young tree's supple bough,
And leave my human feelings
In their own course to flow."

The wanderer would not heed me;
Its kiss grew warmer still.
"Oh, come!" it sighed so sweetly;
"I'll win thee 'gainst thy will.

"Were we not friends from childhood?
Have I not loved thee long—
As long as thou the solemn night,
Whose silence wakes my song?

"And when thy heart is resting
Beneath the church-aisle stone,
I shall have time for mourning,
And *thou* for being alone."

In these stanzas a louder gale has roused the sleeper on her pillow. The wakened soul struggles to blend with the storm by which it is swayed:—

Ay, there it is! It wakes to-night
Deep feelings I thought dead;
Strong in the blast—quick gathering light—
The heart's flame kindles red.

'Now I can tell by thine altered cheek,
And by thine eyes' full gaze,
And by the words thou scarce dost speak
How wildly fancy plays.

"Yes; I could swear that glorious wind
Has swept the world aside,
Has dashed its memory from thy mind
Like foam-bells from the tide.

"And thou art now a spirit pouring
Thy presence into all—
The thunder of the tempest's roaring,
The whisper of its fall;

"An universal influence,
From thine own influence free;
A principle of life—intense—
Lost to mortality.

"Thus truly, when that breast is cold,
Thy prisoned soul shall rise,
The dungeon mingle with the mould,
The captive with the skies.
Nature's deep being thine shall hold,
Her spirit all thy spirit fold,
Her breath absorb thy sighs.
Mortal! though soon life's tale is told,
Who once lives, never dies!"

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP.

Love is like the wild rose-briar,
  Friendship like the holly-tree.
The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms,
  But which will bloom most constantly ?

The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,
  Its summer blossoms scent the air ;
Yet wait till winter comes again,
  And who will call the wild-briar fair ?

Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now,
  And deck thee with the holly's sheen,
That, when December blights thy brow,
  He still may leave thy garland green.

THE ELDER'S REBUKE.

" Listen ! When your hair, like mine,
  Takes a tint of silver gray ;
When your eyes, with dimmer shine,
  Watch life's bubbles float away ;
When you, young man, have borne, like me,
The weary weight of sixty-three,
Then shall penance sore be paid
  For those hours so wildly squandered,
And the words that now fall dead
  On your ear be deeply pondered—
Pondered and approved at last ;
But their virtue will be past.

" Glorious is the prize of Duty,
  Though she be ' a serious power ; '
Treacherous all the lures of Beauty,
  Thorny bud and poisonous flower !

"Mirth is but a mad beguiling
  Of the golden-gifted time;
Love, a demon-meteor, wiling
  Heedless feet to gulfs of crime.

"Those who follow earthly pleasure
  Heavenly knowledge will not lead;
Wisdom hides from them her treasure,
  Virtue bids them evil-speed!

"Vainly may their hearts, repenting,
  Seek for aid in future years:
Wisdom scorned knows no relenting;
  Virtue is not won by fears."

Thus spake the ice-blooded elder gray.
The young man scoffed as he turned away—
Turned to the call of a sweet lute's measure,
Waked by the lightsome touch of pleasure.
Had he ne'er met a gentler teacher,
Woe had been wrought by that pitiless preacher.

THE WANDERER FROM THE FOLD.

How few, of all the hearts that loved,
  Are grieving for thee now?
And why should mine to-night be moved
  With such a sense of woe?

Too often thus, when left alone,
  Where none my thoughts can see,
Comes back a word, a passing tone
  From thy strange history.

Sometimes I seem to see thee rise,
  A glorious child again,
All virtues beaming from thine eyes
  That ever honoured men:

Courage and truth, a generous breast
  Where sinless sunshine lay—
A being whose very presence blest
  Like gladsome summer day.

Oh, fairly spread thy early sail,
  And fresh, and pure, and free,
Was the first impulse of the gale
  Which urged life's wave for thee!

Why did the pilot, too confiding,
  Dream o'er that ocean's foam,
And trust in pleasure's careless guiding
  To bring his vessel home?

For well he knew what dangers frowned,
  What mists would gather dim,
What rocks and shelves and sands lay round
  Between his port and him.

The very brightness of the sun,
  The splendour of the main,
The wind which bore him wildly on
  Should not have warned in vain.

An anxious gazer from the shore,
  I marked the whitening wave,
And wept above thy fate the more
  Because I could not save.

It recks not now, when all is over;
  But yet my heart will be
A mourner still, though friend and lover
  Have both forgotten thee.

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WARNING AND REPLY.

In the earth—the earth—thou shalt be laid,
A gray stone standing over thee,
Black mould beneath thee spread,
And black mould to cover thee.

" Well, there is rest there;
So fast come thy prophecy—
The time when my sunny hair
Shall with grass roots entwined be."

But cold, cold is that resting-place,
Shut out from joy and liberty,
And all who loved thy living face
Will shrink from it shudderingly.

" Not so. *Here* the world is chill,
And sworn friends fall from me;
But *there* they will own me still,
And prize my memory."

Farewell, then, all that love,
All that deep sympathy.
Sleep on. Heaven laughs above;
Earth never misses thee.

Turf-sod and tombstone drear
Part human company.
One heart breaks only—here;
But that heart was worthy thee.

LAST WORDS.

I knew not 'twas so dire a crime
To say the word " Adieu,"
But this shall be the only time
My lips or heart shall sue.

The wild hillside, the winter morn,
The gnarled and ancient tree,
If in your breast they waken scorn,
Shall wake the same in me.

I can forget black eyes and brows,
And lips of falsest charm,
If you forget the sacred vows
Those faithless lips could form.

If hard commands can tame your love,
Or strongest walls can hold,
I would not wish to grieve above
A thing so false and cold.

And there are bosoms bound to mine
With links both tried and strong;
And there are eyes whose lightning shine
Has warmed and blest me long.

Those eyes shall make my only day,
Shall set my spirit free,
And chase the foolish thoughts away
That mourn your memory.

THE LADY TO HER GUITAR.

For him who struck thy foreign string,
I ween this heart has ceased to care;
Then why dost thou such feelings bring
To my sad spirit, old guitar?

It is as if the warm sunlight
In some deep glen should lingering stay,
When clouds of storm, or shades of night,
Have wrapt the parent orb away.

It is as if the glassy brook
Should image still its willows fair,

Though years ago the woodman's stroke
Laid low in dust their dryad-hair.

Even so, guitar, thy magic tone
Hath moved the tear and waked the sigh;
Hath bid the ancient torrent moan,
Although its very source is dry.

THE TWO CHILDREN.

Heavy hangs the rain-drop
From the burdened spray;
Heavy broods the damp mist
On uplands far away.

Heavy looms the dull sky,
Heavy rolls the sea,
And heavy throbs the young heart
Beneath that lonely tree.

Never has a blue streak
Cleft the clouds since morn;
Never has his grim fate
Smiled since he was born.

Frowning on the infant,
Shadowing childhood's joy,
Guardian angel knows not
That melancholy boy.

Day is passing swiftly
Its sad and sombre prime;
Boyhood sad is merging
In sadder manhood's time.

All the flowers are praying
For sun, before they close,
And he prays too—unconscious—
That sunless human rose.

Blossom, that the west wind
Has never wooed to blow,
Scentless are thy petals,
Thy dew is cold as snow.

Soul, where kindred kindness,
No early promise woke,
Barren is thy beauty,
As weed upon a rock.

Wither, soul and blossom!
You both were vainly given.
Earth reserves no blessing
For the unblest of heaven!

Child of delight, with sun-bright hair,
And sea-blue, sea-deep eyes!
Spirit of bliss! what brings thee here
Beneath these sullen skies?

Thou shouldst live in eternal spring,
Where endless day is never dim.
Why, seraph, has thine erring wing
Wafted thee down to weep with him?

"Ah! not from heaven am I descended,
Nor do I come to mingle tears;
But sweet is day, though with shadows blended,
And, though clouded, sweet are youthful years.

"I—the image of light and gladness—
Saw and pitied that mournful boy,
And I vowed, if need were, to share his sadness,
And give to him my sunny joy.

"Heavy and dark the night is closing;
Heavy and dark may its biding be.
Better for all from grief reposing,
And better for all who watch like me—

"Watch in love by a fevered pillow,
Cooling the fever with pity's balm;
Safe as the petrel on tossing billow,
Safe in mine own soul's golden calm.

"Guardian angel he lacks no longer,
Evil fortune he need not fear;
Fate is strong, but love is stronger,
And *my* love is truer than angel-care."

THE VISIONARY.

SILENT is the house: all are laid asleep.
One alone looks out o'er the snow-wreaths deep,
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze
That whirls the wildering drift, and bends the groaning trees.

Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor;
Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or door.
The little lamp burns straight, its rays shoot strong and far;
I trim it well, to be the wanderer's guiding-star.

Frown, my haughty sire; chide, my angry dame;
Set your slaves to spy; threaten me with shame.
But neither sire nor dame nor prying serf shall know
What angel nightly tracks that waste of frozen snow.

What I love shall come like visitant of air,
Safe in secret power from lurking human snare;
What loves me, no word of mine shall e'er betray,
Though for faith unstained my life must forfeit pay.

Burn then, little lamp; glimmer straight and clear.
Hush! a rustling wing stirs, methinks, the air!
He for whom I wait thus ever comes to me.
Strange Power! I trust thy might; trust thou my constancy.

ENCOURAGEMENT.

I do not weep; I would not weep;
  Our mother needs no tears.
Dry thine eyes too; 'tis vain to keep
  This causeless grief for years.

What though her brow be changed and cold,
  Her sweet eyes closed for ever?
What though the stone, the darksome mould
  Our mortal bodies sever?

What though her hand smooth ne'er again
  Those silken locks of thine,
Nor through long hours of future pain
  Her kind face o'er thee shine?

Remember still she is not dead;
  She sees us, sister, now,
Laid, where her angel spirit fled,
  'Mid heath and frozen snow.

And from that world of heavenly light
  Will she not always bend
To guide us in our lifetime's night,
  And guard us to the end?

Thou knowest she will; and thou mayst mourn
  That *we* are left below,
But not that she can ne'er return
  To share our earthly woe.

STANZAS.

Often rebuked, yet always back returning
  To those first feelings that were born with me,
And leaving busy chase of wealth and learning
  For idle dreams of things which cannot be.

To-day I will seek not the shadowy region;
Its unsustaining vastness waxes drear;
And visions rising, legion after legion,
Bring the unreal world too strangely near.

I'll walk, but not in old heroic traces,
And not in paths of high morality,
And not among the half-distinguished faces,
The clouded forms of long-past history.

I'll walk where my own nature would be leading—
It vexes me to choose another guide—
Where the gray flocks in ferny glens are feeding,
Where the wild wind blows on the mountain side.

What have those lonely mountains worth revealing?
More glory and more grief than I can tell.
The earth that wakes *one* human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of heaven and hell.

The following are the last lines my sister Emily ever wrote:—

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life, that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in Thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts—unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by Thine infinity,
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is no room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void.
Thou—THOU art Being and Breath,
And what THOU art may never be destroyed.

SELECTIONS FROM POEMS BY ANNE BRONTË

("ACTON BELL")

by CHARLOTTE BRONTË
("CURRER BELL")

IN looking over my sister Anne's papers, I find mournful evidence that religious feeling had been to her but too much like what it was to Cowper—I mean, of course, in a far milder form. Without rendering her a prey to those horrors that defy concealment, it subdued her mood and bearing to a perpetual pensiveness; the pillar of a cloud glided constantly before her eyes; she ever waited at the foot of a secret Sinai, listening in her heart to the voice of a trumpet sounding long and waxing louder. Some, perhaps, would rejoice over these tokens of sincere though sorrowing piety in a deceased relative. I own to me they seem sad, as if her whole innocent life had been passed under the martyrdom of an unconfessed physical pain. Their effect, indeed, would be too distressing, were it not combated by the certain knowledge that in her last moments this tyranny of a too tender conscience was overcome; this pomp of terrors broke up, and passing away, left her dying hour unclouded. Her belief in God did not then bring to her dread, as of a stern Judge, but hope, as in a Creator and Saviour; and no faltering hope was it, but a sure and steadfast conviction, on which, in the rude passage from time to eternity, she threw the weight of her human weakness, and by which she was enabled to bear what was to be borne—patiently, serenely, victoriously.

DESPONDENCY.

I HAVE gone backward in the work;
  The labour has not sped;
Drowsy and dark my spirit lies,
  Heavy and dull as lead.

How can I rouse my sinking soul
  From such a lethargy?
How can I break these iron chains
  And set my spirit free?

There have been times when I have mourned
  In anguish o'er the past,
And raised my suppliant hands on high,
  While tears fell thick and fast;

And prayed to have my sins forgiven,
  With such a fervent zeal,
An earnest grief, a strong desire,
  As now I cannot feel.

And I have felt so full of love,
  So strong in spirit then,
As if my heart would never cool,
  Or wander back again.

And yet, alas! how many times
  My feet have gone astray!
How oft have I forgot my God,
  How greatly fallen away!

My sins increase, my love grows cold,
  And hope within me dies;
Even faith itself is wavering now.
  Oh, how shall I arise?

I cannot weep, but I can pray;
  Then let me not despair.

Lord Jesus, save me, lest I die!
Christ, hear my humble prayer!

A PRAYER.

My God (oh, let me call Thee mine,
Weak, wretched sinner though I be),
My trembling soul would fain be Thine,
My feeble faith still clings to Thee.

Not only for the past I grieve—
The future fills me with dismay.
Unless Thou hasten to relieve,
Thy suppliant is a castaway.

I cannot say my faith is strong,
I dare not hope my love is great;
But strength and love to Thee belong.
Oh, do not leave me desolate!

I know I owe my all to Thee;
Oh, *take* the heart I cannot give!
Do Thou my strength, my Saviour be,
And *make* me to Thy glory live.

IN MEMORY OF A HAPPY DAY IN FEBRUARY.

Blessed be Thou for all the joy
My soul has felt to-day!
Oh, let its memory stay with me,
And never pass away!

I was alone, for those I loved
Were far away from me;
The sun shone on the withered grass,
The wind blew fresh and free.

Was it the smile of early spring
  That made my bosom glow ?
'Twas sweet; but neither sun nor wind
  Could cheer my spirit so.

Was it some feeling of delight
  All vague and undefined ?
No ; 'twas a rapture deep and strong,
  Expanding in the mind.

Was it a sanguine view of life,
  And all its transient bliss,
A hope of bright prosperity ?
  Oh no ! it was not this.

It was a glimpse of truth divine
  Unto my spirit given,
Illumined by a ray of light
  That shone direct from heaven.

I felt there was a God on high,
  By whom all things were made ;
I saw His wisdom and His power
  In all His works displayed.

But most throughout the moral world
  I saw His glory shine ;
I saw His wisdom infinite,
  His mercy all divine.

Deep secrets of His providence,
  In darkness long concealed,
Unto the vision of my soul
  Were graciously revealed.

But while I wondered and adored
  His Majesty divine,
I did not tremble at His power—
  I felt that God was mine.

I knew that my Redeemer lived;
  I did not fear to die—
Full sure that I should rise again
  To immortality.

I longed to view that bliss divine
  Which eye hath never seen;
Like Moses, I would see His face
  Without the veil between.

CONFIDENCE.

OPPRESSED with sin and woe,
  A burdened heart I bear,
Opposed by many a mighty foe;
  But I will not despair.

With this polluted heart
  I dare to come to Thee,
Holy and mighty as Thou art,
  For Thou wilt pardon me.

I feel that I am weak,
  And prone to every sin;
But Thou who giv'st to those who seek
  Wilt give me strength within.

Far as this earth may be
  From yonder starry skies,
Remoter still am I from Thee;
  Yet Thou wilt not despise.

I need not fear my foes,
  I need not yield to care;
I need not sink beneath my woes,
  For Thou wilt answer prayer.

In my Redeemer's name
I give myself to Thee;
And, all unworthy as I am,
My God will cherish me.

My sister Anne had to taste the cup of life as it is mixed for the class termed " Governesses."

The following are some of the thoughts that now and then solace a governess :—

LINES WRITTEN FROM HOME.

THOUGH bleak these woods and damp the ground,
With fallen leaves so thickly strewn,
And cold the wind that wanders round
With wild and melancholy moan,

There *is* a friendly roof, I know,
Might shield me from the wintry blast;
There is a fire whose ruddy glow
Will cheer me for my wanderings past.

And so, though still, where'er I go,
Cold stranger glances meet my eye;
Though, when my spirit sinks in woe,
Unheeded swells the unbidden sigh;

Though solitude, endured too long,
Bids youthful joys too soon decay,
Makes mirth a stranger to my tongue,
And overclouds my noon of day;

When kindly thoughts that would have way
Flow back, discouraged, to my breast,
I know there is, though far away,
A home where heart and soul may rest.

Warm hands are there, that, clasped in mine,
  The warmer heart will not belie;
While mirth and truth and friendship shine
  In smiling lip and earnest eye.

The ice that gathers round my heart
  May there be thawed; and sweetly, then,
The joys of youth, that now depart,
  Will come to cheer my soul again.

Though far I roam, that thought shall be
  My hope, my comfort everywhere;
While such a home remains to me,
  My heart shall never know despair.

THE NARROW WAY.

Believe not those who say
  The upward path is smooth,
Lest thou shouldst stumble in the way
  And faint before the truth.

It is the only road
  Unto the realms of joy;
But he who seeks that blest abode
  Must all his powers employ.

Bright hopes and pure delight
  Upon his course may beam;
And there, amid the sternest heights,
  The sweetest flowerets gleam.

On all her breezes borne,
  Earth yields no scents like those;
But he that dares not grasp the thorn
  Should never crave the rose.

Arm—arm thee for the fight;
  Cast useless loads away.

Watch through the darkest hours of night;
  Toil through the hottest day.

Crush pride into the dust,
  Or thou must needs be slack;
And trample down rebellious lust,
  Or it will hold thee back.

Seek not thy honour here;
  Waive pleasure and renown;
The world's dread scoff undaunted bear,
  And face its deadliest frown.

To labour and to love,
  To pardon and endure,
To lift thy heart to God above,
  And keep thy conscience pure—

Be this thy constant aim,
  Thy hope, thy chief delight.
What matter who should whisper blame,
  Or who should scorn or slight?

What matter, if thy God approve,
  And if, within thy breast,
Thou feel the comfort of His love,
  The earnest of His rest?

DOMESTIC PEACE.

WHY should such gloomy silence reign,
  And why is all the house so drear,
When neither danger, sickness, pain,
  Nor death, nor want, have entered here?

We are as many as we were
  That other night, when all were gay,
And full of hope, and free from care;
  Yet is there something gone away.

The moon without as pure and calm
  Is shining as that night she shone;
But now to us she brings no balm,
  For something from our hearts is gone–

Something whose absence leaves a void,
  A cheerless want in every heart;
Each feels the bliss of all destroyed,
  And mourns the change—but each apart.

The fire is burning in the grate
  As redly as it used to burn;
But still the hearth is desolate,
  Till mirth, and love, and *peace* return.

'Twas *peace* that flowed from heart to heart,
  With looks and smiles that spoke of heaven,
And gave us language to impart
  The blissful thoughts itself had given.

Domestic peace, best joy of earth,
  When shall we all thy value learn?
White angel, to our sorrowing hearth
  Return—oh, graciously return!

THE THREE GUIDES.*

SPIRIT of Earth, thy hand is chill:
  I've felt its icy clasp;
And, shuddering, I remember still
  That stony-hearted grasp.
Thine eye bids love and joy depart.
  Oh, turn its gaze from me!
It presses down my shrinking heart;
  I will not walk with thee.

"Wisdom is mine," I've heard thee say.
  "Beneath my searching eye

---

* First published in *Fraser's Magazine.*

All mist and darkness melt away,
  Phantoms and fables fly.
Before me truth can stand alone—
  The naked, solid truth;
And man matured by worth will own
  If I am shunned by youth.

"Firm is my tread, and sure though slow;
  My footsteps never slide;
And he that follows me shall know
  I am the surest guide."
Thy boast is vain; but were it true
  That thou couldst safely steer
Life's rough and devious pathway through,
  Such guidance I should fear.

How could I bear to walk for aye,
  With eyes to earthward prone,
O'er trampled weeds and miry clay,
  And sand and flinty stone;
Never the glorious view to greet
  Of hill, and dale, and sky,
To see that nature's charms are sweet,
  Or feel that heaven is nigh?

If in my heart arose a spring,
  A gush of thought divine,
At once stagnation thou wouldst bring
  With that cold touch of thine.
If, glancing up, I sought to snatch
  But one glimpse of the sky,
My baffled gaze would only catch
  Thy heartless, cold gray eye.

If to the breezes wandering near
  I listened eagerly,
And deemed an angel's tongue to hear
  That whispered hope to me,

That heavenly music would be drowned
  In thy harsh, droning voice;
Nor inward thought, nor sight, nor sound,
  Might my sad soul rejoice.

Dull is thine ear, unheard by thee
  The still, small voice of heaven;
Thine eyes are dim and cannot see
  The helps that God has given.
There is a bridge o'er every flood
  Which thou canst not perceive;
A path through every tangled wood,
  But thou wilt not believe.

Striving to make thy way by force,
  Toil-spent and bramble-torn,
Thou'lt fell the tree that checks thy course,
  And burst through briar and thorn;
And, pausing by the river's side,
  Poor reasoner! thou wilt deem,
By casting pebbles in its tide,
  To cross the swelling stream.

Right through the flinty rock thou'lt try
  Thy toilsome way to bore,
Regardless of the pathway nigh
  That would conduct thee o'er.
Not only art thou, then, unkind,
  And freezing cold to me,
But unbelieving, deaf, and blind.
  I will not walk with thee.

Spirit of Pride, thy wings are strong,
  Thine eyes like lightning shine,
Ecstatic joys to thee belong,
  And powers almost divine.
But 'tis a false, destructive blaze
  Within those eyes I see.
Turn hence their fascinating gaze.
  I will not follow thee.

"Coward and fool!" thou mayst reply,
"Walk on the common sod;
Go, trace with timid foot and eye
The steps by others trod.
'Tis best the beaten path to keep,
The ancient faith to hold,
To pasture with thy fellow-sheep,
And lie within the fold.

"Cling to the earth, poor grovelling worm;
'Tis not for thee to soar
Against the fury of the storm,
Amid the thunder's roar.
There's glory in that daring strife
Unknown, undreamt by thee;
There's speechless rapture in the life
Of those who follow me."

Yes, I have seen thy votaries oft,
Upheld by thee their guide,
In strength and courage mount aloft
The steepy mountain side.
I've seen them stand against the sky,
And, gazing from below,
Beheld thy lightning in their eye,
Thy triumph on their brow.

Oh, I have felt what glory then,
What transport must be theirs—
So far above their fellow-men,
Above their toils and cares;
Inhaling nature's purest breath,
Her riches round them spread,
The wide expanse of earth beneath,
Heaven's glories overhead!

But I have seen them helpless, dashed
Down to a bloody grave,
And still thy ruthless eye has flashed,
Thy strong hand did not save.

I've seen some o'er the mountain's brow
  Sustained awhile by thee,
O'er rocks of ice and hills of snow
  Bound fearless, wild, and free.

Bold and exultant was their mien,
  While thou didst cheer them on;
But evening fell—and then, I ween,
  Their faithless guide was gone.
Alas! how fared thy favourites then—
  Lone, helpless, weary, cold?
Did ever wanderer find again
  The path he left of old?

Where is their glory, where the pride
  That swelled their hearts before?
Where now the courage that defied
  The mightiest tempest's roar?
What shall they do when night grows black,
  When angry storms arise?
Who now will lead them to the track
  Thou taughtst them to despise?

Spirit of Pride, it needs not this
  To make me shun thy wiles,
Renounce thy triumph and thy bliss,
  Thy honours and thy smiles.
Bright as thou art, and bold, and strong,
  That fierce glance wins not me,
And I abhor thy scoffing tongue.
  I will not follow thee.

Spirit of Faith, be thou my guide;
  Oh! clasp my hand in thine,
And let me never quit thy side.
  Thy comforts are divine.
Earth calls thee blind, misguided one;
  But who can show like thee
Forgotten things that have been done,
  And things that are to be?

Secrets concealed from nature's ken
  Who like thee can declare ?
Or who like thee to erring men
  God's holy will can bear ?
Pride scorns thee for thy lowly mien ;
  But who like thee can rise
Above this toilsome, sordid scene,
  Beyond the holy skies ?

Meek is thine eye and soft thy voice,
  But wondrous is thy might,
To make the wretched soul rejoice,
  To give the simple light !
And still to all that seek thy way
  This magic power is given,—
E'en while their footsteps press the clay,
  Their souls ascend to heaven.

Danger surrounds them—pain and woe
  Their portion here must be;
But only they that trust thee know
  What comfort dwells with thee,—
Strength to sustain their drooping powers,
  And vigour to defend—
Thou pole-star of my darkest hours,
  Affliction's firmest friend !

Day does not always mark our way,
  Night's shadows oft appall:
But lead me, and I cannot stray;
  Hold me, I shall not fall ;
Sustain me, I shall never faint,
  How rough soe'er may be
My upward road ; nor moan, nor plaint
  Shall mar my trust in thee.

Narrow the path by which we go,
  And oft it turns aside
From pleasant meads where roses blow
  And peaceful waters glide;

Where flowery turf lies green and soft,
  And gentle gales are sweet,
To where dark mountains frown aloft,
  Hard rocks distress the feet,

Deserts beyond lie bleak and bare,
  And keen winds round us blow;
But if thy hand conducts me there,
  The way is right, I know.
I have no wish to turn away;
  My spirit does not quail.
How can it while I hear thee say,
  "Press forward and prevail"?

Even above the tempest's swell
  I hear thy voice of love;
Of hope and peace I hear thee tell,
  And that blest home above.
Through pain and death I can rejoice,
  If but thy strength be mine;
Earth hath no music like thy voice,
  Life owns no joy like thine.

Spirit of Faith, I'll go with thee!
  Thou, if I hold thee fast,
Wilt guide, defend, and strengthen me,
  And bear me home at last.
By thy help all things I can do,
  In thy strength all things bear.
Teach me, for thou art just and true;
  Smile on me—thou art fair.

I have given the last memento of my sister Emily. This is the last of my sister Anne:—

I HOPED that with the brave and strong
  My portioned task might lie—
To toil amid the busy throng,
  With purpose pure and high.

But God has fixed another part,
  And He has fixed it well.
I said so with my bleeding heart,
  When first the anguish fell.

Thou, God, hast taken our delight,
  Our treasured hope away:
Thou bidd'st us now weep through the night,
  And sorrow through the day.

These weary hours will not be lost,
  These days of misery,
These nights of darkness, anguish-tost,
  Can I but turn to Thee.

With secret labour to sustain
  In humble patience every blow,
To gather fortitude from pain,
  And hope and holiness from woe.

Thus let me serve Thee from my heart,
  Whate'er may be my written fate—
Whether thus early to depart,
  Or yet awhile to wait.

If Thou shouldst bring me back to life,
  More humbled I should be,
More wise, more strengthened for the strife,
  More apt to lean on Thee.

Should death be standing at the gate,
  Thus should I keep my vow;
But, Lord, whatever be my fate,
  Oh, let me serve Thee now!

These lines written, the desk was closed, the pen laid aside—for ever.

THE END.

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