ABSTRACT
This book contains content from the third part of English 273 taught by Lisa Ray at Thomas Nelson Community College.

Lisa Ray
English 273
Franny Burney / Evalina

ORIGINAL DEDICATION.

TO THE AUTHORS OF THE MONTHLY AND CRITICAL REVIEWS.

GENTLEMEN, The liberty which I take in addressing to you the trifling production of a few idle hours, will doubtless move your wonder, and probably your contempt. I will not, however, with the futility of apologies, intrude upon your time, but briefly acknowledge the motives of my temerity; lest, by a premature exercise of that patience which I hope will befriend me, I should lessen its benevolence, and be accessory to my own condemnation.

Without name, without recommendation, and unknown alike to success and disgrace, to whom can I so properly apply for patronage, as to those who publicly profess themselves Inspectors of all literary performances?

The extensive plan of your critical observations,-which, not confined to works of utility or ingenuity, is equally open to those of frivolous amusement,-and, yet worse than frivolous, dullness,-encourages me to seek for your protection, since,-perhaps for my sins!-it intitles me to your annotations. To resent, therefore, this offering, however insignificant, would ill become the universality of your undertaking; though not to despise it may, alas! be out of your power.

The language of adulation, and the incense of flattery, though the natural inheritance, and constant resource, from time immemorial, of the Dedicator, to me offer nothing but the wistful regret that I dare not invoke their aid. Sinister views would be imputed to all I could say; since, thus situated, to extol your judgment, would seem the effect of art, and to celebrate your impartiality, be attributing to suspecting it.

As magistrates of the press, and Censors for the public,-to which you are bound by the sacred ties of integrity to exert the most spirited impartiality, and to which your suffrages should carry the marks of pure, dauntless, irrefragable truth-to appeal to your MERCY, were to solicit your dishonour; and therefore,-though ’tis sweeter than frankincense,-more grateful to the senses than all the odorous perfumes of Arabia,-and though

It droppeth like the gentle
rain from heaven Upon the
place beneath,-

I court it not! to your justice alone I am intitled, and by that I must abide. Your engagements are not to the supplicating authors; but to the candid public, which will not fail to crave

The penalty and forfeit of your bond.

No hackneyed writer, inured to abuse, and callous to criticism, here braves your severity;-neither does a half-starved garretteer,
Oblig’d by hunger-and request of friends,-

implore your lenity: your examination will be alike unbiassed by partiality and prejudice; no refractory murmuring will follow your censure, no private interest will be gratified by your praise.

Let not the anxious solicitude with which I recommend myself to your notice, expose me to your derision. Remember, Gentlemen, you were all young writers once, and the most experienced veteran of your corps may, by recollecting his first publication, renovate his first terrors, and learn to allow for mine. For though Courage is one of the noblest virtues of this nether sphere; and though scarcely more requisite in the field of battle, to guard the fighting hero from disgrace, than in the private commerce of the world, to ward off that littleness of soul which leads, by steps imperceptible, to all the base train of the inferior passions, and by which the too timid mind is betrayed into a servility derogatory to the dignity of human nature! yet is it a virtue of no necessity in a situation such as mine; a situation which removes, even from cowardice itself, the sting of ignominy;-for surely that courage may easily be dispensed with, which would rather excite disgust than admiration! Indeed, it is the peculiar privilege of an author, to rob terror of contempt, and pusillanimity of reproach.

Here let me rest- and snatch myself, while I yet am able, from the fascination of EGOTISM:-a monster who has more votaries than ever did homage to the most popular deity of antiquity; and whose singular quality is, that while he excites a blind and involuntary adoration in almost every individual, his influence is universally disallowed, his power universally contemned, and his worship, even by his followers, never mentioned but with abhorence.

In addressing you jointly, I mean but to mark the generous sentiments by which liberal criticism, to the utter annihilation of envy, jealousy, and all selfish views, ought to be distinguished.

I have the honour to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient
Humble Servant,

*** ****

_________________________________________________________

ORIGINAL PREFACE.

IN the republic of letters, there is no member of such inferior rank, or who is so much disdained by his brethren of the quill, as the humble Novelist; nor is his fate less hard in the world at large, since, among the whole class of writers, perhaps not one can be named of which the votaries are more numerous but less respectable.

Yet, while in the annals of those few of our predecessors, to whom this species of writing is indebted for being saved from contempt, and rescued from depravity, we can trace such names as Rousseau, Johnson,(1)Marivaux, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett, no man need blush at starting from the same post, though many, nay, most men, may sigh at finding themselves distanced.
The following letters are presented to the Public—for such, by novel writers, novel readers will be called, with a very singular mixture of timidity and confidence, resulting from the peculiar situation of the editor; who, though trembling for their success from a consciousness of their imperfections, yet fears not being involved in their disgrace, while happily wrapped up in a mantle of impenetrable obscurity.

To draw characters from nature, though not from life, and to mark the manners of the times, is the attempted plan of the following letters. For this purpose, a young female, educated in the most secluded retirement, makes, at the age of seventeen, her first appearance upon the great and busy stage of life; with a virtuous mind, a cultivated understanding, and a feeling heart, her ignorance of the forms, and inexperience in the manners of the world, occasion all the little incidents which these volumes record, and which form the natural progression of the life of a young woman of obscure birth, but conspicuous beauty, for the first six months after her Entrance into the world.

Perhaps, were it possible to effect the total extirpation of novels, our young ladies in general, and boarding-school damsels in particular, might profit from their annihilation; but since the distemper they have spread seems incurable, since their contagion bids defiance to the medicine of advice or reprehension, and since they are found to baffle all the mental art of physic, save what is prescribed by the slow regimen of Time, and bitter diet of Experience; surely all attempts to contribute to the number of those which may be read, if not with advantage, at least without injury, ought rather to be encouraged than contemned.

Let me, therefore, prepare for disappointment those who, in the perusal of these sheets, entertain the gentle expectation of being transported to the fantastic regions of Romance, where Fiction is coloured by all the gay tints of luxurious Imagination, where Reason is an outcast, and where the sublimity of the Marvellous rejects all aid from sober Probability. The heroine of these memoirs, young, artless, and inexperienced, is

No faultless Monster that the world ne'er saw;

but the offspring of Nature, and of Nature in her simplest attire.

In all the Arts, the value of copies can only be proportioned to the scarcity of originals: among sculptors and painters, a fine statue, or a beautiful picture, of some great master, may deservedly employ the imitative talents of young and inferior artists, that their appropriation to one spot may not wholly prevent the more general expansion of their excellence; but, among authors, the reverse is the case, since the noblest productions of literature are almost equally attainable with the meanest. In books, therefore, imitation cannot be shunned too sedulously; for the very perfection of a model which is frequently seen, serves but more forcibly to mark the inferiority of a copy.

To avoid what is common, without adopting what is unnatural, must limit the ambition of the vulgar herd of authors: however zealous, therefore, my veneration of the great writers I have mentioned, however I may feel myself enlightened by the knowledge of Johnson, charmed with the eloquence of Rousseau, softened by the pathetic powers of Richardson, and exhiliarated by the wit of Fielding and humour of Smollett, I yet presume not to attempt pursuing the same ground which they have tracked; whence, though they may have cleared the weeds, they have also culled the flowers; and, though they have rendered the path plain, they have left it barren.
The candour of my readers I have not the impertinence to doubt, and to their indulgence I am sensible I have no claim; I have, therefore, only to intreat, that my own words may not pronounce my condemnation; and that what I have here ventured to say in regard to imitation, may be understood as it is meant, in a general sense, and not be imputed to an opinion of my own originality, which I have not the vanity, the folly, or the blindness, to entertain.

Whatever may be the fate of these letters, the editor is satisfied they will meet with justice; and commits them to the press, though hopeless of fame, yet not regardless of censure.

1)However superior the capacities in which these great writers deserve to be considered, they must pardon me that, for the dignity of my subject, I here rank the authors of Rasselas and Eloise as Novelists.

LETTER I

LADY HOWARD TO THE REV. MR. VILLARS Howard Grove, Kent.

CAN any thing, my good Sir, be more painful to a friendly mind, than a necessity of communicating disagreeable intelligence? Indeed it is sometimes difficult to determine, whether the relator or the receiver of evil tidings is most to be pitied.

I have just had a letter from Madame Duval; she is totally at a loss in what manner to behave; she seems desirous to repair the wrongs she has done, yet wishes the world to believe her blameless. She would fain cast upon another the odium of those misfortunes for which she alone is answerable. Her letter is violent, sometimes abusive, and that of you! you, to whom she is under obligations which are greater even than her faults, but to whose advice she wickedly imputes all the sufferings of her much injured daughter, the late Lady Belmont. The chief purport of her writing I will acquaint you with; the letter itself is not worthy your notice.

She tells me that she has, for many years past, been in continual expectation of making a journey to England, which prevented her writing for information concerning this melancholy subject, by giving her hopes of making personal inquiries; but family occurrences have still detained her in France, which country she now sees no prospect of quitting. She has, therefore, lately used her utmost endeavors to obtain a faithful account of whatever related to her ill-advised daughter; the result of which giving her some reason to apprehend, that, upon her death-bed, she bequeathed an infant orphan to the world, she most graciously says, that if you, with whom she understands the child is placed, will procure authentic proofs of its relationship to her, you may sent it to Paris, where she will properly provide for it.

This woman is, undoubtedly, at length, self-convicted of her most unnatural behaviour; it is evident, from her writing, that she is still as vulgar and illiterate as when her first husband, Mr. Evelyn, had the weakness to marry her; nor does she at all apologize for addressing herself to me, though I was only once in her company.
Her letter has excited in my daughter Mirvan, a strong desire to be informed of the motives which induced Madame Duval to abandon the unfortunate Lady Belmont, at a time when a mother’s protection was peculiarly necessary for her peace and her reputation. Notwithstanding I was personally acquainted with all the parties concerned in that affair, the subject always appeared of too delicate a nature to be spoken of with the principals; I cannot, therefore, satisfy Mrs. Mirvan otherwise than by applying to you.

By saying that you may send the child, Madame Duval aims at conferring, where she most owes obligation. I pretend not to give you advice; you, to whose generous protection this helpless orphan is indebted for every thing, are the best and only judge of what she ought to do; but I am much concerned at the trouble and uneasiness which this unworthy woman may occasion you.

My daughter and my grandchild join with me in desiring to be most kindly remembered to the amiable girl; and they bid me remind you, that the annual visit to Howard Grove, which we were formerly promised, has been discontinued for more than four years. I am, dear Sir, with great regard, Your most obedient friend and servant, M. HOWARD.

LETTER II

MR. VILLARS TO LADY HOWARD Berry Hill, Dorsetshire.

YOUR Ladyship did but too well foresee the perplexity and uneasiness of which Madame Duval’s letter has been productive. However, I ought rather to be thankful that I have so many years remained unmolested, than repine at my present embarrassment; since it proves, at least, that this wretched woman is at length awakened to remorse.

In regard to my answer, I must humbly request your Ladyship to write to this effect: “That I would not, upon any account, intentionally offend Madame Duval; but that I have weighty, nay unanswerable reasons for detaining her grand-daughter at present in England; the principal of which is, that it was the earnest desire of one to whose will she owes implicit duty. Madame Duval may be assured, that she meets with the utmost attention and tenderness; that her education, however short of my wishes, almost exceeds my abilities; and I flatter myself, when the time arrives that she shall pay her duty to her grand-mother, Madame Duval will find no reason to be dissatisfied with what has been done for her.”

Your Ladyship will not, I am sure, be surprised at this answer. Madame Duval is by no means a proper companion or guardian for a young woman: she is at once uneducated and unprincipled; ungentle in temper, and unamiable in her manners. I have long known that she has persuaded herself to harbour an aversion for me- Unhappy woman! I can only regard her as an object of pity!

I dare not hesitate at a request from Mrs. Mirvan; yet, in complying with it, I shall, for her own sake, be as concise as I possibly can; since the cruel transactions which preceded the birth of my ward can afford no entertainment to a mind so humane as her’s.
Your Ladyship may probably have heard, that I had the honour to accompany Mr. Evelyn, the grandfather of my young charge, when upon his travels, in the capacity of a tutor. His unhappy marriage, immediately upon his return to England, with Madame Duval, then a waiting-girl at a tavern, contrary to the advice and entreaties of all his friends, among whom I was myself the most urgent, induced him to abandon his native land, and fix his abode in France. Thither he was followed by shame and repentance; feelings which his heart was not framed to support; for, notwithstanding he had been too weak to resist the allurements of beauty, which nature, though a niggard to her of every other boon, had with a lavish hand bestowed on his wife; yet he was a young man of excellent character, and, till thus unaccountably infatuated, of unblemished conduct. He survived this ill-judged marriage but two years. Upon his death-bed, with an unsteady hand, he wrote me the following note:

"My friend, forget your resentment, in favour of your humanity; a father, trembling for the welfare of his child, bequeaths her to your care. O Villars! hear! pity! And relieve me!"

Had my circumstances permitted me, I should have answered these words by an immediate journey to Paris; but I was obliged to act by the agency of a friend, who was upon the spot, and present at the opening of the will.

Mr. Evelyn left to me a legacy of a thousand pounds, and the sole guardianship of his daughter's person till her eighteenth year; conjuring me, in the most affecting terms, to take the charge of her education till she was able to act with propriety for herself; but, in regard to fortune, he left her wholly dependent on her mother, to whose tenderness he earnestly recommended her.

Thus, though he would not, to a woman low-bred and illiberal as Mrs. Evelyn, trust the conduct and morals of his daughter, he nevertheless thought proper to secure to her the respect and duty to which, from her own child, were certainly her due; but unhappily, it never occurred to him that the mother, on her part, could fail in affection or justice.

Miss Evelyn, Madam, from the second to the eighteenth year of her life, was brought up under my care, and, except when at school under my roof. I need not speak to your Ladyship of the virtues of that excellent young creature. She loved me as her father; nor was Mrs. Villars less valued by her; while to me she became so dear, that her loss was little less afflicting than that which I have since sustained of Mrs. Villars herself.

At that period of her life we parted; her mother, then married to Monsieur Duval, sent for her to Paris. How often have I since regretted that I did not accompany her thither! Protected and supported by me, the misery and disgrace which awaited her might perhaps have been avoided. But, to be brief-Madame Duval, at the instigation of her husband, earnestly, or rather tyrannically, endeavoured to effect a union between Miss Evelyn and one of his nephews. And, when she found her power inadequate to her attempt, enraged at her non-compliance, she treated her with the grossest unkindness, and threatened her with poverty and ruin.
Miss Evelyn, to whom wrath and violence had hitherto been strangers, soon grew weary of such usage; and rashly, and without a witness, consented to a private marriage with Sir John Belmont, a very profligate young man, who had but too successfully found means to insinuate himself into her favour. He promised to conduct her to England—he did. O, Madam, you know the rest!—Disappointed of the fortune he expected, by the inexorable rancour of the Duvals, he infamously burnt the certificate of their marriage, and denied that they had ever been united.

She flew to me for protection. With what mixed transports of joy and anguish did I again see her! By my advice, she endeavoured to procure proofs of her marriage—but in vain; her credulity had been no match for his art.

Every body believed her innocent, from the guiltless tenor of her unspotted youth, and from the known libertinism of her barbarous betrayer. Yet her sufferings were too acute for her slender frame; and the same moment that gave birth to her infant, put an end at once to the sorrows and the life of its mother.

The rage of Madame Duval at her elopement, abated not while this injured victim of cruelty yet drew breath. She probably intended, in time, to have pardoned her; but time was not allowed. When she was informed of her death, I have been told, that the agonies of grief and remorse, with which she was seized, occasioned her a severe fit of illness. But, from the time of her recovery to the date of her letter to your Ladyship, I had never heard that she manifested any desire to be made acquainted with the circumstances which attended the death of Lady Belmont, and the birth of her helpless child.

That child, Madam, shall never, while life is lent me, know the loss she has sustained. I have cherished, succoured, and supported her, from her earliest infancy to her sixteenth year; and so amply has she repaid my care and affection, that my fondest wish is now circumscribed by the desire of bestowing her on one who may be sensible of her worth, and then sinking to eternal rest in her arms.

Thus it has happened, that the education of the father, daughter, and grand-daughter, has devolved on me. What infinite misery have the two first caused me! Should the fate of the dear survivor be equally adverse, how wretched will be the end of my cares—the end of my days!

Even had Madame Duval merited the charge she claims, I fear my fortitude would have been unequal to such a parting; but being such as she is, not only my affection, but my humanity, recoils, at the barbarous idea of deserting the sacred trust reposed in me. Indeed, I could but ill support her former yearly visits to the respectable mansion at Howard Grove: pardon me, dear Madam, and do not think me insensible of the honour which your Ladyship’s condescension confers upon us both; but so deep is the impression which the misfortunes of her mother have made on my heart, that she does not, even for a moment, quit my sight without exciting apprehensions and terrors which almost overpower me. Such, Madam, is my tenderness, and such my weakness!—But she is the only tie I have upon earth, and I trust to your Ladyship’s goodness not to judge of my feelings with severity.
I beg leave to present my humble respects to Mrs. and Miss Mirvan; and have the honour to be, Madam, your Ladyship’s most obedient and most humble servant, ARTHUR VILLARS.

LETTER III [Written some months after the last]

LADY HOWARD TO THE REV. MR. VILLARS Howard Grove, March 8.

Dear and Rev. Sir,

YOUR last letter gave me infinite pleasure: after so long and tedious an illness, how grateful to yourself and to your friends must be your returning health! You have the hearty wishes of every individual of this place for its continuance and increase.

Will you not think I take advantage of your acknowledged recovery, if I once more venture to mention your pupil and Howard Grove together? Yet you must remember the patience with which we submitted to your desire of not parting with her during the bad state of your health, tho’ it was with much reluctance we forbore to solicit her company. My grand-daughter in particular, has scarce been able to repress her eagerness to again meet the friend of her infancy; and for my own part, it is very strongly my wish to manifest the regard I had for the unfortunate Lady Belmont, by proving serviceable to her child; which seems to me the best respect that can be paid to her memory. Permit me, therefore, to lay before you a plan which Mrs. Mirvan and I have formed, in consequence of your restoration to health.

I would not frighten you;—but do you think you could bear to part with your young companion for two or three months? Mrs. Mirvan proposes to spend the ensuing spring in London, whither for the first time, my grandchild will accompany her: Now, my good friend, it is very earnestly their wish to enlarge and enliven their party by the addition of your amiable ward, who would share, equally with her own daughter, the care and attention of Mrs. Mirvan. Do not start at this proposal; it is time that she should see something of the world. When young people are too rigidly sequestered from it, their lively and romantic imaginations paint it to them as a paradise of which they have been beguiled; but when they are shown it properly, and in due time, they see it such as it really is, equally shared by pain and pleasure, hope and disappointment.

You have nothing to apprehend from her meeting with Sir John Belmont, as that abandoned man is now abroad, and not expected home this year.

Well, my good Sir, what say you to our scheme? I hope it will meet with your approbation; but if it should not, be assured I can never object to any decision of one who is so much respected and esteemed as Mr. Villars, by His most faithful, humble servant, M. HOWARD.

LETTER IV

MR. VILLARS TO LADY HOWARD Berry Hill, March 12.
I am grieved, Madam, to appear obstinate, and I blush to incur the imputation of selfishness. In detaining my young charge thus long with myself in the country, I consulted not solely my own inclination. Destined, in all probability, to possess a very moderate fortune, I wished to contract her views to something within it. The mind is but too naturally prone to pleasure, but too easily yielded to dissipation: it has been my study to guard her against their delusions, by preparing her to expect and to despise them. But the time draws on for experience and observation to take the place of instruction: if I have in some measure, rendered her capable of using one with discretion, and making the other with improvement, I shall rejoice myself with the assurance of having largely contributed to her welfare. She is now of an age that happiness is eager to attend, - let her then enjoy it! I commit her to the protection of your Ladyship, and only hope she may be found worthy half the goodness I am satisfied she will meet with at your hospitable mansion.

Thus far, Madam, I cheerfully submit to your desire. In confiding my ward to the care of Lady Howard, I can feel no uneasiness from her absence, but what will arise from the loss of her company, since I shall be as well convinced of her safety as if she were under my own roof. - But can your Ladyship be serious in proposing to introduce her to the gaieties of a London life? Permit me to ask, for what end, or for what purpose? A youthful mind is seldom totally free from ambition; to curb that, is the first step to contentment, since to diminish expectation is to increase enjoyment. I apprehend nothing more than too much raising her hopes and her views, which the natural vivacity of her disposition would render but too easy to effect. The town-acquaintance of Mrs. Mirvan are all in the circle of high life; this artless young creature, with too much beauty to escape notice, has too much sensibility to be indifferent to it; but she has too little wealth to be sought with propriety by men of the fashionable world.

Consider Madam, the peculiar cruelty of her situation. Only child of a wealthy Baronet, whose person she has never seen, whose character she has reason to abhor, and whose name she is forbidden to claim; entitled as she is to lawfully inherit his fortune and estate, is there any probability that he will properly own her? And while he continues to persevere in disavowing his marriage with Miss Evelyn, she shall never, at the expense of her mother's honour, receive a part of her right as the donation of his bounty.

And as to Mr. Evelyn's estate, I have no doubt but that Madame Duval and her relations will dispose of it among themselves.

It seems, therefore, as if this deserted child, though legally heiress to two large fortunes, must owe all her rational expectations to adoption and friendship. Yet her income will be such as may make her happy, if she is disposed to be so in private life; though it will by no means allow her to enjoy the luxury of a London fine lady.

Let Miss Mirvan, then, Madam, shine in all the splendour of high life; but suffer my child still to enjoy the pleasures of humble retirement, with a mind to which greater views are unknown.

I hope this reasoning will be honoured with your approbation; and I have yet another motive which has some weight with me: I would not willingly give offence to any human being; and surely
Madame Duval might accuse me of injustice, if, while I refuse to let her grand-daughter wait upon her, I consent that she should join a party of pleasure to London.

In sending her to Howard Grove, not one of these scruples arise; and therefore Mrs. Clinton, a most worthy woman, formerly her nurse, and now my housekeeper, shall attend her thither next week.

Though I have always called her by the name of Anville, and reported in this neighbourhood that her father, my intimate friend, left her to my guardianship; yet I have thought it necessary she should herself be acquainted with the melancholy circumstances attending her birth: for though I am very desirous of guarding her from curiosity and impertinence, by concealing her name, family, and story, yet I would not leave it in the power of chance to shock her gentle nature with a tale of so much sorrow.

You must not, Madam, expect too much from my pupil; she is quite a little rustic, and knows nothing of the world; and though her education has been the best I could bestow in this retired place, to which Dorchester, the nearest town, is seven miles distant, yet I shall not be surprised if you should discover in her a thousand deficiencies of which I have never dreamt. She must be very much altered since she was last at Howard Grove. But I will say nothing of her; I leave her to your Ladyship's own observations, of which I beg a faithful relation; and am, Dear Madam, with great respect, Your obedient and most humble Servant, ARTHUR VILLARS.

LETTER V

MR. VILLARS TO LADY HOWARD March 18. Dear Madam,

THIS letter will be delivered to you by my child—the child of my adoption—my affection! Unblest with one natural friend, she merits a thousand. I send her to you innocent as an angel, and artless as purity itself; and I send you with her the heart of your friend, the only hope he has on earth, the subject of his tenderest thoughts, and the object of his latest cares. She is one, Madam, for whom alone I have lately wished to live; and she is one whom to serve I would with transport die! Restore her but to me all innocence as you receive her, and the fondest hope of my heart will be amply gratified. A. VILLARS.

LETTER VI

LADY HOWARD TO THE REV. MR. VILLARS Howard Grove.

Dear Rev. Sir,

THE solemn manner in which you have committed your child to my care, has in some measure damped the pleasure which I receive from the trust, as it makes me fear that you suffer from your compliance, in which case I shall very sincerely blame myself for the earnestness with which I have
requested this favour: but remember, my good Sir, she is within a few days summons; and be assured, I will not detain her a moment longer than you wish.

You desire my opinion of her.

She is a little angel! I cannot wonder that you sought to monopolize her: neither ought you, at finding it impossible.

Her face and person answer my most refined ideas of complete beauty: and this, though a subject of praise less important to you, or, to me than any other, is yet so striking, it is not possible to pass it unnoticed. Had I not known from whom she received her education, I should at first sight of so perfect a face, have been in pain for her understanding; since it has been long and justly remarked, that folly has ever sought alliance with beauty.

She has the same gentleness in her manners, the same natural graces in her motions, that I formerly so much admired in her mother. Her character seems truly ingenuous and simple; and at the same time that nature has blessed her with an excellent understanding and great quickness of parts, she has a certain air of inexperience and innocency that is extremely interesting.

You have not reason to regret the retirement in which she has lived; since that politeness which is acquired by an acquaintance with high life, is in her so well supplied by a natural desire of obliging, joined to a deportment infinitely engaging.

I observe, with great satisfaction, a growing affection between this amiable girl and my grand-daughter, whose heart is as free from selfishness or conceit, as that of her young friend is from all guile. Their regard may be mutually useful, since much is to be expected from emulation where nothing is to be feared from envy. I would have them love each other as sisters, and reciprocally supply the place of that tender and happy relationship to which neither of them has a natural claim.

Be satisfied, my good Sir, that your child shall meet with the same attention as our own. We all join in most hearty wishes for your health and happiness, and in returning our sincere thanks for the favour you have conferred on us. I am, dear Sir, Your most faithful servant, M. HOWARD.

LETTER VII

LADY HOWARD TO THE REV. MR. VILLARS Howard Grove, March 26.

BE not alarmed, my worthy friend, at my so speedily troubling you again; I seldom use the ceremony of waiting for answers, or writing with any regularity, and I have at present immediate occasion for begging your patience.
Mrs. Mirvan has just received a letter from her long absent husband, containing the welcome news of his hoping to reach London by the beginning of next week. My daughter and the Captain have been separated almost seven years, and it would therefore be needless to say what joy, surprise, and consequently confusion, his at present unexpected return has caused at Howard Grove. Mrs. Mirvan, you cannot doubt, will go instantly to town to meet him; her daughter is under a thousand obligations to attend her; I grieve that her mother cannot.

And now, my good Sir, I almost blush to proceed; - but, tell me, may I ask - will you permit - that your child may accompany them? Do not think us unreasonable, but consider the many inducements which conspire to make London the happiest place at present she can be in. The joyful occasion of the journey; the gaiety of the whole party, opposed to the dull life she must lead, if left here with a solitary old woman for her sole companion, while she so well knows the cheerfulness and felicity enjoyed by the rest of the family, - are circumstances that seem to merit your consideration. Mrs. Mirvan desires me to assure you that one week is all she asks, as she is certain that the Captain, who hates London, will be eager to revisit Howard Grove; and Maria is so very earnest in wishing to have the company of her friend, that, if you are inexorable, she will be deprived of half the pleasure she otherwise hopes to receive.

However, I will not, my good Sir, deceive you into an opinion that they intend to live in a retired manner, as that cannot be fairly expected. But you have no reason to be uneasy concerning Madame Duval; she has not any correspondent in England, and obtains no intelligence but by common report. She must be a stranger to the name your child bears; and, even should she hear of this excursion, so short a time as a week or less spent in town upon so particular an occasion, though previous to their meeting, cannot be construed into disrespect to herself.

Mrs. Mirvan desires me to assure you, that if you will oblige her, her two children shall equally share her time and her attention. She has sent a commission to a friend in town to take a house for her; and while she waits for an answer concerning it, I shall for one from you to our petition. However, your child is writing herself; and that, I doubt not, will more avail than all we can possible urge.

My daughter desires her best compliments to you if, she says, you will grant her request but not else.

Adieu, my dear Sir, we all hope every thing from your goodness.
M. HOWARD.

LETTER VIII

EVELINA TO THE REV. MR. VILLARS Howard Grove, March 26.

THIS house seems to be the house of joy; every face wears a smile, and a laugh is at every body's service. It is quite amusing to walk about and see the general confusion; a room leading to the garden is fitting up for Captain Mirvan's study. Lady Howard does not sit a moment in a place; Miss
Women Writers – Novels - 13

Mirvan is making caps; every body so busy!-such flying from room to room!-so many orders given, and retracted, and given again! nothing but hurry and perturbation.

Well but, my dear Sir, I am desired to make a request to you. I hope you will not think me an encroacher; Lady Howard insists upon my writing!-yet I hardly know how to go on; a petition implies a want and have you left me one? No, indeed.

I am half ashamed of myself for beginning this letter. But these dear ladies are so pressing-I cannot, for my life, resist wishing for the pleasures they offer me,-provided you do not disapprove them.

They are to make a very short stay in town. The Captain will meet them in a day or two. Mrs. Mirvan and her sweet daughter both go; what a happy party! Yet, I am not very eager to accompany them: at least I shall be contented to remain where I am, if you desire that I should.

Assured, my dearest Sir, of your goodness, your bounty, and your indulgent kindness, ought I to form a wish that has not your sanction? Decide for me, therefore, without the least apprehension that I shall be uneasy or discontented. While I am yet in suspense, perhaps I may hope; but I am most certain that when you have once determined I shall not repine.

They tell me that London is now in full splendour. Two playhouses are open,-the Opera-house,-Ranelagh,-and the Pantheon.-You see I have learned all their names. However, pray don’t suppose that I make any point of going, for I shall hardly sigh, to see them depart without me, though I shall probably never meet with such another opportunity. And, indeed, their domestic happiness will be so great,-it is natural to wish to partake of it.

I believe I am bewitched! I made a resolution, when I began, that I would not be urgent; but my pen, or rather my thoughts, will not suffer me to keep it-for I acknowledge, I must acknowledge, I cannot help wishing for your permission.

I almost repent already that I have made this confession; pray forget that you have read it, if this journey is displeasing to you. But I will not write any longer; for the more I think of this affair, the less indifferent to it I find myself.

Adieu, my most honoured, most reverenced, most beloved father! for by what other name can I call you? I have no happiness or sorrow, no hope or fear, but what your kindness bestows, or your displeasure may cause. You will not, I am sure, send a refusal without reasons unanswerable, and therefore I shall cheerfully acquiesce. Yet I hope-I hope you will be able to permit me to go! I am, with the utmost affection, gratitude, and duty, your EVELINA -

I cannot to you sign ANVILLE, and what other name may I claim?
LETTER IX

MR. VILLARS TO EVELINA Berry Hill, March 28.

TO resist the urgency of intreaty, is a power which I have not yet acquired: I aim not at an authority which deprives you of liberty, yet I would fain guide myself by a prudence which should save me the pangs of repentance. Your impatience to fly to a place which your imagination has painted to you in colors so attractive, surprises me not; I have only to hope, that the liveliness of your fancy may not deceive you: to refuse, would be raising it still higher. To see my Evelina happy, is to see myself without a wish: go, then my child; and may that Heaven, which alone can direct, preserve and strengthen you! To that, my love, will I daily offer prayers for your felicity. O may it guard, watch over you, defend you from danger, save you from distress, and keep vice as distant from your person as from your heart! And to me, may it grant, the ultimate blessing of closing these aged eyes in the arms of one so dear-so deservedly beloved! ARTHUR VILLARS.

LETTER X

EVELINA TO THE REV. MR. VILLARS Queen Ann Street, London, Saturday, April 2.

THIS moment arrived. Just going to Drury Lane Theatre. The celebrated Mr. Garrick performs Ranger. I am quite in ecstasy. So is Miss Mirvan. How fortunate that he should happen to play! We would not let Mrs. Mirvan rest till she consented to go. Her chief objection was to our dress, for we have had no time to Londonize ourselves; but we teased her into compliance, and so we are to sit in some obscure place that she may not be seen. As to me, I should be alike unknown in the most conspicuous or most private part of the house.

I can write no more now. I have hardly time to breathe-only just this, the houses and streets are not quite so superb as I expected. However, I have seen nothing yet, so I ought not to judge.

Well; adieu, my dearest Sir, for the present; I could not forbear writing a few words instantly on my arrival, though I suppose my letter of thanks for your consent is still on the road. Saturday Night.

O, my dear Sir, in what raptures am I returned? Well may Mr. Garrick be so celebrated, so universally admired-I had not any idea of so great a performer.

Such ease! such vivacity in his manner! such grace in his motions! such fire and meaning in his eyes! I could hardly believe he had studied a written part, for every word seemed to be uttered from the impulse of the moment.

His action-at once so graceful and so free!-his voice-so clear, so melodious, yet so wonderfully various in its tones!-Such animation!-every look speaks!
I would have given the world to have had the whole play acted over again. And when he danced-O, how I envied Clarinda! I almost wished to have jumped on the stage and joined them.

I am afraid you will think me mad, so I won’t say any more; yet, I really believe Mr. Garrick would make you mad too if you could see him. I intend to ask Mrs. Mirvan to go to the play every night while we stay in town. She is extremely kind to me; and Maria, her charming daughter, is the sweetest girl in the world.

I shall write to you every evening all that passes in the day, and that in the same manner as, if I could see, I should tell you. Sunday.

This morning we went to Portland chapel; and afterwards we walked in the mall of St. James's Park, which by no means answered my expectations: it is a long straight walk of dirty gravel, very uneasy to the feet; and at each end instead of an open prospect, nothing is to be seen but houses built of brick. When Mrs. Mirvan pointed out the Palace to me—thinking I was never much more surprised.

However, the walk was very agreeable to us; every body looked gay, and seemed pleased; and the ladies were so much dressed, that Miss Mirvan and I could do nothing but look at them. Mrs. Mirvan met several of her friends. No wonder, for I never saw so many people assembled together before. I looked about for some of my acquaintance, but in vain; for I saw not one person that I knew, which is very odd, for all the world seemed there.

Mrs. Mirvan says we are not to walk in the Park again next Sunday, even if we should be in town, because there is better company in Kensington Gardens; but really if you had seen how much every body was dressed, you would not think that possible. Monday.

We are to go this evening to a private ball, given by Mrs. Stanley, a very fashionable lady of Mrs. Mirvan’s acquaintance.

We have been a-shopping as Mrs. Mirvan calls it, all this morning, to buy silks, caps, gauzes, and so forth.

The shops are really very entertaining, especially the mercers; there seem to be six or seven men belonging to each shop; and every one took care by bowing and smirking, to be noticed. We were conducted from one to another, and carried from room to room with so much ceremony, that at I was almost afraid to go on.

I thought I should never have chosen a silk: for they produced so many, I knew not which to fix upon; and they recommended them all so strongly, that I fancy they thought I only wanted persuasion to buy every thing they showed me. And, indeed, they took so much trouble, that I was almost ashamed I could not.
At the milliners, the ladies we met were so much dressed, that I should rather have imagined they were making visits than purchases. But what most diverted me was, that we were more frequently served by men than by women; and such men! so finical, so affected! they seemed to understand every part of a woman's dress better than we do ourselves; and they recommended caps and ribbons with an air of so much importance, that I wished to ask them how long they had left off wearing them.

The dispatch with which they work in these great shops is amazing, for they have promised me a complete suit of linen against the evening.

I have just had my hair dressed. You can't think how oddly my head feels; full of powder and black pins, and a great cushion on the top of it. I believe you would hardly know me, for my face looks quite different to what it did before my hair was dressed. When I shall be able to make use of a comb for myself I cannot tell; for my hair is so much entangled, frizzled they call it, that I fear it will be very difficult.

I am half afraid of this ball to-night; for, you know, I have never danced but at school: however, Miss Mirvan says there is nothing in it. Yet, I wish it was over.

Adieu, my dear Sir, pray excuse the wretched stuff I write; perhaps I may improve by being in this town, and then my letters will be less unworthy your reading. Meantime, I am, Your dutiful and affectionate, though unpolished, EVELINA.

Poor Miss Mirvan cannot wear one of the caps she made, because they dress her hair too large for them.

LETTER XI

EVELINA IN CONTINUATION Queen Ann Street, April 5, Tuesday Morning.

I HAVE a vast deal to say, and shall give all this morning to my pen.

As to my plan of writing every evening the adventures of the day, I find it impracticable; for the diversions here are so very late, that if I begin my letters after them, I could not go to bed at all.

We passed a most extraordinary evening. A private ball this was called, so I expected to have seen about four or five couple; but Lord! my dear Sir, I believe I saw half the world! Two very large rooms were full of company; in one were cards for the elderly ladies, and in the other were the dancers. My mamma Mirvan, for she always calls me her child, said she would sit with Maria and me till we were provided with partners, and then join the card-players.
The gentleme, as they passed and repassed, looked as if they thought we were quite at their
disposal, and only waiting for the honour of their commands; and they sauntered about, in a
careless, indolent manner, as if with a view to keep us in suspense. I don’t speak of this in regard to
Miss Mirvan and myself only, but to the ladies in general: and I thought it so provoking, that I
determined in my own mind that, far from humouring such airs, I would rather not dance at all,
than with any one who would seem to think me ready to accept the first partner who would
condescend to take me.

Not long after, a young man, who had for some time looked at us with a kind of negligent
impertinence, advanced on tiptoe towards me; he had a set smile on his face, and his dress was so
foppish, that I really believed he even wished to be stared at; and yet he was very ugly.

Bowing almost to the ground with a sort of swing, and waving his hand, with the greatest conceit,
after a short and silly pause, he said, "Madam—may I presume?"—and stooped, offering to take my hand.
I drew it back, but could scarce forbear laughing. "Allow me, Madam," continued he, affectedly
breaking off every half moment, "the honour and happiness—if I am not so unhappy as to address
you too late—to have the happiness and honour—"

Again he would have taken my hand; but bowing my head, I begged to be excused, and turned to
Miss Mirvan to conceal my laughter. He then desired to know if I had already engaged myself to
some more fortunate man? I said No, and that I believed I should not dance at all. He would keep
himself he told me, disengaged, in hopes I should relent; and then, uttering some ridiculous
speeches of sorrow and disappointment, though his face still wore the same invariable smile, he
retreated.

It so happened, as we have since recollected, that during this little dialogue Mrs. Mirvan was
conversing with the lady of the house. And very soon after, another gentleman, who seemed about
six-and-twenty years old, gaily but not foppishly dressed, and indeed extremely handsome, with an
air of mixed politeness and gallantry, desired to know if I was engaged, or would honour him with
my hand. So he was pleased to say, though I am sure I know not what honour he could receive from
me; but these sort of expressions, I find, are used as words of course, without any distinction of
persons, or study of propriety.

Well, I bowed, and I am sure I coloured; for indeed I was frightened at the thoughts of dancing
before so many people, all strangers, and, which was worse, with a stranger: however, that was
unavoidable; for, though I looked round the room several times, I could not see one person that I
knew. And so he took my hand, and led me to join in the dance.

The minuets were over before we arrived, for we were kept late by the milliners making us wait for
our things.

He seemed very desirous of entering into conversation with me; but I was seized with such a panic,
that I could hardly speak a word, and nothing but the shame of so soon changing my mind
prevented my returning to my seat, and declining to dance at all.
He appeared to be surprised at my terror, which I believe was but too apparent: however, he asked no questions, though I fear he must think it very strange, for I did not choose to tell him it was owing to my never before dancing but with a school-girl.

His conversation was sensible and spirited; his air, and address were open and noble; his manners gentle, attentive, and infinitely engaging; his person is all elegance, and his countenance the most animated and expressive I have ever seen.

In a short time we were joined by Miss Mirvan, who stood next couple to us. But how I was startled when she whispered me that my partner was a nobleman! This gave me a new alarm: how will he be provoked, thought I, when he finds what a simple rustic he has honoured with his choice! one whose ignorance of the world makes her perpetually fear doing something wrong!

That he should be so much my superior in every way, quite disconcerted me; and you will suppose my spirits were not much raised, when I heard a lady, in passing us, say, "This is the most difficult dance I ever saw."

"O dear, then" cried Maria to her partner, "with your leave, I'll sit down till the next."

"So will I too, then," cried I, "for I am sure I can hardly stand."

"But you must speak to your partner first," answered she; for he had turned aside to talk with some gentlemen. However, I had not sufficient courage to address him; and so away we all three tript, and seated ourselves at another end of the room.

But, unfortunately for me, Miss Mirvan soon after suffered herself to be prevailed upon to attempt the dance; and just as she rose to go, she cried, "My dear, yonder is your partner, Lord Orville walking about the room in search of you."

"Don't leave me then, dear girl!" cried I; but she was obliged to go. And now I was more uneasy than ever; I would have given the world to have seen Mrs. Mirvan, and begged of her to make my apologies; for what, thought I, can I possibly say to him in excuse for running away? He must either conclude me a fool, or half mad; for any one brought up in the great world, and accustomed to its ways, can have no idea of such sort of fears as mine.

My confusion increased when I observed that he was every where seeking me, with apparent perplexity and surprise; but when, at last, I saw him move towards the place where I sat, I was ready to sink with shame and distress. I found it absolutely impossible to keep my seat, because I could not think of a word to say for myself; and so I rose, and walked hastily towards the card-room, resolving to stay with Mrs. Mirvan the rest of the evening, and not to dance at all. But before I could find her, Lord Orville saw and approached me.
He begged to know if I was not well? You may easily imagine how much I was embarrassed. I made no answer; but hung my head like a fool, and looked on my fan.

He then, with an air the most respectfully serious, asked if he had been so unhappy as to offend me?

"No, indeed!" cried I; and, in hopes of changing the discourse, and preventing his further inquiries, I desired to know if he had seen the young lady who had been conversing with me?

No;—but would I honour him with any commands to her?

"O, by no means!"

Was there any other person with whom I wished to speak?

I said no, before I knew I had answered at all.

Should he have the pleasure of bringing me any refreshment?

I bowed, almost involuntarily. And away he flew.

I was quite ashamed of being so troublesome, and so much above myself as these seeming airs made me appear; but indeed I was too much confused to think or act with any consistency.

If he had not been as swift as lightning, I don't know whether I should not have stolen away again; but he returned in a moment. When I had drank a glass of lemonade, he hoped, he said, that I would again honour him with my hand, as a new dance was just begun. I had not the presence of mind to say a single word, and so I let him once more lead me to the place I had left.

Shocked to find how silly, how childish a part I had acted, my former fears of dancing before such a company, and with such a partner, returned more forcibly than ever. I suppose he perceived my uneasiness; for he entreated me to sit down again if dancing was disagreeable to me. But I was quite satisfied with the folly I had already shewn; and therefore declined his offer, though I was really scarce able to stand.

Under such conscious disadvantages, you may easily imagine my dear Sir, how ill I acquitted myself. But, though I both expected and deserved to find him very much mortified and displeased at his ill fortune in the choice he had made; yet, to my very great relief, he appeared to be even contented, and very much assisted and encouraged me. These people in high life have too much presence of
mind, I believe, to seem disconcerted, or out of humour, however they may feel: for had I been the person of the most consequence in the room, I could not have met with more attention and respect.

When the dance was over, seeing me still very much flurried, he led me to a seat, saying that he would not suffer me to fatigue myself from politeness.

And then, if my capacity, or even, if my spirits had been better, in how animated a conversation I might have been engaged! it was then I saw that the rank of Lord Orville was his least recommendation, his understanding and his manners being far more distinguished. His remarks upon the company in general were so apt, so just, so lively, I am almost surprised myself that they did not reanimate me; but, indeed, I was too well convinced of the ridiculous part I had myself played before so nice an observer, to be able to enjoy his pleasantry: so self-compassion gave me feeling for others. Yet I had not the courage to attempt either to defend them or to rally in my turn; but listened to him in silent embarrassment.

When he found this, he changed the subject, and talked of public places, and public performers; but he soon discovered that I was totally ignorant of them.

He then, very ingeniously, turned the discourse to the amusements and occupations of the country.

It now struck me that he was resolved to try whether or not I was capable of talking upon any subject. This put so great a restraint upon my thoughts, that I was unable to go further than a monosyllable, and not ever so far, when I could possibly avoid it.

We were sitting in this manner, he conversing with all gaiety, I looking down with all foolishness, when that fop who had first asked me to dance, with a most ridiculous solemnity approached, and, after a profound bow or two, said, "I humbly beg pardon, Madam,-and of you too, my Lord,-for breaking in upon such agreeable conversation-which must, doubtless, be more delectable-than what I have the honour to offer-but-"

I interrupted him-I blush for my folly,-with laughing; yet I could not help it; for, added to the man’s stately foppishness, (and he actually took snuff between every three words) when I looked around at Lord Orville, I saw such extreme surprise in his face,-the cause of which appeared so absurd, that I could not for my life preserve my gravity.

I had not laughed before from the time I had left Miss Mirvan, and I had much better have cried then; Lord Orville actually stared at me; the beau, I know not his name, looked quite enraged. "Refrain-Madam," said he, with an important air, "a few moments refrain!-I have but a sentence to trouble you with.-May I know to what accident I must attribute not having the honour of your hand?"

"Accident, Sir!" repeated I, much astonished.
"Yes, accident, Madam;—for surely,—I must take the liberty to observe—pardon me, Madam,—it ought to be no common one—that should tempt a lady—so young a one too,—to be guilty of ill-manners."

A confused idea now for the first time entered my head, of something I had heard of the rules of an assembly; but I was never at one before,—I have only danced at school,—and so giddy and heedless I was, that I had not once considered the impropriety of refusing one partner, and afterwards accepting another. I was thunderstruck at the recollection: but, while these thoughts were rushing into my head, Lord Orville with some warmth, said, "This Lady, Sir, is incapable of meriting such an accusation!"

The creature—for I am very angry with him—made a low bow and with a grin the most malicious I ever saw, "My Lord," said he, "far be it from me to accuse the lady, for having the discernment to distinguish and prefer—the superior attractions of your Lordship."

Again he bowed and walked off.

Was ever any thing so provoking? I was ready to die with shame. "What a coxcomb!" exclaimed Lord Orville: while I, without knowing what I did, rose hastily, and moving off, "I can't imagine," cried I, "where Mrs. Mirvan has hid herself!"

"Give me leave to see," answered he. I bowed and sat down again, not daring to meet his eyes; for what must he think of me, between my blunder, and the supposed preference?

He returned in a moment, and told me that Mrs. Mirvan was at cards, but would be glad to see me; and I went immediately. There was but one chair vacant; so, to my great relief, Lord Orville presently left us. I then told Mrs. Mirvan my disasters; and she good-naturedly blamed herself for not having better instructed me; but said, she had taken it for granted that I must know such common customs. However, the man may, I think, be satisfied with his pretty speech and carry his resentment no farther.

In a short time Lord Orville returned. I consented, with the best grace I could, to go down another dance, for I had had time to recollect myself; and therefore resolved to use some exertion, and, if possible, to appear less a fool than I had hitherto done; for it occurred to me, that, insignificant as I was, compared to a man of his rank and figure; yet, since he had been so unfortunate as to make choice of me for a partner, why I should endeavour to make the best of it.

The dance, however, was short, and he spoke very little; so I had no opportunity of putting my resolution in practice. He was satisfied, I suppose, with his former successless efforts to draw me out or, rather, I fancied he had been inquiring who I was. This again disconcerted me; and the spirits I had determined to exert, again failed me. Tired, ashamed, and mortified, I begged to sit down till we returned home, which I did soon after. Lord Orville did me the honour to hand me to the coach, talking all the way of the honour I had done him! O these fashionable people!
Well, my dear Sir, was it not a strange evening? I could not help being thus particular, because, to me, every thing is so new. But it is now time to conclude. I am, with all love and duty, your Evelina.

LETTER XII

EVELINA IN CONTINUATION Tuesday, April 5.

There is to be no end to the troubles of last night. I have this moment, between persuasion and laughter, gathered from Maria the most curious dialogue that ever I heard. You will at first be startled at my vanity; but, my dear Sir, have patience!

It must have passed while I was sitting with Mrs. Mirvan, in the card-room. Maria was taking some refreshment, and saw Lord Orville advancing for the same purpose himself; but he did not know her, though she immediately recollected him. Presently after, a very gay-looking man, stepping hastily up to him cried, "Why, my Lord, what have you done with your lovely partner?"

"Nothing!" answered Lord Orville with a smile and a shrug.

"By Jove," cried the man, "she is the most beautiful creature I ever saw in my life!"

Lord Orville, as he well might, laughed; but answered, "Yes, a pretty modest-looking girl."

"O my Lord!" cried the madman, "she is an angel!"

"A silent one," returned he.

"Why ay, my Lord, how stands she as to that? She looks all intelligence and expression."

"A poor weak girl!" answered Lord Orville, shaking his head.

"By Jove," cried the other, "I am glad to hear it!"

At that moment, the same odious creature who had been my former tormentor, joined them. Addressing Lord Orville with great respect, he said, "I beg pardon, my Lord,-if I was-as I fear might be the case-rather too severe in my censure of the lady who is honoured with your protection-but, my Lord, ill-breeding is apt to provoke a man."
"Ill-breeding!" cried my unknown champion, "impossible! that elegant face can never be so vile a mask!"

"O Sir, as to that," answered he, "you must allow me to judge; for though I pay all deference to your opinion-in other things-yet I hope you will grant-and I appeal to your Lordship also-that I am not totally despicable as a judge of good or ill-manners."

"I was so wholly ignorant," said Lord Orville, gravely, "of the provocation you might have had, that I could not but be surprised at your singular resentment."

"It was far from my intention," answered he, "to offend your lordship; but, really, for a person who is nobody, to give herself such airs-I own I could not command my passion. For, my Lord, though I have made diligent inquiry-I cannot learn who she is."

"By what I can make out," cried my defender, "she must be a country parson's daughter."

"He! he! he! very good, 'pon honour!" cried the fop; "well, so I could have sworn by her manners."

And then, delighted at his own wit, he laughed, and went away, as I suppose, to repeat it.

"But what the deuce is all this?" demanded the other.

"Why a very foolish affair," answered Lord Orville; "your Helen first refused this coxcomb, and then-danced with me. This is all I can gather of it."

"O, Orville," returned he, "you are a happy man!-But ill-bred? -I can never believe it! And she looks too sensible to be ignorant."

"Whether ignorant or mischievous, I will not pretend to determine; but certain it is, she attended to all I could say to her, though I have really fatigued myself with fruitless endeavours to entertain her, with the most immovable gravity; but no sooner did Lovel begin his complaint, than she was seized with a fit of laughing, first affronting the poor beau, and then enjoying his mortification."

"Ha! ha! ha! why there is some genius in that, my Lord, perhaps rather-rustic."

Here Maria was called to dance, and so heard no more.
Now, tell me, my dear Sir, did you ever know any thing more provoking? "A poor weak girl!" "Ignorant or mischievous!" What mortifying words! I am resolved, however, that I will never again be tempted to go to an assembly. I wish I had been in Dorsetshire.

Well, after this, you will not be surprised that Lord Orville contented himself with an inquiry after our healths this morning, by his servant, without troubling himself to call, as Miss Mirvan had told me he would; but perhaps it may be only a country custom.

I would not live here for the world. I care not how soon we leave town. London soon grows tiresome. I wish the Captain would come. Mrs. Mirvan talks of the opera for this evening; however, I am very indifferent about it. Wednesday Morning.

Well, my dear Sir, I have been pleased against my will, I could almost say; for I must own I went out in very ill humour, which I think you cannot wonder at: but the music and the singing were charming; they soothed me into a pleasure the most grateful, the best suited to my present disposition in the world. I hope to persuade Mrs. Mirvan to go again on Saturday. I wish the opera was every night. It is, of all entertainments, the sweetest and most delightful. Some of the songs seemed to melt my very soul. It was what they call a serious opera, as the comic first singer was ill.

To-night we go to Ranelagh. If any of those three gentlemen who conversed so freely about me should be there—but I won't think of it. Thursday Morning.

Well, my dear Sir, we went to Ranelagh. It is a charming place; and the brilliancy of the lights, on my first entrance, made me almost think I was in some enchanted castle or fairy palace, for all looked like magic to me.

The very first person I saw was Lord Orville. I felt so confused!—but he did not see me. After tea, Mrs. Mirvan being tired, Maria and I walked round the room alone. Then again we saw him, standing by the orchestra. We, too, stopt to hear a singer. He bowed to me; I courtesied, and I am sure I coloured. We soon walked on, not liking our situation; however, he did not follow us; and when we passed by the orchestra again, he was gone. Afterwards, in the course of the evening, we met him several times; but he was always with some party, and never spoke to us, though whenever he chanced to meet my eyes, he condescended to bow.

I cannot but be hurt at the opinion he entertains of me. It is true my own behaviour incurred it—yet he is himself the most agreeable, and, seemingly, the most amiable man in the world, and therefore it is that I am grieved to be thought ill of by him: for of whose esteem ought we to be ambitious, if not of those who most merit our own?—But it is too late to reflect upon this now. Well I can't help it.—However, I think I have done with assemblies.

This morning was destined for seeing sights, auctions, curious shops, and so forth; but my head ached, and I was not in a humour to be amused, and so I made them go without me, though very unwillingly. They are all kindness.
And now I am sorry I did not accompany them, for I know not what to do with myself. I had resolved not to go to the play to-night; but I believe I shall. In short, I hardly care whether I do or not.

I thought I had done wrong! Mrs. Mirvan and Maria have been half the town over, and so entertained!-while I, like a fool, staid at home to do nothing. And, at the auction in Pall-mall, who should they meet but Lord Orville. He sat next to Mrs. Mirvan, and they talked a great deal together; but she gave me no account of the conversation.

I may never have such another opportunity of seeing London; I am quite sorry that I was not of the party; but I deserve this mortification, for having indulged my ill-humour. Thursday Night.

We are just returned from the play, which was King Lear, and has made me very sad. We did not see any body we knew.

Well, adieu, it is too late to write more. Friday.

Captain Mirvan is arrived. I have not spirits to give an account of his introduction, for he has really shocked me. I do not like him. He seems to be surly, vulgar, and disagreeable.

Almost the same moment that Maria was presented to him, he began some rude jests upon the bad shape of her nose, and called her a tall ill-formed thing. She bore it with the utmost good-humour; but that kind and sweet-tempered woman, Mrs. Mirvan, deserved a better lot. I am amazed she would marry him.

For my own part, I have been so shy, that I have hardly spoken to him, or he to me. I cannot imagine why the family was so rejoiced at his return. If he had spent his whole life abroad, I should have supposed they might rather have been thankful than sorrowful. However, I hope they do not think so ill of him as I do. At least, I am sure they have too much prudence to make it known. Saturday Night.

We have been to the opera, and I am still more pleased than I was on Tuesday. I could have thought myself in Paradise, but for the continual talking of the company around me. We sat in the pit, where every body was dressed in so high a style, that if I had been less delighted with the performance, my eyes would have found me sufficient entertainment from looking at the ladies.

I was very glad I did not sit next the Captain; for he could not bear the music or singers, and was extremely gross in his observations of both. When the opera was over, we went into a place called the coffee-room where ladies, as well as gentlemen, assemble. There are all sorts of refreshments, and the company walk about, and chat with the same ease and freedom as in a private room.
On Monday we go to a ridotto, and on Wednesday we return to Howard Grove. The Captain says he won't stay here to be smoked with filth any longer; but, having been seven years smoked with a burning sun, he will retire to the country, and sink into a fair weather chap. Adieu, my dear Sir.

Jane Austen / Emma

VOLUME I

CHAPTER I

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.

She was the youngest of the two daughters of a most affectionate, indulgent father; and had, in consequence of her sister's marriage, been mistress of his house from a very early period. Her mother had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses; and her place had been supplied by an excellent woman as governess, who had fallen little short of a mother in affection.

Sixteen years had Miss Taylor been in Mr. Woodhouse's family, less as a governess than a friend, very fond of both daughters, but particularly of Emma. Between them it was more the intimacy of sisters. Even before Miss Taylor had ceased to hold the nominal office of governess, the mildness of her temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint; and the shadow of authority being now long passed away, they had been living together as friend and friend very mutually attached, and Emma doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, but directed chiefly by her own.

The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger, however, was at present so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her.

Sorrow came—a gentle sorrow—but not at all in the shape of any disagreeable consciousness.—Miss Taylor married. It was Miss Taylor's loss which first brought grief. It was on the wedding-day of this beloved friend that Emma first sat in mournful thought of any continuance. The wedding over, and the bride-people gone, her father and herself were left to dine together, with no prospect of a third to cheer a long evening. Her father composed himself to sleep after dinner, as usual, and she had then only to sit and think of what she had lost.

The event had every promise of happiness for her friend. Mr. Weston was a man of unexceptionable character, easy fortune, suitable age, and pleasant manners; and there was some satisfaction in
considering with what self-denying, generous friendship she had always wished and promoted the match; but it was a black morning’s work for her. The want of Miss Taylor would be felt every hour of every day. She recalled her past kindness—the kindness, the affection of sixteen years—how she had taught and how she had played with her from five years old—how she had devoted all her powers to attach and amuse her in health—and how nursed her through the various illnesses of childhood. A large debt of gratitude was owing here; but the intercourse of the last seven years, the equal footing and perfect unreserve which had soon followed Isabella’s marriage, on their being left to each other, was yet a dearer, tenderer recollection. She had been a friend and companion such as few possessed: intelligent, well-informed, useful, gentle, knowing all the ways of the family, interested in all its concerns, and peculiarly interested in herself, in every pleasure, every scheme of hers—one to whom she could speak every thought as it arose, and who had such an affection for her as could never find fault.

How was she to bear the change?—It was true that her friend was going only half a mile from them; but Emma was aware that great must be the difference between a Mrs. Weston, only half a mile from them, and a Miss Taylor in the house; and with all her advantages, natural and domestic, she was now in great danger of suffering from intellectual solitude. She dearly loved her father, but he was no companion for her. He could not meet her in conversation, rational or playful.

The evil of the actual disparity in their ages (and Mr. Woodhouse had not married early) was much increased by his constitution and habits; for having been a valetudinarian all his life, without activity of mind or body, he was a much older man in ways than in years; and though everywhere beloved for the friendliness of his heart and his amiable temper, his talents could not have recommended him at any time.

Her sister, though comparatively but little removed by matrimony, being settled in London, only sixteen miles off, was much beyond her daily reach; and many a long October and November evening must be struggled through at Hartfield, before Christmas brought the next visit from Isabella and her husband, and their little children, to fill the house, and give her pleasant society again.

Highbury, the large and populous village, almost amounting to a town, to which Hartfield, in spite of its separate lawn, and shrubberies, and name, did really belong, afforded her no equals. The Woodhouses were first in consequence there. All looked up to them. She had many acquaintance in the place, for her father was universally civil, but not one among them who could be accepted in lieu of Miss Taylor for even half a day. It was a melancholy change; and Emma could not but sigh over it, and wish for impossible things, till her father awoke, and made it necessary to be cheerful. His spirits required support. He was a nervous man, easily depressed; fond of every body that he was used to, and hating to part with them; hating change of every kind. Matrimony, as the origin of change, was always disagreeable; and he was by no means yet reconciled to his own daughter's marrying, nor could ever speak of her but with compassion, though it had been entirely a match of affection, when he was now obliged to part with Miss Taylor too; and from his habits of gentle selfishness, and of being never able to suppose that other people could feel differently from himself, he was very much disposed to think Miss Taylor had done as sad a thing for herself as for them, and would have been a great deal happier if she had spent all the rest of her life at Hartfield. Emma
smiled and chatted as cheerfully as she could, to keep him from such thoughts; but when tea came, it was impossible for him not to say exactly as he had said at dinner,

“Poor Miss Taylor!—I wish she were here again. What a pity it is that Mr. Weston ever thought of her!”

“I cannot agree with you, papa; you know I cannot. Mr. Weston is such a good-humoured, pleasant, excellent man, that he thoroughly deserves a good wife;—and you would not have had Miss Taylor live with us for ever, and bear all my odd humours, when she might have a house of her own?”

“A house of her own!—But where is the advantage of a house of her own? This is three times as large.—And you have never any odd humours, my dear.”

“How often we shall be going to see them, and they coming to see us!—We shall be always meeting! We must begin; we must go and pay wedding visit very soon.”

“My dear, how am I to get so far? Randalls is such a distance. I could not walk half so far.”

“No, papa, nobody thought of your walking. We must go in the carriage, to be sure.”

“The carriage! But James will not like to put the horses to for such a little way;—and where are the poor horses to be while we are paying our visit?”

“They are to be put into Mr. Weston's stable, papa. You know we have settled all that already. We talked it all over with Mr. Weston last night. And as for James, you may be very sure he will always like going to Randalls, because of his daughter's being housemaid there. I only doubt whether he will ever take us anywhere else. That was your doing, papa. You got Hannah that good place. Nobody thought of Hannah till you mentioned her—James is so obliged to you!”

“I am very glad I did think of her. It was very lucky, for I would not have had poor James think himself slighted upon any account; and I am sure she will make a very good servant: she is a civil, pretty-spoken girl; I have a great opinion of her. Whenever I see her, she always curtseys and asks me how I do, in a very pretty manner; and when you have had her here to do needlework, I observe she always turns the lock of the door the right way and never bangs it. I am sure she will be an excellent servant; and it will be a great comfort to poor Miss Taylor to have somebody about her that she is used to see. Whenever James goes over to see his daughter, you know, she will be hearing of us. He will be able to tell her how we all are.”

Emma spared no exertions to maintain this happier flow of ideas, and hoped, by the help of backgammon, to get her father tolerably through the evening, and be attacked by no regrets but her own. The backgammon-table was placed; but a visitor immediately afterwards walked in and made it unnecessary.

Mr. Knightley, a sensible man about seven or eight-and-thirty, was not only a very old and intimate friend of the family, but particularly connected with it, as the elder brother of Isabella's husband. He lived about a mile from Highbury, was a frequent visitor, and always welcome, and at this time
more welcome than usual, as coming directly from their mutual connexions in London. He had returned to a late dinner, after some days' absence, and now walked up to Hartfield to say that all were well in Brunswick Square. It was a happy circumstance, and animated Mr. Woodhouse for some time. Mr. Knightley had a cheerful manner, which always did him good; and his many inquiries after "poor Isabella" and her children were answered most satisfactorily. When this was over, Mr. Woodhouse gratefully observed, "It is very kind of you, Mr. Knightley, to come out at this late hour to call upon us. I am afraid you must have had a shocking walk."

"Not at all, sir. It is a beautiful moonlight night; and so mild that I must draw back from your great fire."

"But you must have found it very damp and dirty. I wish you may not catch cold."

"Dirty, sir! Look at my shoes. Not a speck on them."

"Well! that is quite surprising, for we have had a vast deal of rain here. It rained dreadfully hard for half an hour while we were at breakfast. I wanted them to put off the wedding."

"By the bye—I have not wished you joy. Being pretty well aware of what sort of joy you must both be feeling, I have been in no hurry with my congratulations; but I hope it all went off tolerably well. How did you all behave? Who cried most?"

"Ah! poor Miss Taylor! 'Tis a sad business."

"Poor Mr. and Miss Woodhouse, if you please; but I cannot possibly say 'poor Miss Taylor.' I have a great regard for you and Emma; but when it comes to the question of dependence or independence!—At any rate, it must be better to have only one to please than two."

"Especially when one of those two is such a fanciful, troublesome creature!" said Emma playfully. "That is what you have in your head, I know—and what you would certainly say if my father were not by."

"I believe it is very true, my dear, indeed," said Mr. Woodhouse, with a sigh. "I am afraid I am sometimes very fanciful and troublesome."

"My dearest papa! You do not think I could mean you, or suppose Mr. Knightley to mean you. What a horrible idea! Oh no! I meant only myself. Mr. Knightley loves to find fault with me, you know—in a joke—it is all a joke. We always say what we like to one another."

Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them: and though this was not particularly agreeable to Emma herself, she knew it would be so much less so to her father, that she would not have him really suspect such a circumstance as her not being thought perfect by everybody.
“Emma knows I never flatter her,” said Mr. Knightley, “but I meant no reflection on any body. Miss Taylor has been used to have two persons to please; she will now have but one. The chances are that she must be a gainer.”

“Well,” said Emma, willing to let it pass—“you want to hear about the wedding; and I shall be happy to tell you, for we all behaved charmingly. Every body was punctual, every body in their best looks: not a tear, and hardly a long face to be seen. Oh no; we all felt that we were going to be only half a mile apart, and were sure of meeting every day.”

“Dear Emma bears every thing so well,” said her father. “But, Mr. Knightley, she is really very sorry to lose poor Miss Taylor, and I am sure she will miss her more than she thinks for.”

Emma turned away her head, divided between tears and smiles. “It is impossible that Emma should not miss such a companion,” said Mr. Knightley. “We should not like her so well as we do, sir, if we could suppose it; but she knows how much the marriage is to Miss Taylor’s advantage; she knows how very acceptable it must be, at Miss Taylor’s time of life, to be settled in a home of her own, and how important to her to be secure of a comfortable provision, and therefore cannot allow herself to feel so much pain as pleasure. Every friend of Miss Taylor must be glad to have her so happily married.”

“And you have forgotten one matter of joy to me,” said Emma, “and a very considerable one—that I made the match myself. I made the match, you know, four years ago; and to have it take place, and be proved in the right, when so many people said Mr. Weston would never marry again, may comfort me for any thing.”

Mr. Knightley shook his head at her. Her father fondly replied, “Ah! my dear, I wish you would not make matches and foretell things, for whatever you say always comes to pass. Pray do not make any more matches.”

“I promise you to make none for myself, papa; but I must, indeed, for other people. It is the greatest amusement in the world! And after such success, you know!—Every body said that Mr. Weston would never marry again. Oh dear, no! Mr. Weston, who had been a widower so long, and who seemed so perfectly comfortable without a wife, so constantly occupied either in his business in town or among his friends here, always acceptable wherever he went, always cheerful—Mr. Weston need not spend a single evening in the year alone if he did not like it. Oh no! Mr. Weston certainly would never marry again. Some people even talked of a promise to his wife on her deathbed, and others of the son and the uncle not letting him. All manner of solemn nonsense was talked on the subject, but I believed none of it.

“Ever since the day—about four years ago—that Miss Taylor and I met with him in Broadway Lane, when, because it began to drizzle, he darted away with so much gallantry, and borrowed two umbrellas for us from Farmer Mitchell’s, I made up my mind on the subject. I planned the match from that hour; and when such success has blessed me in this instance, dear papa, you cannot think that I shall leave off match-making.”
“I do not understand what you mean by ‘success,’” said Mr. Knightley. “Success supposes endeavour. Your time has been properly and delicately spent, if you have been endeavouring for the last four years to bring about this marriage. A worthy employment for a young lady's mind! But if, which I rather imagine, your making the match, as you call it, means only your planning it, your saying to yourself one idle day, 'I think it would be a very good thing for Miss Taylor if Mr. Weston were to marry her,' and saying it again to yourself every now and then afterwards, why do you talk of success? Where is your merit? What are you proud of? You made a lucky guess; and that is all that can be said.”

“And have you never known the pleasure and triumph of a lucky guess?—I pity you.—I thought you cleverer—for, depend upon it a lucky guess is never merely luck. There is always some talent in it. And as to my poor word 'success,' which you quarrel with, I do not know that I am so entirely without any claim to it. You have drawn two pretty pictures; but I think there may be a third—a something between the do-nothing and the do-all. If I had not promoted Mr. Weston's visits here, and given many little encouragements, and smoothed many little matters, it might not have come to any thing after all. I think you must know Hartfield enough to comprehend that.”

“A straightforward, open-hearted man like Weston, and a rational, unaffected woman like Miss Taylor, may be safely left to manage their own concerns. You are more likely to have done harm to yourself, than good to them, by interference.”

“Emma never thinks of herself, if she can do good to others,” rejoined Mr. Woodhouse, understanding but in part. “But, my dear, pray do not make any more matches; they are silly things, and break up one's family circle grievously.”

“Only one more, papa; only for Mr. Elton. Poor Mr. Elton! You like Mr. Elton, papa,—I must look about for a wife for him. There is nobody in Highbury who deserves him—and he has been here a whole year, and has fitted up his house so comfortably, that it would be a shame to have him single any longer—and I thought when he was joining their hands to-day, he looked so very much as if he would like to have the same kind office done for him! I think very well of Mr. Elton, and this is the only way I have of doing him a service.”

“Mr. Elton is a very pretty young man, to be sure, and a very good young man, and I have a great regard for him. But if you want to shew him any attention, my dear, ask him to come and dine with us some day. That will be a much better thing. I dare say Mr. Knightley will be so kind as to meet him.”

“With a great deal of pleasure, sir, at any time,” said Mr. Knightley, laughing, “and I agree with you entirely, that it will be a much better thing. Invite him to dinner, Emma, and help him to the best of the fish and the chicken, but leave him to chuse his own wife. Depend upon it, a man of six or seven-and-twenty can take care of himself.”

CHAPTER II

Mr. Weston was a native of Highbury, and born of a respectable family, which for the last two or three generations had been rising into gentility and property. He had received a good education,
but, on succeeding early in life to a small independence, had become indisposed for any of the more homely pursuits in which his brothers were engaged, and had satisfied an active, cheerful mind and social temper by entering into the militia of his county, then embodied.

Captain Weston was a general favourite; and when the chances of his military life had introduced him to Miss Churchill, of a great Yorkshire family, and Miss Churchill fell in love with him, nobody was surprized, except her brother and his wife, who had never seen him, and who were full of pride and importance, which the connexion would offend.

Miss Churchill, however, being of age, and with the full command of her fortune—though her fortune bore no proportion to the family-estate—was not to be dissuaded from the marriage, and it took place, to the infinite mortification of Mr. and Mrs. Churchill, who threw her off with due decorum. It was an unsuitable connexion, and did not produce much happiness. Mrs. Weston ought to have found more in it, for she had a husband whose warm heart and sweet temper made him think every thing due to her in return for the great goodness of being in love with him; but though she had one sort of spirit, she had not the best. She had resolution enough to pursue her own will in spite of her brother, but not enough to refrain from unreasonable regrets at that brother’s unreasonable anger, nor from missing the luxuries of her former home. They lived beyond their income, but still it was nothing in comparison of Enscombe: she did not cease to love her husband, but she wanted at once to be the wife of Captain Weston, and Miss Churchill of Enscombe.

Captain Weston, who had been considered, especially by the Churchills, as making such an amazing match, was proved to have much the worst of the bargain; for when his wife died, after a three years’ marriage, he was rather a poorer man than at first, and with a child to maintain. From the expense of the child, however, he was soon relieved. The boy had, with the additional softening claim of a lingering illness of his mother’s, been the means of a sort of reconciliation; and Mr. and Mrs. Churchill, having no children of their own, nor any other young creature of equal kindred to care for, offered to take the whole charge of the little Frank soon after her decease. Some scruples and some reluctance the widower-father may be supposed to have felt; but as they were overcome by other considerations, the child was given up to the care and the wealth of the Churchills, and he had only his own comfort to seek, and his own situation to improve as he could.

A complete change of life became desirable. He quitted the militia and engaged in trade, having brothers already established in a good way in London, which afforded him a favourable opening. It was a concern which brought just employment enough. He had still a small house in Highbury, where most of his leisure days were spent; and between useful occupation and the pleasures of society, the next eighteen or twenty years of his life passed cheerfully away. He had, by that time, realised an easy competence—enough to secure the purchase of a little estate adjoining Highbury, which he had always longed for—enough to marry a woman as portionless even as Miss Taylor, and to live according to the wishes of his own friendly and social disposition.

It was now some time since Miss Taylor had begun to influence his schemes; but as it was not the tyrannic influence of youth on youth, it had not shaken his determination of never settling till he could purchase Randalls, and the sale of Randalls was long looked forward to; but he had gone steadily on, with these objects in view, till they were accomplished. He had made his fortune, bought his house, and obtained his wife; and was beginning a new period of existence, with every probability of greater happiness than in any yet passed through. He had never been an unhappy man; his own temper had secured him from that, even in his first marriage; but his second must shew him how delightful a well-judging and truly amiable woman could be, and must give him the
pleasantest proof of its being a great deal better to choose than to be chosen, to excite gratitude than to feel it.

He had only himself to please in his choice: his fortune was his own; for as to Frank, it was more than being tacitly brought up as his uncle's heir, it had become so avowed an adoption as to have him assume the name of Churchill on coming of age. It was most unlikely, therefore, that he should ever want his father's assistance. His father had no apprehension of it. The aunt was a capricious woman, and governed her husband entirely; but it was not in Mr. Weston's nature to imagine that any caprice could be strong enough to affect one so dear, and, as he believed, so deservedly dear. He saw his son every year in London, and was proud of him; and his fond report of him as a very fine young man had made Highbury feel a sort of pride in him too. He was looked on as sufficiently belonging to the place to make his merits and prospects a kind of common concern.

Mr. Frank Churchill was one of the boast of Highbury, and a lively curiosity to see him prevailed, though the compliment was so little returned that he had never been there in his life. His coming to visit his father had been often talked of but never achieved.

Now, upon his father's marriage, it was very generally proposed, as a most proper attention, that the visit should take place. There was not a dissentient voice on the subject, either when Mrs. Perry drank tea with Mrs. and Miss Bates, or when Mrs. and Miss Bates returned the visit. Now was the time for Mr. Frank Churchill to come among them; and the hope strengthened when it was understood that he had written to his new mother on the occasion. For a few days, every morning visit in Highbury included some mention of the handsome letter Mrs. Weston had received. “I suppose you have heard of the handsome letter Mr. Frank Churchill has written to Mrs. Weston? I understand it was a very handsome letter, indeed. Mr. Woodhouse told me of it. Mr. Woodhouse saw the letter, and he says he never saw such a handsome letter in his life.”

It was, indeed, a highly prized letter. Mrs. Weston had, of course, formed a very favourable idea of the young man; and such a pleasing attention was an irresistible proof of his great good sense, and a most welcome addition to every source and every expression of congratulation which her marriage had already secured. She felt herself a most fortunate woman; and she had lived long enough to know how fortunate she might well be thought, where the only regret was for a partial separation from friends whose friendship for her had never cooled, and who could ill bear to part with her.

She knew that at times she must be missed; and could not think, without pain, of Emma’s losing a single pleasure, or suffering an hour’s ennui, from the want of her companionableness: but dear Emma was of no feeble character; she was more equal to her situation than most girls would have been, and had sense, and energy, and spirits that might be hoped would bear her well and happily through its little difficulties and privations. And then there was such comfort in the very easy distance of Randalls from Hartfield, so convenient for even solitary female walking, and in Mr. Weston’s disposition and circumstances, which would make the approaching season no hindrance to their spending half the evenings in the week together.

Her situation was altogether the subject of hours of gratitude to Mrs. Weston, and of moments only of regret; and her satisfaction—her more than satisfaction—her cheerful enjoyment, was so just and so apparent, that Emma, well as she knew her father, was sometimes taken by surprise at his being still able to pity ‘poor Miss Taylor,’ when they left her at Randalls in the centre of every domestic comfort, or saw her go away in the evening attended by her pleasant husband to a
carriage of her own. But never did she go without Mr. Woodhouse’s giving a gentle sigh, and saying, “Ah, poor Miss Taylor! She would be very glad to stay.”

There was no recovering Miss Taylor—nor much likelihood of ceasing to pity her; but a few weeks brought some alleviation to Mr. Woodhouse. The compliments of his neighbours were over; he was no longer teased by being wished joy of so sorrowful an event; and the wedding-cake, which had been a great distress to him, was all eat up. His own stomach could bear nothing rich, and he could never believe other people to be different from himself. What was unwholesome to him he regarded as unfit for any body; and he had, therefore, earnestly tried to dissuade them from having any wedding-cake at all, and when that proved vain, as earnestly tried to prevent any body’s eating it. He had been at the pains of consulting Mr. Perry, the apothecary, on the subject. Mr. Perry was an intelligent, gentlemanlike man, whose frequent visits were one of the comforts of Mr. Woodhouse’s life; and upon being applied to, he could not but acknowledge (though it seemed rather against the bias of inclination) that wedding-cake might certainly disagree with many—perhaps with most people, unless taken moderately. With such an opinion, in confirmation of his own, Mr. Woodhouse hoped to influence every visitor of the newly married pair; but still the cake was eaten; and there was no rest for his benevolent nerves till it was all gone.

There was a strange rumour in Highbury of all the little Perrys being seen with a slice of Mrs. Weston’s wedding-cake in their hands: but Mr. Woodhouse would never believe it.

CHAPTER III

Mr. Woodhouse was fond of society in his own way. He liked very much to have his friends come and see him; and from various united causes, from his long residence at Hartfield, and his good nature, from his fortune, his house, and his daughter, he could command the visits of his own little circle, in a great measure, as he liked. He had not much intercourse with any families beyond that circle; his horror of late hours, and large dinner-parties, made him unfit for any acquaintance but such as would visit him on his own terms. Fortunately for him, Highbury, including Randalls in the same parish, and Donwell Abbey in the parish adjoining, the seat of Mr. Knightley, comprehended many such. Not unfrequently, through Emma’s persuasion, he had some of the chosen and the best to dine with him: but evening parties were what he preferred; and, unless he fancied himself at any time unequal to company, there was scarcely an evening in the week in which Emma could not make up a card-table for him.

Real, long-standing regard brought the Westons and Mr. Knightley; and by Mr. Elton, a young man living alone without liking it, the privilege of exchanging any vacant evening of his own blank solitude for the elegancies and society of Mr. Woodhouse’s drawing-room, and the smiles of his lovely daughter, was in no danger of being thrown away.

After these came a second set; among the most come-at-able of whom were Mrs. and Miss Bates, and Mrs. Goddard, three ladies almost always at the service of an invitation from Hartfield, and who were fetched and carried home so often, that Mr. Woodhouse thought it no hardship for either James or the horses. Had it taken place only once a year, it would have been a grievance.

Mrs. Bates, the widow of a former vicar of Highbury, was a very old lady, almost past every thing but tea and quadrille. She lived with her single daughter in a very small way, and was considered with all the regard and respect which a harmless old lady, under such untoward circumstances, can excite. Her daughter enjoyed a most uncommon degree of popularity for a woman neither young,
handsome, rich, nor married. Miss Bates stood in the very worst predicament in the world for having much of the public favour; and she had no intellectual superiority to make atonement to herself, or frighten those who might hate her into outward respect. She had never boasted either beauty or cleverness. Her youth had passed without distinction, and her middle of life was devoted to the care of a failing mother, and the endeavour to make a small income go as far as possible. And yet she was a happy woman, and a woman whom no one named without good-will. It was her own universal good-will and contented temper which worked such wonders. She loved every body, was interested in every body's happiness, quicksighted to every body's merits; thought herself a most fortunate creature, and surrounded with blessings in such an excellent mother, and so many good neighbours and friends, and a home that wanted for nothing. The simplicity and cheerfulness of her nature, her contented and grateful spirit, were a recommendation to every body, and a mine of felicity to herself. She was a great talker upon little matters, which exactly suited Mr. Woodhouse, full of trivial communications and harmless gossip.

Mrs. Goddard was the mistress of a School—not of a seminary, or an establishment, or any thing which professed, in long sentences of refined nonsense, to combine liberal acquirements with elegant morality, upon new principles and new systems—and where young ladies for enormous pay might be screwed out of health and into vanity—but a real, honest, old-fashioned Boarding-school, where a reasonable quantity of accomplishments were sold at a reasonable price, and where girls might be sent to be out of the way, and scramble themselves into a little education, without any danger of coming back prodigies. Mrs. Goddard's school was in high repute—and very deservedly; for Highbury was reckoned a particularly healthy spot; she had an ample house and garden, gave the children plenty of wholesome food, let them run about a great deal in the summer, and in winter dressed their chilblains with her own hands. It was no wonder that a train of twenty young couple now walked after her to church. She was a plain, motherly kind of woman, who had worked hard in her youth, and now thought herself entitled to the occasional holiday of a tea-visit; and having formerly owed much to Mr. Woodhouse's kindness, felt his particular claim on her to leave her neat parlour, hung round with fancy-work, whenever she could, and win or lose a few sixpences by his fireside.

These were the ladies whom Emma found herself very frequently able to collect; and happy was she, for her father's sake, in the power; though, as far as she was herself concerned, it was no remedy for the absence of Mrs. Weston. She was delighted to see her father look comfortable, and very much pleased with herself for contriving things so well; but the quiet prosings of three such women made her feel that every evening so spent was indeed one of the long evenings she had fearfully anticipated.

As she sat one morning, looking forward to exactly such a close of the present day, a note was brought from Mrs. Goddard, requesting, in most respectful terms, to be allowed to bring Miss Smith with her; a most welcome request: for Miss Smith was a girl of seventeen, whom Emma knew very well by sight, and had long felt an interest in, on account of her beauty. A very gracious invitation was returned, and the evening no longer dreaded by the fair mistress of the mansion.

Harriet Smith was the natural daughter of somebody. Somebody had placed her, several years back, at Mrs. Goddard's school, and somebody had lately raised her from the condition of scholar to that of parlour-boarder. This was all that was generally known of her history. She had no visible friends but what had been acquired at Highbury, and was now just returned from a long visit in the country to some young ladies who had been at school there with her.
She was a very pretty girl, and her beauty happened to be of a sort which Emma particularly admired. She was short, plump, and fair, with a fine bloom, blue eyes, light hair, regular features, and a look of great sweetness, and, before the end of the evening, Emma was as much pleased with her manners as her person, and quite determined to continue the acquaintance.

She was not struck by any thing remarkably clever in Miss Smith's conversation, but she found her altogether very engaging—not inconveniently shy, not unwilling to talk—and yet so far from pushing, shewing so proper and becoming a deference, seeming so pleasantly grateful for being admitted to Hartfield, and so artlessly impressed by the appearance of every thing in so superior a style to what she had been used to, that she must have good sense, and deserve encouragement. Encouragement should be given. Those soft blue eyes, and all those natural graces, should not be wasted on the inferior society of Highbury and its connexions. The acquaintance she had already formed were unworthy of her. The friends from whom she had just parted, though very good sort of people, must be doing her harm. The family of the name of Martin, whom Emma well knew by character, as renting a large farm of Mr. Knightley, and residing in the parish of Donwell—very creditably, she believed—she knew Mr. Knightley thought highly of them—but they must be coarse and unpolished, and very unfit to be the intimates of a girl who wanted only a little more knowledge and elegance to be quite perfect. She would notice her; she would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; she would form her opinions and her manners. It would be an interesting, and certainly a very kind undertaking; highly becoming her own situation in life, her leisure, and powers.

She was so busy in admiring those soft blue eyes, in talking and listening, and forming all these schemes in the in-betweens, that the evening flew away at a very unusual rate; and the supper-table, which always closed such parties, and for which she had been used to sit and watch the due time, was all set out and ready, and moved forwards to the fire, before she was aware. With an alacrity beyond the common impulse of a spirit which yet was never indifferent to the credit of doing every thing well and attentively, with the real good-will of a mind delighted with its own ideas, did she then do all the honours of the meal, and help and recommend the minced chicken and scalloped oysters, with an urgency which she knew would be acceptable to the early hours and civil scruples of their guests.

Upon such occasions poor Mr. Woodhouse's feelings were in sad warfare. He loved to have the cloth laid, because it had been the fashion of his youth, but his conviction of suppers being very unwholesome made him rather sorry to see any thing put on it; and while his hospitality would have welcomed his visitors to every thing, his care for their health made him grieve that they would eat.

Such another small basin of thin gruel as his own was all that he could, with thorough self-approbation, recommend; though he might constrain himself, while the ladies were comfortably clearing the nicer things, to say:

“Mrs. Bates, let me propose your venturing on one of these eggs. An egg boiled very soft is not unwholesome. Serle understands boiling an egg better than any body. I would not recommend an egg boiled by any body else; but you need not be afraid, they are very small, you see—one of our small eggs will not hurt you. Miss Bates, let Emma help you to a little bit of tart—a very little bit. Ours are all apple-tarts. You need not be afraid of unwholesome preserves here. I do not advise the custard. Mrs. Goddard, what say you to hal'fa glass of wine? A small half-glass, put into a tumbler of water? I do not think it could disagree with you.”
Emma allowed her father to talk—but supplied her visitors in a much more satisfactory style, and on the present evening had particular pleasure in sending them away happy. The happiness of Miss Smith was quite equal to her intentions. Miss Woodhouse was so great a personage in Highbury, that the prospect of the introduction had given as much panic as pleasure; but the humble, grateful little girl went off with highly gratified feelings, delighted with the affability with which Miss Woodhouse had treated her all the evening, and actually shaken hands with her at last!

CHAPTER IV

Harriet Smith’s intimacy at Hartfield was soon a settled thing. Quick and decided in her ways, Emma lost no time in inviting, encouraging, and telling her to come very often; and as their acquaintance increased, so did their satisfaction in each other. As a walking companion, Emma had very early foreseen how useful she might find her. In that respect Mrs. Weston’s loss had been important. Her father never went beyond the shrubbery, where two divisions of the ground sufficed him for his long walk, or his short, as the year varied; and since Mrs. Weston’s marriage her exercise had been too much confined. She had ventured once alone to Randalls, but it was not pleasant; and a Harriet Smith, therefore, one whom she could summon at any time to a walk, would be a valuable addition to her privileges. But in every respect, as she saw more of her, she approved her, and was confirmed in all her kind designs.

Harriet certainly was not clever, but she had a sweet, docile, grateful disposition, was totally free from conceit, and only desiring to be guided by any one she looked up to. Her early attachment to herself was very amiable; and her inclination for good company, and power of appreciating what was elegant and clever, shewed that there was no want of taste, though strength of understanding must not be expected. Altogether she was quite convinced of Harriet Smith’s being exactly the young friend she wanted—exactly the something which her home required. Such a friend as Mrs. Weston was out of the question. Two such could never be granted. Two such she did not want. It was quite a different sort of thing, a sentiment distinct and independent. Mrs. Weston was the object of a regard which had its basis in gratitude and esteem. Harriet would be loved as one to whom she could be useful. For Mrs. Weston there was nothing to be done; for Harriet every thing.

Her first attempts at usefulness were in an endeavour to find out who were the parents, but Harriet could not tell. She was ready to tell every thing in her power, but on this subject questions were vain. Emma was obliged to fancy what she liked—but she could never believe that in the same situation she should not have discovered the truth. Harriet had no penetration. She had been satisfied to hear and believe just what Mrs. Goddard chose to tell her; and looked no farther.

Mrs. Goddard, and the teachers, and the girls and the affairs of the school in general, formed naturally a great part of the conversation—and but for her acquaintance with the Martins of Abbey-Mill Farm, it must have been the whole. But the Martins occupied her thoughts a good deal; she had spent two very happy months with them, and now loved to talk of the pleasures of her visit, and describe the many comforts and wonders of the place. Emma encouraged her talkativeness—amused by such a picture of another set of beings, and enjoying the youthful simplicity which could speak with so much exultation of Mrs. Martin’s having “two parlours, two very good parlours, indeed; one of them quite as large as Mrs. Goddard’s drawing-room; and of her having an upper maid who had lived five-and-twenty years with her; and of their having eight cows, two of them Alderneys, and one a little Welch cow, a very pretty little Welch cow indeed; and of Mrs. Martin’s saying as she was so fond of it, it should be called her cow; and of their having a very handsome
summer-house in their garden, where some day next year they were all to drink tea:—a very handsome summer-house, large enough to hold a dozen people."

For some time she was amused, without thinking beyond the immediate cause; but as she came to understand the family better, other feelings arose. She had taken up a wrong idea, fancying it was a mother and daughter, a son and son’s wife, who all lived together; but when it appeared that the Mr. Martin, who bore a part in the narrative, and was always mentioned with approbation for his great good-nature in doing something or other, was a single man; that there was no young Mrs. Martin, no wife in the case; she did suspect danger to her poor little friend from all this hospitality and kindness, and that, if she were not taken care of, she might be required to sink herself forever.

With this inspiring notion, her questions increased in number and meaning; and she particularly led Harriet to talk more of Mr. Martin, and there was evidently no dislike to it. Harriet was very ready to speak of the share he had had in their moonlight walks and merry evening games; and dwelt a good deal upon his being so very good-humoured and obliging. He had gone three miles round one day in order to bring her some walnuts, because she had said how fond she was of them, and in every thing else he was so very obliging. He had his shepherd’s son into the parlour one night on purpose to sing to her. She was very fond of singing. He could sing a little himself. She believed he was very clever, and understood every thing. He had a very fine flock, and, while she was with them, he had been bid more for his wool than any body in the country. She believed every body spoke well of him. His mother and sisters were very fond of him. Mrs. Martin had told her one day (and there was a blush as she said it,) that it was impossible for any body to be a better son, and therefore she was sure, whenever he married, he would make a good husband. Not that she wanted him to marry. She was in no hurry at all.

“Well done, Mrs. Martin!” thought Emma. “You know what you are about.”

“And when she had come away, Mrs. Martin was so very kind as to send Mrs. Goddard a beautiful goose—the finest goose Mrs. Goddard had ever seen. Mrs. Goddard had dressed it on a Sunday, and asked all the three teachers, Miss Nash, and Miss Prince, and Miss Richardson, to sup with her.”

“Mr. Martin, I suppose, is not a man of information beyond the line of his own business? He does not read?”

“Oh yes!—that is, no—I do not know—but I believe he has read a good deal—but not what you would think any thing of. He reads the Agricultural Reports, and some other books that lay in one of the window seats—but he reads all them to himself. But sometimes of an evening, before we went to cards, he would read something aloud out of the Elegant Extracts, very entertaining. And I know he has read the Vicar of Wakefield. He never read the Romance of the Forest, nor The Children of the Abbey. He had never heard of such books before I mentioned them, but he is determined to get them now as soon as ever he can.”

The next question was—

“What sort of looking man is Mr. Martin?”

“Oh! not handsome—not at all handsome. I thought him very plain at first, but I do not think him so plain now. One does not, you know, after a time. But did you never see him? He is in Highbury every
now and then, and he is sure to ride through every week in his way to Kingston. He has passed you very often.”

“That may be, and I may have seen him fifty times, but without having any idea of his name. A young farmer, whether on horseback or on foot, is the very last sort of person to raise my curiosity. The yeomanry are precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do. A degree or two lower, and a creditable appearance might interest me; I might hope to be useful to their families in some way or other. But a farmer can need none of my help, and is, therefore, in one sense, as much above my notice as in every other he is below it.”

“To be sure. Oh yes! It is not likely you should ever have observed him; but he knows you very well indeed—I mean by sight.”

“I have no doubt of his being a very respectable young man. I know, indeed, that he is so, and, as such, wish him well. What do you imagine his age to be?”

“He was four-and-twenty the 8th of last June, and my birthday is the 23rd just a fortnight and a day’s difference—which is very odd.”

“Only four-and-twenty. That is too young to settle. His mother is perfectly right not to be in a hurry. They seem very comfortable as they are, and if she were to take any pains to marry him, she would probably repent it. Six years hence, if he could meet with a good sort of young woman in the same rank as his own, with a little money, it might be very desirable.”

“Six years hence! Dear Miss Woodhouse, he would be thirty years old!”

“Well, and that is as early as most men can afford to marry, who are not born to an independence. Mr. Martin, I imagine, has his fortune entirely to make—cannot be at all beforehand with the world. Whatever money he might come into when his father died, whatever his share of the family property, it is, I dare say, all afloat, all employed in his stock, and so forth; and though, with diligence and good luck, he may be rich in time, it is next to impossible that he should have realised any thing yet.”

“To be sure, so it is. But they live very comfortably. They have no indoors man, else they do not want for any thing; and Mrs. Martin talks of taking a boy another year.”

“I wish you may not get into a scrape, Harriet, whenever he does marry;—I mean, as to being acquainted with his wife—for though his sisters, from a superior education, are not to be altogether objected to, it does not follow that he might marry any body at all fit for you to notice. The misfortune of your birth ought to make you particularly careful as to your associates. There can be no doubt of your being a gentleman’s daughter, and you must support your claim to that station by every thing within your own power, or there will be plenty of people who would take pleasure in degrading you.”

“Yes, to be sure, I suppose there are. But while I visit at Hartfield, and you are so kind to me, Miss Woodhouse, I am not afraid of what any body can do.”

“You understand the force of influence pretty well, Harriet; but I would have you so firmly established in good society, as to be independent even of Hartfield and Miss Woodhouse. I want to
see you permanently well connected, and to that end it will be advisable to have as few odd acquaintance as may be; and, therefore, I say that if you should still be in this country when Mr. Martin marries, I wish you may not be drawn in by your intimacy with the sisters, to be acquainted with the wife, who will probably be some mere farmer's daughter, without education."

“To be sure. Yes. Not that I think Mr. Martin would ever marry any body but what had had some education—and been very well brought up. However, I do not mean to set up my opinion against yours—and I am sure I shall not wish for the acquaintance of his wife. I shall always have a great regard for the Miss Martins, especially Elizabeth, and should be very sorry to give them up, for they are quite as well educated as me. But if he marries a very ignorant, vulgar woman, certainly I had better not visit her, if I can help it.”

Emma watched her through the fluctuations of this speech, and saw no alarming symptoms of love. The young man had been the first admirer, but she trusted there was no other hold, and that there would be no serious difficulty, on Harriet’s side, to oppose any friendly arrangement of her own.

They met Mr. Martin the very next day, as they were walking on the Donwell road. He was on foot, and after looking very respectfully at her, looked with most unfeigned satisfaction at her companion. Emma was not sorry to have such an opportunity of survey; and walking a few yards forward, while they talked together, soon made her quick eye sufficiently acquainted with Mr. Robert Martin. His appearance was very neat, and he looked like a sensible young man, but his person had no other advantage; and when he came to be contrasted with gentlemen, she thought he must lose all the ground he had gained in Harriet’s inclination. Harriet was not insensible of manner; she had voluntarily noticed her father’s gentleness with admiration as well as wonder. Mr. Martin looked as if he did not know what manner was.

They remained but a few minutes together, as Miss Woodhouse must not be kept waiting; and Harriet then came running to her with a smiling face, and in a flutter of spirits, which Miss Woodhouse hoped very soon to compose.

“Only think of our happening to meet him!—How very odd! It was quite a chance, he said, that he had not gone round by Randalls. He did not think we ever walked this road. He thought we walked towards Randalls most days. He has not been able to get the Romance of the Forest yet. He was so busy the last time he was at Kingston that he quite forgot it, but he goes again to-morrow. So very odd we should happen to meet! Well, Miss Woodhouse, is he like what you expected? What do you think of him? Do you think him so very plain?”

“He is very plain, undoubtedly—remarkably plain:—but that is nothing compared with his entire want of gentility. I had no right to expect much, and I did not expect much; but I had no idea that he could be so very clownish, so totally without air. I had imagined him, I confess, a degree or two nearer gentility.”

“To be sure,” said Harriet, in a mortified voice, “he is not so genteel as real gentlemen.”

“I think, Harriet, since your acquaintance with us, you have been repeatedly in the company of some such very real gentlemen, that you must yourself be struck with the difference in Mr. Martin. At Hartfield, you have had very good specimens of well educated, well bred men. I should be surprized if, after seeing them, you could be in company with Mr. Martin again without perceiving him to be a very inferior creature—and rather wondering at yourself for having ever thought him at all
agreeable before. Do not you begin to feel that now? Were not you struck? I am sure you must have been struck by his awkward look and abrupt manner, and the uncouthness of a voice which I heard to be wholly unmodulated as I stood here.”

“Certainly, he is not like Mr. Knightley. He has not such a fine air and way of walking as Mr. Knightley. I see the difference plain enough. But Mr. Knightley is so very fine a man!”

“Mr. Knightley’s air is so remarkably good that it is not fair to compare Mr. Martin with him. You might not see one in a hundred with gentleman so plainly written as in Mr. Knightley. But he is not the only gentleman you have been lately used to. What say you to Mr. Weston and Mr. Elton? Compare Mr. Martin with either of them. Compare their manner of carrying themselves; of walking; of speaking; of being silent. You must see the difference.”

“Oh yes!—there is a great difference. But Mr. Weston is almost an old man. Mr. Weston must be between forty and fifty.”

“Which makes his good manners the more valuable. The older a person grows, Harriet, the more important it is that their manners should not be bad; the more glaring and disgusting any loudness, or coarseness, or awkwardness becomes. What is passable in youth is detestable in later age. Mr. Martin is now awkward and abrupt; what will he be at Mr. Weston’s time of life?”

“There is no saying, indeed,” replied Harriet rather solemnly.

“But there may be pretty good guessing. He will be a completely gross, vulgar farmer, totally inattentive to appearances, and thinking of nothing but profit and loss.”

“Will he, indeed? That will be very bad.”

“How much his business engrosses him already is very plain from the circumstance of his forgetting to inquire for the book you recommended. He was a great deal too full of the market to think of anything else—which is just as it should be, for a thriving man. What has he to do with books? And I have no doubt that he will thrive, and be a very rich man in time—and his being illiterate and coarse need not disturb us.”

“I wonder he did not remember the book”—was all Harriet’s answer, and spoken with a degree of grave displeasure which Emma thought might be safely left to itself. She, therefore, said no more for some time. Her next beginning was,

“In one respect, perhaps, Mr. Elton’s manners are superior to Mr. Knightley’s or Mr. Weston’s. They have more gentleness. They might be more safely held up as a pattern. There is an openness, a quickness, almost a bluntness in Mr. Weston, which every body likes in him, because there is so much good-humour with it—but that would not do to be copied. Neither would Mr. Knightley’s downright, decided, commanding sort of manner, though it suits him very well; his figure, and look, and situation in life seem to allow it; but if any young man were to set about copying him, he would not be sufferable. On the contrary, I think a young man might be very safely recommended to take Mr. Elton as a model. Mr. Elton is good-humoured, cheerful, obliging, and gentle. He seems to me to be grown particularly gentle of late. I do not know whether he has any design of ingratiating himself with either of us, Harriet, by additional softness, but it strikes me that his manners are softer than
they used to be. If he means any thing, it must be to please you. Did not I tell you what he said of you the other day?"

She then repeated some warm personal praise which she had drawn from Mr. Elton, and now did full justice to; and Harriet blushed and smiled, and said she had always thought Mr. Elton very agreeable.

Mr. Elton was the very person fixed on by Emma for driving the young farmer out of Harriet's head. She thought it would be an excellent match; and only too palpably desirable, natural, and probable, for her to have much merit in planning it. She feared it was what every body else must think of and predict. It was not likely, however, that any body should have equalled her in the date of the plan, as it had entered her brain during the very first evening of Harriet's coming to Hartfield. The longer she considered it, the greater was her sense of its expediency. Mr. Elton's situation was most suitable, quite the gentleman himself, and without low connexions; at the same time, not of any family that could fairly object to the doubtful birth of Harriet. He had a comfortable home for her, and Emma imagined a very sufficient income; for though the vicarage of Highbury was not large, he was known to have some independent property; and she thought very highly of him as a good-humoured, well-meaning, respectable young man, without any deficiency of useful understanding or knowledge of the world.

She had already satisfied herself that he thought Harriet a beautiful girl, which she trusted, with such frequent meetings at Hartfield, was foundation enough on his side; and on Harriet's there could be little doubt that the idea of being preferred by him would have all the usual weight and efficacy. And he was really a very pleasing young man, a young man whom any woman not fastidious might like. He was reckoned very handsome; his person much admired in general, though not by her, there being a want of elegance of feature which she could not dispense with:—but the girl who could be gratified by a Robert Martin's riding about the country to get walnuts for her might very well be conquered by Mr. Elton's admiration.

CHAPTER V

"I do not know what your opinion may be, Mrs. Weston," said Mr. Knightley, "of this great intimacy between Emma and Harriet Smith, but I think it a bad thing."

"A bad thing! Do you really think it a bad thing?—why so?"

"I think they will neither of them do the other any good."

"You surprize me! Emma must do Harriet good: and by supplying her with a new object of interest, Harriet may be said to do Emma good. I have been seeing their intimacy with the greatest pleasure. How very differently we feel!—Not think they will do each other any good! This will certainly be the beginning of one of our quarrels about Emma, Mr. Knightley."

"Perhaps you think I am come on purpose to quarrel with you, knowing Weston to be out, and that you must still fight your own battle."

"Mr. Weston would undoubtedly support me, if he were here, for he thinks exactly as I do on the subject. We were speaking of it only yesterday, and agreeing how fortunate it was for Emma, that there should be such a girl in Highbury for her to associate with. Mr. Knightley, I shall not allow you
to be a fair judge in this case. You are so much used to live alone, that you do not know the value of a companion; and, perhaps no man can be a good judge of the comfort a woman feels in the society of one of her own sex, after being used to it all her life. I can imagine your objection to Harriet Smith. She is not the superior young woman which Emma's friend ought to be. But on the other hand, as Emma wants to see her better informed, it will be an inducement to her to read more herself. They will read together. She means it, I know."

"Emma has been meaning to read more ever since she was twelve years old. I have seen a great many lists of her drawing-up at various times of books that she meant to read regularly through—and very good lists they were—very well chosen, and very neatly arranged—sometimes alphabetically, and sometimes by some other rule. The list she drew up when only fourteen—I remember thinking it did her judgment so much credit, that I preserved it some time; and I dare say she may have made out a very good list now. But I have done with expecting any course of steady reading from Emma. She will never submit to any thing requiring industry and patience, and a subjection of the fancy to the understanding. Where Miss Taylor failed to stimulate, I may safely affirm that Harriet Smith will do nothing.—You never could persuade her to read half so much as you wished.—You know you could not."

"I dare say," replied Mrs. Weston, smiling, "that I thought so then;—but since we have parted, I can never remember Emma's omitting to do any thing I wished."

"There is hardly any desiring to refresh such a memory as that,"—said Mr. Knightley, feelingly; and for a moment or two he had done. "But I," he soon added, "who have had no such charm thrown over my senses, must still see, hear, and remember. Emma is spoiled by being the cleverest of her family. At ten years old, she had the misfortune of being able to answer questions which puzzled her sister at seventeen. She was always quick and assured: Isabella slow and diffident. And ever since she was twelve, Emma has been mistress of the house and of you all. In her mother she lost the only person able to cope with her. She inherits her mother's talents, and must have been under subjection to her."

"I should have been sorry, Mr. Knightley, to be dependent on your recommendation, had I quitted Mr. Woodhouse's family and wanted another situation; I do not think you would have spoken a good word for me to any body. I am sure you always thought me unfit for the office I held."

"Yes," said he, smiling. "You are better placed here; very fit for a wife, but not at all for a governess. But you were preparing yourself to be an excellent wife all the time you were at Hartfield. You might not give Emma such a complete education as your powers would seem to promise; but you were receiving a very good education from her, on the very material matrimonial point of submitting your own will, and doing as you were bid; and if Weston had asked me to recommend him a wife, I should certainly have named Miss Taylor."

"Thank you. There will be very little merit in making a good wife to such a man as Mr. Weston."

"Why, to own the truth, I am afraid you are rather thrown away, and that with every disposition to bear, there will be nothing to be borne. We will not despair, however. Weston may grow cross from the wantonness of comfort, or his son may plague him."

"I hope not that.—It is not likely. No, Mr. Knightley, do not foretell vexation from that quarter."
“Not I, indeed. I only name possibilities. I do not pretend to Emma’s genius for foretelling and guessing. I hope, with all my heart, the young man may be a Weston in merit, and a Churchill in fortune.—But Harriet Smith—I have not half done about Harriet Smith. I think her the very worst sort of companion that Emma could possibly have. She knows nothing herself, and looks upon Emma as knowing everything. She is a flatterer in all her ways; and so much the worse, because undesigned. Her ignorance is hourly flattery. How can Emma imagine she has anything to learn herself, while Harriet is presenting such a delightful inferiority? And as for Harriet, I will venture to say that she cannot gain by the acquaintance. Hartfield will only put her out of conceit with all the other places she belongs to. She will grow just refined enough to be uncomfortable with those among whom birth and circumstances have placed her home. I am much mistaken if Emma’s doctrines give any strength of mind, or tend at all to make a girl adapt herself rationally to the varieties of her situation in life.—They only give a little polish.”

“I either depend more upon Emma’s good sense than you do, or am more anxious for her present comfort; for I cannot lament the acquaintance. How well she looked last night!”

“Oh! you would rather talk of her person than her mind, would you? Very well; I shall not attempt to deny Emma’s being pretty.”

“Pretty! say beautiful rather. Can you imagine anything nearer perfect beauty than Emma altogether—face and figure?”

“I do not know what I could imagine, but I confess that I have seldom seen a face or figure more pleasing to me than hers. But I am a partial old friend.”

“Such an eye!—the true hazel eye—and so brilliant! regular features, open countenance, with a complexion! oh! what a bloom of full health, and such a pretty height and size; such a firm and upright figure! There is health, not merely in her bloom, but in her air, her head, her glance. One hears sometimes of a child being ‘the picture of health;’ now, Emma always gives me the idea of being the complete picture of grown-up health. She is loveliness itself. Mr. Knightley, is not she?”

“I have not a fault to find with her person,” he replied. “I think her all you describe. I love to look at her; and I will add this praise, that I do not think her personally vain. Considering how very handsome she is, she appears to be little occupied with it; her vanity lies another way. Mrs. Weston, I am not to be talked out of my dislike of Harriet Smith, or my dread of its doing them both harm.”

“And I, Mr. Knightley, am equally stout in my confidence of its not doing them any harm. With all dear Emma’s little faults, she is an excellent creature. Where shall we see a better daughter, or a kinder sister, or a truer friend? No, no; she has qualities which may be trusted; she will never lead any one really wrong; she will make no lasting blunder; where Emma errs once, she is in the right a hundred times.”

“Very well; I will not plague you any more. Emma shall be an angel, and I will keep my spleen to myself till Christmas brings John and Isabella. John loves Emma with a reasonable and therefore not a blind affection, and Isabella always thinks as he does; except when he is not quite frightened enough about the children. I am sure of having their opinions with me.”

“I know that you all love her really too well to be unjust or unkind; but excuse me, Mr. Knightley, if I take the liberty (I consider myself, you know, as having somewhat of the privilege of speech that
Emma's mother might have had the liberty of hinting that I do not think any possible good can arise from Harriet Smith's intimacy being made a matter of much discussion among you. Pray excuse me; but supposing any little inconvenience may be apprehended from the intimacy, it cannot be expected that Emma, accountable to nobody but her father, who perfectly approves the acquaintance, should put an end to it, so long as it is a source of pleasure to herself. It has been so many years my province to give advice, that you cannot be surprized, Mr. Knightley, at this little remains of office."

"Not at all," cried he; "I am much obliged to you for it. It is very good advice, and it shall have a better fate than your advice has often found; for it shall be attended to."

"Mrs. John Knightley is easily alarmed, and might be made unhappy about her sister."

"Be satisfied," said he, "I will not raise any outcry. I will keep my ill-humour to myself. I have a very sincere interest in Emma. Isabella does not seem more my sister; has never excited a greater interest; perhaps hardly so great. There is an anxiety, a curiosity in what one feels for Emma. I wonder what will become of her!"

"So do I," said Mrs. Weston gently, "very much."

"She always declares she will never marry, which, of course, means just nothing at all. But I have no idea that she has yet ever seen a man she cared for. It would not be a bad thing for her to be very much in love with a proper object. I should like to see Emma in love, and in some doubt of a return; it would do her good. But there is nobody hereabouts to attach her; and she goes so seldom from home."

"There does, indeed, seem as little to tempt her to break her resolution at present," said Mrs. Weston, "as can well be; and while she is so happy at Hartfield, I cannot wish her to be forming any attachment which would be creating such difficulties on poor Mr. Woodhouse's account. I do not recommend matrimony at present to Emma, though I mean no slight to the state, I assure you."

Part of her meaning was to conceal some favourite thoughts of her own and Mr. Weston's on the subject, as much as possible. There were wishes at Randalls respecting Emma's destiny, but it was not desirable to have them suspected; and the quiet transition which Mr. Knightley soon afterwards made to "What does Weston think of the weather; shall we have rain?" convinced her that he had nothing more to say or surmise about Hartfield.

**VOLUME II**

**CHAPTER I**

Emma and Harriet had been walking together one morning, and, in Emma's opinion, had been talking enough of Mr. Elton for that day. She could not think that Harriet's solace or her own sins required more; and she was therefore industriously getting rid of the subject as they returned;—but it burst out again when she thought she had succeeded, and after speaking some time of what the poor must suffer in winter, and receiving no other answer than a very plaintive—"Mr. Elton is so good to the poor!"—she found something else must be done.

They were just approaching the house where lived Mrs. and Miss Bates. She determined to call upon them and seek safety in numbers. There was always sufficient reason for such an attention;
Mrs. and Miss Bates loved to be called on, and she knew she was considered by the very few who presumed ever to see imperfection in her, as rather negligent in that respect, and as not contributing what she ought to the stock of their scanty comforts.

She had had many a hint from Mr. Knightley and some from her own heart, as to her deficiency—but none were equal to counteract the persuasion of its being very disagreeable,—a waste of time— tiresome women—and all the horror of being in danger of falling in with the second-rate and third-rate of Highbury, who were calling on them for ever, and therefore she seldom went near them. But now she made the sudden resolution of not passing their door without going in—observing, as she proposed it to Harriet, that, as well as she could calculate, they were just now quite safe from any letter from Jane Fairfax.

The house belonged to people in business. Mrs. and Miss Bates occupied the drawing-room floor; and there, in the very moderate-sized apartment, which was every thing to them, the visitors were most cordially and even gratefully welcomed; the quiet neat old lady, who with her knitting was seated in the warmest corner, wanting even to give up her place to Miss Woodhouse, and her more active, talking daughter, almost ready to overpower them with care and kindness, thanks for their visit, solicitude for their shoes, anxious inquiries after Mr. Woodhouse's health, cheerful communications about her mother's, and sweet-cake from the beaufet—"Mrs. Cole had just been there, just called in for ten minutes, and had been so good as to sit an hour with them, and she had taken a piece of cake and been so kind as to say she liked it very much; and, therefore, she hoped Miss Woodhouse and Miss Smith would do them the favour to eat a piece too."

The mention of the Coles was sure to be followed by that of Mr. Elton. There was intimacy between them, and Mr. Cole had heard from Mr. Elton since his going away. Emma knew what was coming; they must have the letter over again, and settle how long he had been gone, and how much he was engaged in company, and what a favourite he was wherever he went, and how full the Master of the Ceremonies' ball had been; and she went through it very well, with all the interest and all the commendation that could be requisite, and always putting forward to prevent Harriet's being obliged to say a word.

This she had been prepared for when she entered the house; but meant, having once talked him handsomely over, to be no farther incommoded by any troublesome topic, and to wander at large amongst all the Mistresses and Misses of Highbury, and their card-parties. She had not been prepared to have Jane Fairfax succeed Mr. Elton; but he was actually hurried off by Miss Bates, she jumped away from him at last abruptly to the Coles, to usher in a letter from her niece.

"Oh! yes—Mr. Elton, I understand—certainly as to dancing—Mrs. Cole was telling me that dancing at the rooms at Bath was—Mrs. Cole was so kind as to sit some time with us, talking of Jane; for as soon as she came in, she began inquiring after her, Jane is so very great a favourite there. Whenever she is with us, Mrs. Cole does not know how to shew her kindness enough; and I must say that Jane deserves it as much as any body can. And so she began inquiring after her directly, saying, 'I know you cannot have heard from Jane lately, because it is not her time for writing;' and when I immediately said, 'But indeed we have, we had a letter this very morning,' I do not know that I ever saw any body more surprized. 'Have you, upon your honour?' said she; 'well, that is quite unexpected. Do let me hear what she says.'"

Emma's politeness was at hand directly, to say, with smiling interest—
“Have you heard from Miss Fairfax so lately? I am extremely happy. I hope she is well?”

“Thank you. You are so kind!” replied the happily deceived aunt, while eagerly hunting for the letter.—“Oh! here it is. I was sure it could not be far off; but I had put my huswife upon it, you see, without being aware, and so it was quite hid, but I had it in my hand so very lately that I was almost sure it must be on the table. I was reading it to Mrs. Cole, and since she went away, I was reading it again to my mother, for it is such a pleasure to her—a letter from Jane—that she can never hear it often enough; so I knew it could not be far off, and here it is, only just under my huswife—and since you are so kind as to wish to hear what she says;—but, first of all, I really must, in justice to Jane, apologise for her writing so short a letter—only two pages you see—hardly two—and in general she fills the whole paper and crosses half. My mother often wonders that I can make it out so well. She often says, when the letter is first opened, 'Well, Hetty, now I think you will be put to it to make out all that checker-work'—don't you, ma'am?—And then I tell her, I am sure she would contrive to make it out herself, if she had nobody to do it for her—every word of it—I am sure she would pore over it till she had made out every word. And, indeed, though my mother's eyes are not so good as they were, she can see amazingly well still, thank God! with the help of spectacles. It is such a blessing! My mother's are really very good indeed. Jane often says, when she is here, 'I am sure, grandmama, you must have had very strong eyes to see as you do—and so much fine work as you have done too!—I only wish my eyes may last me as well.'”

All this spoken extremely fast obliged Miss Bates to stop for breath; and Emma said something very civil about the excellence of Miss Fairfax's handwriting.

“You are extremely kind,” replied Miss Bates, highly gratified; “you who are such a judge, and write so beautifully yourself. I am sure there is nobody's praise that could give us so much pleasure as Miss Woodhouse's. My mother does not hear; she is a little deaf you know. Ma'am,” addressing her, “do you hear what Miss Woodhouse is so obliging to say about Jane's handwriting?”

And Emma had the advantage of hearing her own silly compliment repeated twice over before the good old lady could comprehend it. She was pondering, in the meanwhile, upon the possibility, without seeming very rude, of making her escape from Jane Fairfax's letter, and had almost resolved on hurrying away directly under some slight excuse, when Miss Bates turned to her again and seized her attention.

“My mother's deafness is very trifling you see—just nothing at all. By only raising my voice, and saying anything two or three times over, she is sure to hear; but then she is used to my voice. But it is very remarkable that she should always hear Jane better than she does me. Jane speaks so distinct! However, she will not find her grandmama at all deafer than she was two years ago; which is saying a great deal at my mother's time of life—and it really is full two years, you know, since she was here. We never were so long without seeing her before, and as I was telling Mrs. Cole, we shall hardly know how to make enough of her now.”

“Are you expecting Miss Fairfax here soon?”

“Oh yes; next week.”

“Indeed!—that must be a very great pleasure.”
“Thank you. You are very kind. Yes, next week. Every body is so surprized; and every body says the same obliging things. I am sure she will be as happy to see her friends at Highbury, as they can be to see her. Yes, Friday or Saturday; she cannot say which, because Colonel Campbell will be wanting the carriage himself one of those days. So very good of them to send her the whole way! But they always do, you know. Oh yes, Friday or Saturday next. That is what she writes about. That is the reason of her writing out of rule, as we call it; for, in the common course, we should not have heard from her before next Tuesday or Wednesday.”

“Yes, so I imagined. I was afraid there could be little chance of my hearing any thing of Miss Fairfax to-day.”

“So obliging of you! No, we should not have heard, if it had not been for this particular circumstance, of her being to come here so soon. My mother is so delighted!—for she is to be three months with us at least. Three months, she says so, positively, as I am going to have the pleasure of reading to you. The case is, you see, that the Campbells are going to Ireland. Mrs. Dixon has persuaded her father and mother to come over and see her directly. They had not intended to go over till the summer, but she is so impatient to see them again—for till she married, last October, she was never away from them so much as a week, which must make it very strange to be in different kingdoms, I was going to say, but however different countries, and so she wrote a very urgent letter to her mother—or her father, I declare I do not know which it was, but we shall see presently in Jane's letter—wrote in Mr. Dixon's name as well as her own, to press their coming over directly, and they would give them the meeting in Dublin, and take them back to their country seat, Baly-craig, a beautiful place, I fancy. Jane has heard a great deal of its beauty; from Mr. Dixon, I mean—I do not know that she ever heard about it from any body else; but it was very natural, you know, that he should like to speak of his own place while he was paying his addresses—and as Jane used to be very often walking out with them—for Colonel and Mrs. Campbell were very particular about their daughter's not walking out often with only Mr. Dixon, for which I do not at all blame them; of course she heard every thing he might be telling Miss Campbell about his own home in Ireland; and I think she wrote us word that he had shewn them some drawings of the place, views that he had taken himself. He is a most amiable, charming young man, I believe. Jane was quite longing to go to Ireland, from his account of things.”

At this moment, an ingenious and animating suspicion entering Emma's brain with regard to Jane Fairfax, this charming Mr. Dixon, and the not going to Ireland, she said, with the insidious design of farther discovery,

“You must feel it very fortunate that Miss Fairfax should be allowed to come to you at such a time. Considering the very particular friendship between her and Mrs. Dixon, you could hardly have expected her to be excused from accompanying Colonel and Mrs. Campbell.”

“Very true, very true, indeed. The very thing that we have always been rather afraid of; for we should not have liked to have her at such a distance from us, for months together—not able to come if any thing was to happen. But you see, every thing turns out for the best. They want her (Mr. and Mrs. Dixon) excessively to come over with Colonel and Mrs. Campbell; quite depend upon it; nothing can be more kind or pressing than their joint invitation, Jane says, as you will hear presently; Mr. Dixon does not seem in the least backward in any attention. He is a most charming young man. Ever since the service he rendered Jane at Weymouth, when they were out in that party on the water, and she, by the sudden whirling round of something or other among the sails, would have been dashed into the sea at once, and actually was all but gone, if he had not, with the greatest
presence of mind, caught hold of her habit— (I can never think of it without trembling!)—But ever since we had the history of that day, I have been so fond of Mr. Dixon!"

“But, in spite of all her friends' urgency, and her own wish of seeing Ireland, Miss Fairfax prefers devoting the time to you and Mrs. Bates?”

“Yes—entirely her own doing, entirely her own choice; and Colonel and Mrs. Campbell think she does quite right, just what they should recommend; and indeed they particularly wish her to try her native air, as she has not been quite so well as usual lately.”

“I am concerned to hear of it. I think they judge wisely. But Mrs. Dixon must be very much disappointed. Mrs. Dixon, I understand, has no remarkable degree of personal beauty; is not, by any means, to be compared with Miss Fairfax.”

“Oh! no. You are very obliging to say such things—but certainly not. There is no comparison between them. Miss Campbell always was absolutely plain—but extremely elegant and amiable.”

“Yes, that of course.”

“Jane caught a bad cold, poor thing! so long ago as the 7th of November, (as I am going to read to you,) and has never been well since. A long time, is not it, for a cold to hang upon her? She never mentioned it before, because she would not alarm us. Just like her! so considerate!—But however, she is so far from well, that her kind friends the Campbells think she had better come home, and try an air that always agrees with her; and they have no doubt that three or four months at Highbury will entirely cure her—and it is certainly a great deal better that she should come here, than go to Ireland, if she is unwell. Nobody could nurse her, as we should do.”

“It appears to me the most desirable arrangement in the world.”

“And so she is to come to us next Friday or Saturday, and the Campbells leave town in their way to Holyhead the Monday following—as you will find from Jane's letter. So sudden!—You may guess, dear Miss Woodhouse, what a flurry it has thrown me in! If it was not for the drawback of her illness—but I am afraid we must expect to see her grown thin, and looking very poorly. I must tell you what an unlucky thing happened to me, as to that. I always make a point of reading Jane's letters through to myself first, before I read them aloud to my mother, you know, for fear of there being any thing in them to distress her. Jane desired me to do it, so I always do: and so I began to-day with my usual caution; but no sooner did I come to the mention of her being unwell, than I burst out, quite frightened, with 'Bless me! poor Jane is ill!'—which my mother, being on the watch, heard distinctly, and was sadly alarmed at. However, when I read on, I found it was not near so bad as I had fancied at first; and I make so light of it now to her, that she does not think much about it. But I cannot imagine how I could be so off my guard. If Jane does not get well soon, we will call in Mr. Perry. The expense shall not be thought of; and though he is so liberal, and so fond of Jane that I dare say he would not mean to charge any thing for attendance, we could not suffer it to be so, you know. He has a wife and family to maintain, and is not to be giving away his time. Well, now I have just given you a hint of what Jane writes about, we will turn to her letter, and I am sure she tells her own story a great deal better than I can tell it for her.”

“I am afraid we must be running away,” said Emma, glancing at Harriet, and beginning to rise—“My father will be expecting us. I had no intention, I thought I had no power of staying more than five
minutes, when I first entered the house. I merely called, because I would not pass the door without inquiring after Mrs. Bates; but I have been so pleasantly detained! Now, however, we must wish you and Mrs. Bates good morning."

And not all that could be urged to detain her succeeded. She regained the street—happy in this, that though much had been forced on her against her will, though she had in fact heard the whole substance of Jane Fairfax’s letter, she had been able to escape the letter itself.

CHAPTER II

Jane Fairfax was an orphan, the only child of Mrs. Bates’s youngest daughter.

The marriage of Lieut. Fairfax of the ——regiment of infantry, and Miss Jane Bates, had had its day of fame and pleasure, hope and interest; but nothing now remained of it, save the melancholy remembrance of him dying in action abroad—of his widow sinking under consumption and grief soon afterwards—and this girl.

By birth she belonged to Highbury: and when at three years old, on losing her mother, she became the property, the charge, the consolation, the foundling of her grandmother and aunt, there had seemed every probability of her being permanently fixed there; of her being taught only what very limited means could command, and growing up with no advantages of connexion or improvement, to be engrafted on what nature had given her in a pleasing person, good understanding, and warm-hearted, well-meaning relations.

But the compassionate feelings of a friend of her father gave a change to her destiny. This was Colonel Campbell, who had very highly regarded Fairfax, as an excellent officer and most deserving young man; and farther, had been indebted to him for such attentions, during a severe camp-fever, as he believed had saved his life. These were claims which he did not learn to overlook, though some years passed away from the death of poor Fairfax, before his own return to England put any thing in his power. When he did return, he sought out the child and took notice of her. He was a married man, with only one living child, a girl, about Jane’s age: and Jane became their guest, paying them long visits and growing a favourite with all; and before she was nine years old, his daughter's great fondness for her, and his own wish of being a real friend, united to produce an offer from Colonel Campbell of undertaking the whole charge of her education. It was accepted; and from that period Jane had belonged to Colonel Campbell’s family, and had lived with them entirely, only visiting her grandmother from time to time.

The plan was that she should be brought up for educating others; the very few hundred pounds which she inherited from her father making independence impossible. To provide for her otherwise was out of Colonel Campbell’s power; for though his income, by pay and appointments, was handsome, his fortune was moderate and must be all his daughter’s; but, by giving her an education, he hoped to be supplying the means of respectable subsistence hereafter.

Such was Jane Fairfax's history. She had fallen into good hands, known nothing but kindness from the Campbells, and been given an excellent education. Living constantly with right-minded and well-informed people, her heart and understanding had received every advantage of discipline and culture; and Colonel Campbell’s residence being in London, every lighter talent had been done full justice to, by the attendance of first-rate masters. Her disposition and abilities were equally worthy of all that friendship could do; and at eighteen or nineteen she was, as far as such an early age can
be qualified for the care of children, fully competent to the office of instruction herself; but she was too much beloved to be parted with. Neither father nor mother could promote, and the daughter could not endure it. The evil day was put off. It was easy to decide that she was still too young; and Jane remained with them, sharing, as another daughter, in all the rational pleasures of an elegant society, and a judicious mixture of home and amusement, with only the drawback of the future, the sobering suggestions of her own good understanding to remind her that all this might soon be over.

The affection of the whole family, the warm attachment of Miss Campbell in particular, was the more honourable to each party from the circumstance of Jane's decided superiority both in beauty and acquirements. That nature had given it in feature could not be unseen by the young woman, nor could her higher powers of mind be felt by the parents. They continued together with unabated regard however, till the marriage of Miss Campbell, who by that chance, that luck which so often defies anticipation in matrimonial affairs, giving attraction to what is moderate rather than to what is superior, engaged the affections of Mr. Dixon, a young man, rich and agreeable, almost as soon as they were acquainted; and was eligibly and happily settled, while Jane Fairfax had yet her bread to earn.

This event had very lately taken place; too lately for anything to be yet attempted by her less fortunate friend towards entering on her path of duty; though she had now reached the age which her own judgment had fixed on for beginning. She had long resolved that one-and-twenty should be the period. With the fortitude of a devoted novice, she had resolved at one-and-twenty to complete the sacrifice, and retire from all the pleasures of life, of rational intercourse, equal society, peace and hope, to penance and mortification for ever.

The good sense of Colonel and Mrs. Campbell could not oppose such a resolution, though their feelings did. As long as they lived, no exertions would be necessary, their home might be hers for ever; and for their own comfort they would have retained her wholly; but this would be selfishness:—what must be at last, had better be soon. Perhaps they began to feel it might have been kinder and wiser to have resisted the temptation of any delay, and spared her from a taste of such enjoyments of ease and leisure as must now be relinquished. Still, however, affection was glad to catch at any reasonable excuse for not hurrying on the wretched moment. She had never been quite well since the time of their daughter's marriage; and till she should have completely recovered her usual strength, they must forbid her engaging in duties, which, so far from being compatible with a weakened frame and varying spirits, seemed, under the most favourable circumstances, to require something more than human perfection of body and mind to be discharged with tolerable comfort.

With regard to her not accompanying them to Ireland, her account to her aunt contained nothing but truth, though there might be some truths not told. It was her own choice to give the time of their absence to Highbury; to spend, perhaps, her last months of perfect liberty with those kind relations to whom she was so very dear: and the Campbells, whatever might be their motive or motives, whether single, or double, or treble, gave the arrangement their ready sanction, and said, that they depended more on a few months spent in her native air, for the recovery of her health, than on any thing else. Certain it was that she was to come; and that Highbury, instead of welcoming that perfect novelty which had been so long promised it—Mr. Frank Churchill—must put up for the present with Jane Fairfax, who could bring only the freshness of a two years' absence.

Emma was sorry;—to have to pay civilities to a person she did not like through three long months!—to be always doing more than she wished, and less than she ought! Why she did not like
Jane Fairfax might be a difficult question to answer; Mr. Knightley had once told her it was because she saw in her the really accomplished young woman, which she wanted to be thought herself; and though the accusation had been eagerly refuted at the time, there were moments of self-examination in which her conscience could not quite acquit her. But “she could never get acquainted with her: she did not know how it was, but there was such coldness and reserve—such apparent indifference whether she pleased or not—and then, her aunt was such an eternal talker!—and she was made such a fuss with by every body!—and it had been always imagined that they were to be so intimate—because their ages were the same, every body had supposed they must be so fond of each other.” These were her reasons—she had no better.

It was a dislike so little just—every imputed fault was so magnified by fancy, that she never saw Jane Fairfax the first time after any considerable absence, without feeling that she had injured her; and now, when the due visit was paid, on her arrival, after a two years’ interval, she was particularly struck with the very appearance and manners, which for those two whole years she had been depreciating. Jane Fairfax was very elegant, remarkably elegant; and she had herself the highest value for elegance. Her height was pretty, just such as almost every body would think tall, and nobody could think very tall; her figure particularly graceful; her size a most becoming medium, between fat and thin, though a slight appearance of ill-health seemed to point out the likeliest evil of the two. Emma could not but feel all this; and then, her face—her features—there was more beauty in them altogether than she had remembered; it was not regular, but it was very pleasing beauty. Her eyes, a deep grey, with dark eye-lashes and eyebrows, had never been denied their praise; but the skin, which she had been used to cavil at, as wanting colour, had a clearness and delicacy which really needed no fuller bloom. It was a style of beauty, of which elegance was the reigning character, and as such, she must, in honour, by all her principles, admire it:—elegance, which, whether of person or of mind, she saw so little in Highbury. There, not to be vulgar, was distinction, and merit.

In short, she sat, during the first visit, looking at Jane Fairfax with twofold complacency; the sense of pleasure and the sense of rendering justice, and was determining that she would dislike her no longer. When she took in her history, indeed, her situation, as well as her beauty; when she considered what all this elegance was destined to, what she was going to sink from, how she was going to live, it seemed impossible to feel any thing but compassion and respect; especially, if to every well-known particular entitling her to interest, were added the highly probable circumstance of an attachment to Mr. Dixon, which she had so naturally started to herself. In that case, nothing could be more pitiable or more honourable than the sacrifices she had resolved on. Emma was very willing now to acquit her of having seduced Mr. Dixon’s actions from his wife, or of any thing mischievous which her imagination had suggested at first. If it were love, it might be simple, single, successless love on her side alone. She might have been unconsciously sucking in the sad poison, while a sharer of his conversation with her friend; and from the best, the purest of motives, might now be denying herself this visit to Ireland, and resolving to divide herself effectually from him and his connexions by soon beginning her career of laborious duty.

Upon the whole, Emma left her with such softened, charitable feelings, as made her look around in walking home, and lament that Highbury afforded no young man worthy of giving her independence; nobody that she could wish to scheme about for her.

These were charming feelings—but not lasting. Before she had committed herself by any public profession of eternal friendship for Jane Fairfax, or done more towards a recantation of past prejudices and errors, than saying to Mr. Knightley, “She certainly is handsome; she is better than
handsome!” Jane had spent an evening at Hartfield with her grandmother and aunt, and every thing was relapsing much into its usual state. Former provocations reappeared. The aunt was as tiresome as ever; more tiresome, because anxiety for her health was now added to admiration of her powers; and they had to listen to the description of exactly how little bread and butter she ate for breakfast, and how small a slice of mutton for dinner, as well as to see exhibitions of new caps and new workbags for her mother and herself; and Jane’s offences rose again. They had music; Emma was obliged to play; and the thanks and praise which necessarily followed appeared to her an affectation of candour, an air of greatness, meaning only to shew off in higher style her own very superior performance. She was, besides, which was the worst of all, so cold, so cautious! There was no getting at her real opinion. Wrap up in a cloak of politeness, she seemed determined to hazard nothing. She was disgustingly, was suspiciously reserved.

If any thing could be more, where all was most, she was more reserved on the subject of Weymouth and the Dixons than any thing. She seemed bent on giving no real insight into Mr. Dixon’s character, or her own value for his company, or opinion of the suitableness of the match. It was all general approbation and smoothness; nothing delineated or distinguished. It did her no service however. Her caution was thrown away. Emma saw its artifice, and returned to her first surmises. There probably was something more to conceal than her own preference; Mr. Dixon, perhaps, had been very near changing one friend for the other, or been fixed only to Miss Campbell, for the sake of the future twelve thousand pounds.

The like reserve prevailed on other topics. She and Mr. Frank Churchill had been at Weymouth at the same time. It was known that they were a little acquainted; but not a syllable of real information could Emma procure as to what he truly was. “Was he handsome?” — “She believed he was reckoned a very fine young man.” “Was he agreeable?” — “He was generally thought so.” “Did he appear a sensible young man; a young man of information?” — “At a watering-place, or in a common London acquaintance, it was difficult to decide on such points. Manners were all that could be safely judged of, under a much longer knowledge than they had yet had of Mr. Churchill. She believed every body found his manners pleasing.” Emma could not forgive her.

CHAPTER III

Emma could not forgive her; — but as neither provocation nor resentment were discerned by Mr. Knightley, who had been of the party, and had seen only proper attention and pleasing behaviour on each side, he was expressing the next morning, being at Hartfield again on business with Mr. Woodhouse, his approbation of the whole; not so openly as he might have done had her father been out of the room, but speaking plain enough to be very intelligible to Emma. He had been used to think her unjust to Jane, and had now great pleasure in marking an improvement.

“A very pleasant evening,” he began, as soon as Mr. Woodhouse had been talked into what was necessary, told that he understood, and the papers swept away; — “particularly pleasant. You and Miss Fairfax gave us some very good music. I do not know a more luxurious state, sir, than sitting at one’s ease to be entertained a whole evening by two such young women; sometimes with music and sometimes with conversation. I am sure Miss Fairfax must have found the evening pleasant, Emma. You left nothing undone. I was glad you made her play so much, for having no instrument at her grandmother’s, it must have been a real indulgence.”

“I am happy you approved,” said Emma, smiling; “but I hope I am not often deficient in what is due to guests at Hartfield.”
“No, my dear,” said her father instantly; “that I am sure you are not. There is nobody half so attentive and civil as you are. If any thing, you are too attentive. The muffin last night—if it had been handed round once, I think it would have been enough.”

“No,” said Mr. Knightley, nearly at the same time; “you are not often deficient; not often deficient either in manner or comprehension. I think you understand me, therefore.”

An arch look expressed—“I understand you well enough;” but she said only, “Miss Fairfax is reserved.”

“I always told you she was—a little; but you will soon overcome all that part of her reserve which ought to be overcome, all that has its foundation in diffidence. What arises from discretion must be honoured.”

“You think her diffident. I do not see it.”

“My dear Emma,” said he, moving from his chair into one close by her, “you are not going to tell me, I hope, that you had not a pleasant evening.”

“Oh! no; I was pleased with my own perseverance in asking questions; and amused to think how little information I obtained.”

“I am disappointed,” was his only answer.

“Every body had a pleasant evening,” said Mr. Woodhouse, in his quiet way. “I had. Once, I felt the fire rather too much; but then I moved back my chair a little, a very little, and it did not disturb me. Miss Bates was very chatty and good-humoured, as she always is, though she speaks rather too quick. However, she is very agreeable, and Mrs. Bates too, in a different way. I like old friends; and Miss Jane Fairfax is a very pretty sort of young lady, a very pretty and a very well-behaved young lady indeed. She must have found the evening agreeable, Mr. Knightley, because she had Emma.”

“True, sir; and Emma, because she had Miss Fairfax.”

Emma saw his anxiety, and wishing to appease it, at least for the present, said, and with a sincerity which no one could question—

“She is a sort of elegant creature that one cannot keep one’s eyes from. I am always watching her to admire; and I do pity her from my heart.”

Mr. Knightley looked as if he were more gratified than he cared to express; and before he could make any reply, Mr. Woodhouse, whose thoughts were on the Bates’s, said—

“It is a great pity that their circumstances should be so confined! a great pity indeed! and I have often wished—but it is so little one can venture to do—small, trifling presents, of any thing uncommon—Now we have killed a porker, and Emma thinks of sending them a loin or a leg; it is very small and delicate—Hartfield pork is not like any other pork—but still it is pork—and, my dear Emma, unless one could be sure of their making it into steaks, nicely fried, as ours are fried, without the smallest grease, and not roast it, for no stomach can bear roast pork—I think we had better send the leg—do not you think so, my dear?”
“My dear papa, I sent the whole hind-quarter. I knew you would wish it. There will be the leg to be salted, you know, which is so very nice, and the loin to be dressed directly in any manner they like.”

“That’s right, my dear, very right. I had not thought of it before, but that is the best way. They must not over-salt the leg; and then, if it is not over-salted, and if it is very thoroughly boiled, just as Serle boils ours, and eaten very moderately of, with a boiled turnip, and a little carrot or parsnip, I do not consider it unwholesome.”

“Emma,” said Mr. Knightley presently, “I have a piece of news for you. You like news—and I heard an article in my way hither that I think will interest you.”

“News! Oh! yes, I always like news. What is it?—why do you smile so?—where did you hear it?—at Randalls?”

He had time only to say,

“No, not at Randalls; I have not been near Randalls,” when the door was thrown open, and Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax walked into the room. Full of thanks, and full of news, Miss Bates knew not which to give quickest. Mr. Knightley soon saw that he had lost his moment, and that not another syllable of communication could rest with him.

“Oh! my dear sir, how are you this morning? My dear Miss Woodhouse—I come quite over-powered. Such a beautiful hind-quarter of pork! You are too bountiful! Have you heard the news? Mr. Elton is going to be married.”

Emma had not had time even to think of Mr. Elton, and she was so completely surprised that she could not avoid a little start, and a little blush, at the sound.

“There is my news:—I thought it would interest you,” said Mr. Knightley, with a smile which implied a conviction of some part of what had passed between them.

“But where could you hear it?” cried Miss Bates. “Where could you possibly hear it, Mr. Knightley? For it is not five minutes since I received Mrs. Cole’s note—no, it cannot be more than five—or at least ten—for I had got my bonnet and Spencer on, just ready to come out—I was only gone down to speak to Patty again about the pork—Jane was standing in the passage—were not you, Jane?—for my mother was so afraid that we had not any salting-pan large enough. So I said I would go down and see, and Jane said, ‘Shall I go down instead? for I think you have a little cold, and Patty has been washing the kitchen.’—‘Oh! my dear,’ said I—well, and just then came the note. A Miss Hawkins—that’s all I know. A Miss Hawkins of Bath. But, Mr. Knightley, how could you possibly have heard it? for the very moment Mr. Cole told Mrs. Cole of it, she sat down and wrote to me. A Miss Hawkins—”

“I was with Mr. Cole on business an hour and a half ago. He had just read Elton’s letter as I was shewn in, and handed it to me directly.”

“Well! that is quite—I suppose there never was a piece of news more generally interesting. My dear sir, you really are too bountiful. My mother desires her very best compliments and regards, and a thousand thanks, and says you really quite oppress her.”
“We consider our Hartfield pork,” replied Mr. Woodhouse—“indeed it certainly is, so very superior to all other pork, that Emma and I cannot have a greater pleasure than—”

“Oh! my dear sir, as my mother says, our friends are only too good to us. If ever there were people who, without having great wealth themselves, had every thing they could wish for, I am sure it is us. We may well say that ‘our lot is cast in a goodly heritage.’ Well, Mr. Knightley, and so you actually saw the letter; well—”

“It was short—merely to announce—but cheerful, exulting, of course.”—Here was a sly glance at Emma. “He had been so fortunate as to—I forget the precise words—one has no business to remember them. The information was, as you state, that he was going to be married to a Miss Hawkins. By his style, I should imagine it just settled.”

“Mr. Elton going to be married!” said Emma, as soon as she could speak. “He will have every body’s wishes for his happiness.”

“He is very young to settle,” was Mr. Woodhouse’s observation. “He had better not be in a hurry. He seemed to me very well off as he was. We were always glad to see him at Hartfield.”

“A new neighbour for us all, Miss Woodhouse!” said Miss Bates, joyfully; “my mother is so pleased!—she says she cannot bear to have the poor old Vicarage without a mistress. This is great news, indeed. Jane, you have never seen Mr. Elton!—no wonder that you have such a curiosity to see him.”

Jane’s curiosity did not appear of that absorbing nature as wholly to occupy her.

“No—I have never seen Mr. Elton,” she replied, starting on this appeal; “is he—is he a tall man?”

“Who shall answer that question?” cried Emma. “My father would say ‘yes,’ Mr. Knightley ‘no;’ and Miss Bates and I that he is just the happy medium. When you have been here a little longer, Miss Fairfax, you will understand that Mr. Elton is the standard of perfection in Highbury, both in person and mind.”

“Very true, Miss Woodhouse, so she will. He is the very best young man—But, my dear Jane, if you remember, I told you yesterday he was precisely the height of Mr. Perry. Miss Hawkins,—I dare say, an excellent young woman. His extreme attention to my mother—wanting her to sit in the vicarage pew, that she might hear the better, for my mother is a little deaf, you know—it is not much, but she does not hear quite quick. Jane says that Colonel Campbell is a little deaf. He fancied bathing might be good for it—the warm bath—but she says it did him no lasting benefit. Colonel Campbell, you know, is quite our angel. And Mr. Dixon seems a very charming young man, quite worthy of him. It is such a happiness when good people get together—and they always do. Now, here will be Mr. Elton and Miss Hawkins; and there are the Coles, such very good people; and the Perrys—I suppose there never was a happier or a better couple than Mr. and Mrs. Perry. I say, sir,” turning to Mr. Woodhouse, “I think there are few places with such society as Highbury. I always say, we are quite blessed in our neighbours.—My dear sir, if there is one thing my mother loves better than another, it is pork—a roast loin of pork—”
“As to who, or what Miss Hawkins is, or how long he has been acquainted with her,” said Emma, “nothing I suppose can be known. One feels that it cannot be a very long acquaintance. He has been gone only four weeks.”

Nobody had any information to give; and, after a few more wonderings, Emma said,

“You are silent, Miss Fairfax—but I hope you mean to take an interest in this news. You, who have been hearing and seeing so much of late on these subjects, who must have been so deep in the business on Miss Campbell’s account—we shall not excuse your being indifferent about Mr. Elton and Miss Hawkins.”

“When I have seen Mr. Elton,” replied Jane, “I dare say I shall be interested—but I believe it requires that with me. And as it is some months since Miss Campbell married, the impression may be a little worn off.”

“Yes, he has been gone just four weeks, as you observe, Miss Woodhouse,” said Miss Bates, “four weeks yesterday.—A Miss Hawkins!—Well, I had always rather fancied it would be some young lady hereabouts; not that I ever—Mrs. Cole once whispered to me—but I immediately said, 'No, Mr. Elton is a most worthy young man—but’—In short, I do not think I am particularly quick at those sort of discoveries. I do not pretend to it. What is before me, I see. At the same time, nobody could wonder if Mr. Elton should have aspired—Miss Woodhouse lets me chatter on, so good-humouredly. She knows I would not offend for the world. How does Miss Smith do? She seems quite recovered now. Have you heard from Mrs. John Knightley lately? Oh! those dear little children. Jane, do you know I always fancy Mr. Dixon like Mr. John Knightley. I mean in person—tall, and with that sort of look—and not very talkative.”

“Quite wrong, my dear aunt; there is no likeness at all.”

“Very odd! but one never does form a just idea of any body beforehand. One takes up a notion, and runs away with it. Mr. Dixon, you say, is not, strictly speaking, handsome?”

“Handsome! Oh! no—far from it—certainly plain. I told you he was plain.”

“My dear, you said that Miss Campbell would not allow him to be plain, and that you yourself—”

“Oh! as for me, my judgment is worth nothing. Where I have a regard, I always think a person well-looking. But I gave what I believed the general opinion, when I called him plain.”

“Well, my dear Jane, I believe we must be running away. The weather does not look well, and grandmama will be uneasy. You are too obliging, my dear Miss Woodhouse; but we really must take leave. This has been a most agreeable piece of news indeed. I shall just go round by Mrs. Cole’s; but I shall not stop three minutes: and, Jane, you had better go home directly—I would not have you out in a shower!—We think she is the better for Highbury already. Thank you, we do indeed. I shall not attempt calling on Mrs. Goddard, for I really do not think she cares for any thing but boiled pork: when we dress the leg it will be another thing. Good morning to you, my dear sir. Oh! Mr. Knightley is coming too. Well, that is so very!—I am sure if Jane is tired, you will be so kind as to give her your arm.—Mr. Elton, and Miss Hawkins!—Good morning to you.”
Emma, alone with her father, had half her attention wanted by him while he lamented that young people would be in such a hurry to marry—and to marry strangers too—and the other half she could give to her own view of the subject. It was to herself an amusing and a very welcome piece of news, as proving that Mr. Elton could not have suffered long; but she was sorry for Harriet: Harriet must feel it—and all that she could hope was, by giving the first information herself, to save her from hearing it abruptly from others. It was now about the time that she was likely to call. If she were to meet Miss Bates in her way!—and upon its beginning to rain, Emma was obliged to expect that the weather would be detaining her at Mrs. Goddard's, and that the intelligence would undoubtedly rush upon her without preparation.

The shower was heavy, but short; and it had not been over five minutes, when in came Harriet, with just the heated, agitated look which hurrying thither with a full heart was likely to give; and the "Oh! Miss Woodhouse, what do you think has happened!" which instantly burst forth, had all the evidence of corresponding perturbation. As the blow was given, Emma felt that she could not now shew greater kindness than in listening; and Harriet, unchecked, ran eagerly through what she had to tell. "She had set out from Mrs. Goddard's half an hour ago—she had been afraid it would rain—she had been afraid it would pour down every moment—but she thought she might get to Hartfield first—she had hurried on as fast as possible; but then, as she was passing by the house where a young woman was making up a gown for her, she thought she would just step in and see how it went on; and though she did not seem to stay half a moment there, soon after she came out it began to rain, and she did not know what to do; so she ran on directly, as fast as she could, and took shelter at Ford's."—Ford's was the principal woollen-draper, linen-draper, and haberdasher's shop united; the shop first in size and fashion in the place.—"And so, there she had set, without an idea of anything in the world, full ten minutes, perhaps—when all of a sudden, who should come in—to be sure it was so very odd!—but they always dealt at Ford's—who should come in, but Elizabeth Martin and her brother!—Dear Miss Woodhouse! only think. I thought I should have fainted. I did not know what to do. I was sitting near the door—Elizabeth saw me directly; but he did not; he was busy with the umbrella. I am sure she saw me, but she looked away directly, and took no notice; and they both went to quite the farther end of the shop; and I kept sitting near the door!—Oh! dear; I was so miserable! I am sure I must have been as white as my gown. I could not go away you know, because of the rain; but I did so wish myself anywhere in the world but there. Oh! dear, Miss Woodhouse—well, at last, I fancy, he looked round and saw me; for instead of going on with her buyings, they began whispering to one another. I am sure they were talking of me; and I could not help thinking that he was persuading her to speak to me (do you think he was, Miss Woodhouse?)—for presently she came forward—came quite up to me, and asked me how I did, and seemed ready to shake hands, if I would. She did not do any of it in the same way that she used; I could see she was altered; but, however, she seemed to try to be very friendly, and we shook hands, and stood talking some time; but I know no more what I said—I was in such a tremble!—I remember she said she was sorry we never met now; which I thought almost too kind! Dear Miss Woodhouse, I was absolutely miserable! By that time, it was beginning to hold up, and I was determined that nothing should stop me from getting away—and then—only think!—I found he was coming up towards me too—slowly you know, and as if he did not quite know what to do; and so he came and spoke, and I answered—and I stood for a minute, feeling dreadfully, you know, one can't tell how; and then I took courage, and said it did not rain, and I must go; and so off I set; and I had not got three yards from the door, when he came after me, only to say, if I was going to Hartfield, he thought I had much better go round by Mr. Cole's stables, for I should find the near way quite floated by this rain. Oh! dear, I thought it would have been the death of me! So I said, I was very much obliged to him: you know I could not do less; and then he went back to Elizabeth, and I came round by the stables—I believe I did—but I hardly knew where I was, or any thing about it. Oh! Miss Woodhouse, I would rather done any thing than have it happen: and yet, you know,
there was a sort of satisfaction in seeing him behave so pleasantly and so kindly. And Elizabeth, too.
Oh! Miss Woodhouse, do talk to me and make me comfortable again."

Very sincerely did Emma wish to do so; but it was not immediately in her power. She was obliged to stop and think. She was not thoroughly comfortable herself. The young man's conduct, and his sister's, seemed the result of real feeling, and she could not but pity them. As Harriet described it, there had been an interesting mixture of wounded affection and genuine delicacy in their behaviour. But she had believed them to be well-meaning, worthy people before; and what difference did this make in the evils of the connexion? It was folly to be disturbed by it. Of course, he must be sorry to lose her—they must be all sorry. Ambition, as well as love, had probably been mortified. They might all have hoped to rise by Harriet's acquaintance: and besides, what was the value of Harriet's description?—So easily pleased—so little discerning;—what signified her praise?

She exerted herself, and did try to make her comfortable, by considering all that had passed as a mere trifle, and quite unworthy of being dwelt on,

"It might be distressing, for the moment," said she; "but you seem to have behaved extremely well; and it is over—and may never—can never, as a first meeting, occur again, and therefore you need not think about it."

Harriet said, “very true,” and she “would not think about it;” but still she talked of it—still she could talk of nothing else; and Emma, at last, in order to put the Martins out of her head, was obliged to hurry on the news, which she had meant to give with so much tender caution; hardly knowing herself whether to rejoice or be angry, ashamed or only amused, at such a state of mind in poor Harriet—such a conclusion of Mr. Elton's importance with her!

Mr. Elton's rights, however, gradually revived. Though she did not feel the first intelligence as she might have done the day before, or an hour before, its interest soon increased; and before their first conversation was over, she had talked herself into all the sensations of curiosity, wonder and regret, pain and pleasure, as to this fortunate Miss Hawkins, which could conduce to place the Martins under proper subordination in her fancy.

Emma learned to be rather glad that there had been such a meeting. It had been serviceable in deadening the first shock, without retaining any influence to alarm. As Harriet now lived, the Martins could not get at her, without seeking her; where hitherto they had wanted either the courage or the condescension to seek her; for since her refusal of the brother, the sisters never had been at Mrs. Goddard's; and a twelvemonth might pass without their being thrown together again, with any necessity, or even any power of speech.

CHAPTER XIV

Mrs. Elton was first seen at church: but though devotion might be interrupted, curiosity could not be satisfied by a bride in a pew, and it must be left for the visits in form which were then to be paid, to settle whether she were very pretty indeed, or only rather pretty, or not pretty at all.

Emma had feelings, less of curiosity than of pride or propriety, to make her resolve on not being the last to pay her respects; and she made a point of Harriet's going with her, that the worst of the business might be gone through as soon as possible.
She could not enter the house again, could not be in the same room to which she had with such vain artifice retreated three months ago, to lace up her boot, without recollecting. A thousand vexatious thoughts would recur. Compliments, charades, and horrible blunders; and it was not to be supposed that poor Harriet should not be recollecting too; but she behaved very well, and was only rather pale and silent. The visit was of course short; and there was so much embarrassment and occupation of mind to shorten it, that Emma would not allow herself entirely to form an opinion of the lady, and on no account to give one, beyond the nothing-meaning terms of being “elegantly dressed, and very pleasing.”

She did not really like her. She would not be in a hurry to find fault, but she suspected that there was no elegance;—ease, but not elegance.— She was almost sure that for a young woman, a stranger, a bride, there was too much ease. Her person was rather good; her face not unpretty; but neither feature, nor air, nor voice, nor manner, were elegant. Emma thought at least it would turn out so.

As for Mr. Elton, his manners did not appear—but no, she would not permit a hasty or a witty word from herself about his manners. It was an awkward ceremony at any time to be receiving wedding visits, and a man had need be all grace to acquit himself well through it. The woman was better off; she might have the assistance of fine clothes, and the privilege of bashfulness, but the man had only his own good sense to depend on; and when she considered how peculiarly unlucky poor Mr. Elton was in being in the same room at once with the woman he had just married, the woman he had wanted to marry, and the woman whom he had been expected to marry, she must allow him to have the right to look as little wise, and to be as much affectedly, and as little really easy as could be.

“Well, Miss Woodhouse,” said Harriet, when they had quitted the house, and after waiting in vain for her friend to begin; “Well, Miss Woodhouse, (with a gentle sigh,) what do you think of her?—Is not she very charming?”

There was a little hesitation in Emma’s answer.

“Oh! yes—very—a very pleasing young woman.”

“I think her beautiful, quite beautiful.”

“Very nicely dressed, indeed; a remarkably elegant gown.”

“I am not at all surprized that he should have fallen in love.”

“Oh! no—there is nothing to surprize one at all.—A pretty fortune; and she came in his way.”

“I dare say,” returned Harriet, sighing again, “I dare say she was very much attached to him.”

“Perhaps she might; but it is not every man’s fate to marry the woman who loves him best. Miss Hawkins perhaps wanted a home, and thought this the best offer she was likely to have.”

“Yes,” said Harriet earnestly, “and well she might, nobody could ever have a better. Well, I wish them happy with all my heart. And now, Miss Woodhouse, I do not think I shall mind seeing them again. He is just as superior as ever;—but being married, you know, it is quite a different thing. No, indeed, Miss Woodhouse, you need not be afraid; I can sit and admire him now without any great
misery. To know that he has not thrown himself away, is such a comfort!—She does seem a
charming young woman, just what he deserves. Happy creature! He called her 'Augusta.' How
delightful!"

When the visit was returned, Emma made up her mind. She could then see more and judge better.
From Harriet's happening not to be at Hartfield, and her father's being present to engage Mr. Elton,
she had a quarter of an hour of the lady's conversation to herself, and could composedly attend to
her; and the quarter of an hour quite convinced her that Mrs. Elton was a vain woman, extremely
well satisfied with herself, and thinking much of her own importance; that she meant to shine and
be very superior, but with manners which had been formed in a bad school, pert and familiar; that
all her notions were drawn from one set of people, and one style of living; that if not foolish she was
ignorant, and that her society would certainly do Mr. Elton no good.

Harriet would have been a better match. If not wise or refined herself, she would have connected
him with those who were; but Miss Hawkins, it might be fairly supposed from her easy conceit, had
been the best of her own set. The rich brother-in-law near Bristol was the pride of the alliance, and
his place and his carriages were the pride of him.

The very first subject after being seated was Maple Grove, "My brother Mr. Suckling's seat;"—a
comparison of Hartfield to Maple Grove. The grounds of Hartfield were small, but neat and pretty;
and the house was modern and well-built. Mrs. Elton seemed most favourably impressed by the size
of the room, the entrance, and all that she could see or imagine. "Very like Maple Grove indeed!—
She was quite struck by the likeness!—That room was the very shape and size of the morning-room
at Maple Grove; her sister's favourite room."—Mr. Elton was appealed to.—"Was not it
astonishingly like?—She could really almost fancy herself at Maple Grove."

"And the staircase—You know, as I came in, I observed how very like the staircase was; placed
exactly in the same part of the house. I really could not help exclaiming! I assure you, Miss
Woodhouse, it is very delightful to me, to be reminded of a place I am so extremely partial to as
Maple Grove. I have spent so many happy months there! (with a little sigh of sentiment). A
charming place, undoubtedly. Every body who sees it is struck by its beauty; but to me, it has been
quite a home. Whenever you are transplanted, like me, Miss Woodhouse, you will understand how
very delightful it is to meet with any thing at all like what one has left behind. I always say this is
quite one of the evils of matrimony."

Emma made as slight a reply as she could; but it was fully sufficient for Mrs. Elton, who only wanted
to be talking herself.

"So extremely like Maple Grove! And it is not merely the house—the grounds, I assure you, as far as
I could observe, are strikingly like. The laurels at Maple Grove are in the same profusion as here,
and stand very much in the same way—just across the lawn; and I had a glimpse of a fine large tree,
with a bench round it, which put me so exactly in mind! My brother and sister will be enchanted
with this place. People who have extensive grounds themselves are always pleased with any thing
in the same style."

Emma doubted the truth of this sentiment. She had a great idea that people who had extensive
grounds themselves cared very little for the extensive grounds of any body else; but it was not
worth while to attack an error so double-dyed, and therefore only said in reply,
"When you have seen more of this country, I am afraid you will think you have overrated Hartfield. Surry is full of beauties."

"Oh! yes, I am quite aware of that. It is the garden of England, you know. Surry is the garden of England."

"Yes; but we must not rest our claims on that distinction. Many counties, I believe, are called the garden of England, as well as Surry."

"No, I fancy not," replied Mrs. Elton, with a most satisfied smile. "I never heard any county but Surry called so."

Emma was silenced.

"My brother and sister have promised us a visit in the spring, or summer at farthest," continued Mrs. Elton; "and that will be our time for exploring. While they are with us, we shall explore a great deal, I dare say. They will have their barouche-landau, of course, which holds four perfectly; and therefore, without saying anything of our carriage, we should be able to explore the different beauties extremely well. They would hardly come in their chaise, I think, at that season of the year. Indeed, when the time draws on, I shall decidedly recommend their bringing the barouche-landau; it will be so very much preferable. When people come into a beautiful country of this sort, you know, Miss Woodhouse, one naturally wishes them to see as much as possible; and Mr. Suckling is extremely fond of exploring. We explored to King's-Weston twice last summer, in that way, most delightfully, just after their first having the barouche-landau. You have many parties of that kind here, I suppose, Miss Woodhouse, every summer?"

"No; not immediately here. We are rather out of distance of the very striking beauties which attract the sort of parties you speak of; and we are a very quiet set of people, I believe; more disposed to stay at home than engage in schemes of pleasure."

"Ah! there is nothing like staying at home for real comfort. Nobody can be more devoted to home than I am. I was quite a proverb for it at Maple Grove. Many a time has Selina said, when she has been going to Bristol, 'I really cannot get this girl to move from the house. I absolutely must go in by myself, though I hate being stuck up in the barouche-landau without a companion; but Augusta, I believe, with her own good-will, would never stir beyond the park paling.' Many a time has she said so; and yet I am no advocate for entire seclusion. I think, on the contrary, when people shut themselves up entirely from society, it is a very bad thing; and that it is much more advisable to mix in the world in a proper degree, without living in it either too much or too little. I perfectly understand your situation, however, Miss Woodhouse—(looking towards Mr. Woodhouse), Your father's state of health must be a great drawback. Why does not he try Bath?—Indeed he should. Let me recommend Bath to you. I assure you I have no doubt of its doing Mr. Woodhouse good."

"My father tried it more than once, formerly; but without receiving any benefit; and Mr. Perry, whose name, I dare say, is not unknown to you, does not conceive it would be at all more likely to be useful now."

"Ah! that's a great pity; for I assure you, Miss Woodhouse, where the waters do agree, it is quite wonderful the relief they give. In my Bath life, I have seen such instances of it! And it is so cheerful a place, that it could not fail of being of use to Mr. Woodhouse's spirits, which, I understand, are
sometimes much depressed. And as to its recommendations to you, I fancy I need not take much pains to dwell on them. The advantages of Bath to the young are pretty generally understood. It would be a charming introduction for you, who have lived so secluded a life; and I could immediately secure you some of the best society in the place. A line from me would bring you a little host of acquaintance; and my particular friend, Mrs. Partridge, the lady I have always resided with when in Bath, would be most happy to shew you any attentions, and would be the very person for you to go into public with."

It was as much as Emma could bear, without being impolite. The idea of her being indebted to Mrs. Elton for what was called an introduction—of her going into public under the auspices of a friend of Mrs. Elton's—probably some vulgar, dashing widow, who, with the help of a boarder, just made a shift to live!—The dignity of Miss Woodhouse, of Hartfield, was sunk indeed!

She restrained herself, however, from any of the reproofs she could have given, and only thanked Mrs. Elton coolly; "but their going to Bath was quite out of the question; and she was not perfectly convinced that the place might suit her better than her father." And then, to prevent farther outrage and indignation, changed the subject directly.

"I do not ask whether you are musical, Mrs. Elton. Upon these occasions, a lady's character generally precedes her; and Highbury has long known that you are a superior performer."

"Oh! no, indeed; I must protest against any such idea. A superior performer!—very far from it, I assure you. Consider from how partial a quarter your information came. I am doatingly fond of music—passionately fond;—and my friends say I am not entirely devoid of taste; but as to any thing else, upon my honour my performance is mediocre to the last degree. You, Miss Woodhouse, I well know, play delightfully. I assure you it has been the greatest satisfaction, comfort, and delight to me, to hear what a musical society I am got into. I absolutely cannot do without music. It is a necessary of life to me; and having always been used to a very musical society, both at Maple Grove and in Bath, it would have been a most serious sacrifice. I honestly said as much to Mr. E. when he was speaking of my future home, and expressing his fears lest the retirement of it should be disagreeable; and the inferiority of the house too—knowing what I had been accustomed to—of course he was not wholly without apprehension. When he was speaking of it in that way, I honestly said that the world I could give up—parties, balls, plays—for I had no fear of retirement. Blessed with so many resources within myself, the world was not necessary to me. I could do very well without it. To those who had no resources it was a different thing; but my resources made me quite independent. And as to smaller-sized rooms than I had been used to, I really could not give it a thought. I hoped I was perfectly equal to any sacrifice of that description. Certainly I had been accustomed to every luxury at Maple Grove; but I did assure him that two carriages were not necessary to my happiness, nor were spacious apartments. 'But,' said I, 'to be quite honest, I do not think I can live without something of a musical society. I condition for nothing else; but without music, life would be a blank to me.'"

"We cannot suppose," said Emma, smiling, "that Mr. Elton would hesitate to assure you of there being a very musical society in Highbury; and I hope you will not find he has outstepped the truth more than may be pardoned, in consideration of the motive."

"No, indeed, I have no doubts at all on that head. I am delighted to find myself in such a circle. I hope we shall have many sweet little concerts together. I think, Miss Woodhouse, you and I must establish a musical club, and have regular weekly meetings at your house, or ours. Will not it be a
good plan? If we exert ourselves, I think we shall not be long in want of allies. Something of that nature would be particularly desirable for me, as an inducement to keep me in practice; for married women, you know—there is a sad story against them, in general. They are but too apt to give up music.”

“But you, who are so extremely fond of it—there can be no danger, surely?”

“I should hope not; but really when I look around among my acquaintance, I tremble. Selina has entirely given up music—never touches the instrument—though she played sweetly. And the same may be said of Mrs. Jeffereys—Clara Partridge, that was—and of the two Milmans, now Mrs. Bird and Mrs. James Cooper; and of more than I can enumerate. Upon my word it is enough to put one in a fright. I used to be quite angry with Selina; but really I begin now to comprehend that a married woman has many things to call her attention. I believe I was half an hour this morning shut up with my housekeeper.”

“But every thing of that kind,” said Emma, “will soon be in so regular a train—”

“Well,” said Mrs. Elton, laughing, “we shall see.”

Emma, finding her so determined upon neglecting her music, had nothing more to say; and, after a moment’s pause, Mrs. Elton chose another subject.

“We have been calling at Randalls,” said she, “and found them both at home; and very pleasant people they seem to be. I like them extremely. Mr. Weston seems an excellent creature—quite a first-rate favourite with me already, I assure you. And she appears so truly good—there is something so motherly and kind-hearted about her, that it wins upon one directly. She was your governess, I think?”

Emma was almost too much astonished to answer; but Mrs. Elton hardly waited for the affirmative before she went on.

“Having understood as much, I was rather astonished to find her so very lady-like! But she is really quite the gentlewoman.”

“Mrs. Weston’s manners,” said Emma, “were always particularly good. Their propriety, simplicity, and elegance, would make them the safest model for any young woman.”

“And who do you think came in while we were there?”

Emma was quite at a loss. The tone implied some old acquaintance—and how could she possibly guess?

“Knightley!” continued Mrs. Elton; “Knightley himself!—Was not it lucky?—for, not being within when he called the other day, I had never seen him before; and of course, as so particular a friend of Mr. E.’s, I had a great curiosity. ‘My friend Knightley’ had been so often mentioned, that I was really impatient to see him; and I must do my caro sposo the justice to say that he need not be ashamed of his friend. Knightley is quite the gentleman. I like him very much. Decidedly, I think, a very gentleman-like man.”
Happily, it was now time to be gone. They were off; and Emma could breathe.

“Insufferable woman!” was her immediate exclamation. “Worse than I had supposed. Absolutely insufferable! Knightley!—I could not have believed it. Knightley!—never seen him in her life before, and call him Knightley!—and discover that he is a gentleman! A little upstart, vulgar being, with her Mr. E., and her caro sposo, and her resources, and all her airs of pert pretension and underbred finery. Actually to discover that Mr. Knightley is a gentleman! I doubt whether he will return the compliment, and discover her to be a lady. I could not have believed it! And to propose that she and I should unite to form a musical club! One would fancy we were bosom friends! And Mrs. Weston!—Astonished that the person who had brought me up should be a gentlewoman! Worse and worse. I never met with her equal. Much beyond my hopes. Harriet is disgraced by any comparison. Oh! what would Frank Churchill say to her, if he were here? How angry and how diverted he would be! Ah! there I am—thinking of him directly. Always the first person to be thought of! How I catch myself out! Frank Churchill comes as regularly into my mind!”

All this ran so glibly through her thoughts, that by the time her father had arranged himself, after the bustle of the Eltons’ departure, and was ready to speak, she was very tolerably capable of attending.

“Well, my dear,” he deliberately began, “considering we never saw her before, she seems a very pretty sort of young lady; and I dare say she was very much pleased with you. She speaks a little too quick. A little quickness of voice there is which rather hurts the ear. But I believe I am nice; I do not like strange voices; and nobody speaks like you and poor Miss Taylor. However, she seems a very obliging, pretty-behaved young lady, and no doubt will make him a very good wife. Though I think he had better not have married. I made the best excuses I could for not having been able to wait on him and Mrs. Elton on this happy occasion; I said that I hoped I should in the course of the summer. But I ought to have gone before. Not to wait upon a bride is very remiss. Ah! it shews what a sad invalid I am! But I do not like the corner into Vicarage Lane.”

“I dare say your apologies were accepted, sir. Mr. Elton knows you.”

“Yes: but a young lady—a bride—I ought to have paid my respects to her if possible. It was being very deficient.”

“But, my dear papa, you are no friend to matrimony; and therefore why should you be so anxious to pay your respects to a bride? It ought to be no recommendation to you. It is encouraging people to marry if you make so much of them.”

“No, my dear, I never encouraged any body to marry, but I would always wish to pay every proper attention to a lady—and a bride, especially, is never to be neglected. More is avowedly due to her. A bride, you know, my dear, is always the first in company, let the others be who they may.”

“Well, papa, if this is not encouragement to marry, I do not know what is. And I should never have expected you to be lending your sanction to such vanity-baits for poor young ladies.”

“My dear, you do not understand me. This is a matter of mere common politeness and good-breeding, and has nothing to do with any encouragement to people to marry.”
Emma had done. Her father was growing nervous, and could not understand her. Her mind returned to Mrs. Elton’s offences, and long, very long, did they occupy her.

CHAPTER XV

Emma was not required, by any subsequent discovery, to retract her ill opinion of Mrs. Elton. Her observation had been pretty correct. Such as Mrs. Elton appeared to her on this second interview, such she appeared whenever they met again,—self-important, presuming, familiar, ignorant, and ill-bred. She had a little beauty and a little accomplishment, but so little judgment that she thought herself coming with superior knowledge of the world, to enliven and improve a country neighbourhood; and conceived Miss Hawkins to have held such a place in society as Mrs. Elton’s consequence only could surpass.

There was no reason to suppose Mr. Elton thought at all differently from his wife. He seemed not merely happy with her, but proud. He had the air of congratulating himself on having brought such a woman to Highbury, as not even Miss Woodhouse could equal; and the greater part of her new acquaintance, disposed to commend, or not in the habit of judging, following the lead of Miss Bates’s good-will, or taking it for granted that the bride must be as clever and as agreeable as she professed herself, were very well satisfied; so that Mrs. Elton’s praise passed from one mouth to another as it ought to do, unimpeded by Miss Woodhouse, who readily continued her first contribution and talked with a good grace of her being “very pleasant and very elegantly dressed.”

In one respect Mrs. Elton grew even worse than she had appeared at first. Her feelings altered towards Emma.—Offended, probably, by the little encouragement which her proposals of intimacy met with, she drew back in her turn and gradually became much more cold and distant; and though the effect was agreeable, the ill-will which produced it was necessarily increasing Emma’s dislike. Her manners, too—and Mr. Elton’s, were unpleasant towards Harriet. They were sneering and negligent. Emma hoped it must rapidly work Harriet’s cure; but the sensations which could prompt such behaviour sunk them both very much.—It was not to be doubted that poor Harriet’s attachment had been an offering to conjugal unreserve, and her own share in the story, under a colouring the least favourable to her and the most soothing to him, had in all likelihood been given also. She was, of course, the object of their joint dislike.—When they had nothing else to say, it must be always easy to begin abusing Miss Woodhouse; and the enmity which they dared not shew in open disrespect to her, found a broader vent in contemptuous treatment of Harriet.

Mrs. Elton took a great fancy to Jane Fairfax; and from the first. Not merely when a state of warfare with one young lady might be supposed to recommend the other, but from the very first; and she was not satisfied with expressing a natural and reasonable admiration—but without solicitation, or plea, or privilege, she must be wanting to assist and befriend her.—Before Emma had forfeited her confidence, and about the third time of their meeting, she heard all Mrs. Elton’s knight-errantry on the subject.—

“Jane Fairfax is absolutely charming, Miss Woodhouse.—I quite rave about Jane Fairfax.—A sweet, interesting creature. So mild and ladylike—and with such talents!—I assure you I think she has very extraordinary talents. I do not scruple to say that she plays extremely well. I know enough of
music to speak decidedly on that point. Oh! she is absolutely charming! You will laugh at my warmth—but, upon my word, I talk of nothing but Jane Fairfax.—And her situation is so calculated to affect one!—Miss Woodhouse, we must exert ourselves and endeavour to do something for her. We must bring her forward. Such talent as hers must not be suffered to remain unknown.—I dare say you have heard those charming lines of the poet,

'Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, And waste its fragrance on the desert air.'

We must not allow them to be verified in sweet Jane Fairfax.”

“I cannot think there is any danger of it,” was Emma’s calm answer—“and when you are better acquainted with Miss Fairfax’s situation and understand what her home has been, with Colonel and Mrs. Campbell, I have no idea that you will suppose her talents can be unknown.”

“Oh! but dear Miss Woodhouse, she is now in such retirement, such obscurity, so thrown away.—Whatever advantages she may have enjoyed with the Campbells are so palpably at an end! And I think she feels it. I am sure she does. She is very timid and silent. One can see that she feels the want of encouragement. I like her the better for it. I must confess it is a recommendation to me. I am a great advocate for timidity—and I am sure one does not often meet with it.—But in those who are at all inferior, it is extremely prepossessing. Oh! I assure you, Jane Fairfax is a very delightful character, and interests me more than I can express.”

“You appear to feel a great deal—but I am not aware how you or any of Miss Fairfax’s acquaintance here, any of those who have known her longer than yourself, can shew her any other attention than”—

“My dear Miss Woodhouse, a vast deal may be done by those who dare to act. You and I need not be afraid. If we set the example, many will follow it as far as they can; though all have not our situations. We have carriages to fetch and convey her home, and we live in a style which could not make the addition of Jane Fairfax, at any time, the least inconvenient.—I should be extremely displeased if Wright were to send us up such a dinner, as could make me regret having asked more than Jane Fairfax to partake of it. I have no idea of that sort of thing. It is not likely that I should, considering what I have been used to. My greatest danger, perhaps, in housekeeping, may be quite the other way, in doing too much, and being too careless of expense. Maple Grove will probably be my model more than it ought to be—for we do not at all affect to equal my brother, Mr. Suckling, in income.—However, my resolution is taken as to noticing Jane Fairfax.—I shall certainly have her very often at my house, shall introduce her wherever I can, shall have musical parties to draw out her talents, and shall be constantly on the watch for an eligible situation. My acquaintance is so very extensive, that I have little doubt of hearing of something to suit her shortly.—I shall introduce her, of course, very particularly to my brother and sister when they come to us. I am sure they will like her extremely; and when she gets a little acquainted with them, her fears will completely wear off, for there really is nothing in the manners of either but what is highly conciliating.—I shall have her very often indeed while they are with me, and I dare say we shall sometimes find a seat for her in the barouche-landau in some of our exploring parties.”

“Poor Jane Fairfax!”—thought Emma.—“You have not deserved this. You may have done wrong with regard to Mr. Dixon, but this is a punishment beyond what you can have merited!—The kindness and protection of Mrs. Elton!—’Jane Fairfax and Jane Fairfax.' Heavens! Let me not
suppose that she dares go about, Emma Woodhouse-ing me!—But upon my honour, there seems no limits to the licentiousness of that woman's tongue!"

Emma had not to listen to such paradings again—to any so exclusively addressed to herself—so disgustingly decorated with a “dear Miss Woodhouse.” The change on Mrs. Elton’s side soon afterwards appeared, and she was left in peace—neither forced to be the very particular friend of Mrs. Elton, nor, under Mrs. Elton's guidance, the very active patroness of Jane Fairfax, and only sharing with others in a general way, in knowing what was felt, what was meditated, what was done.

She looked on with some amusement.—Miss Bates's gratitude for Mrs. Elton's attentions to Jane was in the first style of guileless simplicity and warmth. She was quite one of her worthies—the most amiable, affable, delightful woman—just as accomplished and condescending as Mrs. Elton meant to be considered. Emma's only surprize was that Jane Fairfax should accept those attentions and tolerate Mrs. Elton as she seemed to do. She heard of her walking with the Eltons, sitting with the Eltons, spending a day with the Eltons! This was astonishing!—She could not have believed it possible that the taste or the pride of Miss Fairfax could endure such society and friendship as the Vicarage had to offer.

“She is a riddle, quite a riddle!” said she.—“To chuse to remain here month after month, under privations of every sort! And now to chuse the mortification of Mrs. Elton’s notice and the penury of her conversation, rather than return to the superior companions who have always loved her with such real, generous affection.”

Jane had come to Highbury professedly for three months; the Campbells were gone to Ireland for three months; but now the Campbells had promised their daughter to stay at least till Midsummer, and fresh invitations had arrived for her to join them there. According to Miss Bates—it all came from her—Mrs. Dixon had written most pressingly. Would Jane but go, means were to be found, servants sent, friends contrived—no travelling difficulty allowed to exist; but still she had declined it!

“She must have some motive, more powerful than appears, for refusing this invitation,” was Emma's conclusion. “She must be under some sort of penance, inflicted either by the Campbells or herself. There is great fear, great caution, great resolution somewhere.—She is not to be with the Dixons. The decree is issued by somebody. But why must she consent to be with the Eltons?—Here is quite a separate puzzle.”

Upon her speaking her wonder aloud on that part of the subject, before the few who knew her opinion of Mrs. Elton, Mrs. Weston ventured this apology for Jane.

“We cannot suppose that she has any great enjoyment at the Vicarage, my dear Emma—but it is better than being always at home. Her aunt is a good creature, but, as a constant companion, must be very tiresome. We must consider what Miss Fairfax quits, before we condemn her taste for what she goes to.”

“You are right, Mrs. Weston,” said Mr. Knightley warmly, “Miss Fairfax is as capable as any of us of forming a just opinion of Mrs. Elton. Could she have chosen with whom to associate, she would not have chosen her. But (with a reproachful smile at Emma) she receives attentions from Mrs. Elton, which nobody else pays her.”
Emma felt that Mrs. Weston was giving her a momentary glance; and she was herself struck by his warmth. With a faint blush, she presently replied,

“Such attentions as Mrs. Elton’s, I should have imagined, would rather disgust than gratify Miss Fairfax. Mrs. Elton’s invitations I should have imagined any thing but inviting.”

“I should not wonder,” said Mrs. Weston, “if Miss Fairfax were to have been drawn on beyond her own inclination, by her aunt’s eagerness in accepting Mrs. Elton’s civilities for her. Poor Miss Bates may very likely have committed her niece and hurried her into a greater appearance of intimacy than her own good sense would have dictated, in spite of the very natural wish of a little change.”

Both felt rather anxious to hear him speak again; and after a few minutes silence, he said,

“Another thing must be taken into consideration too—Mrs. Elton does not talk to Miss Fairfax as she speaks of her. We all know the difference between the pronouns he or she and thou, the plainest spoken amongst us; we all feel the influence of a something beyond common civility in our personal intercourse with each other—a something more early implanted. We cannot give any body the disagreeable hints that we may have been very full of the hour before. We feel things differently. And besides the operation of this, as a general principle, you may be sure that Miss Fairfax awes Mrs. Elton by her superiority both of mind and manner; and that, face to face, Mrs. Elton treats her with all the respect which she has a claim to. Such a woman as Jane Fairfax probably never fell in Mrs. Elton’s way before—and no degree of vanity can prevent her acknowledging her own comparative littleness in action, if not in consciousness.”

“I know how highly you think of Jane Fairfax,” said Emma. Little Henry was in her thoughts, and a mixture of alarm and delicacy made her irresolute what else to say.

“Yes,” he replied, “any body may know how highly I think of her.”

“And yet,” said Emma, beginning hastily and with an arch look, but soon stopping—it was better, however, to know the worst at once—she hurried on—“And yet, perhaps, you may hardly be aware yourself how highly it is. The extent of your admiration may take you by surprize some day or other.”

Mr. Knightley was hard at work upon the lower buttons of his thick leather gaiters, and either the exertion of getting them together, or some other cause, brought the colour into his face, as he answered,

“Oh! are you there?—But you are miserably behindhand. Mr. Cole gave me a hint of it six weeks ago.”

He stopped.—Emma felt her foot pressed by Mrs. Weston, and did not herself know what to think. In a moment he went on—

“That will never be, however, I can assure you. Miss Fairfax, I dare say, would not have me if I were to ask her—and I am very sure I shall never ask her.”

Emma returned her friend’s pressure with interest; and was pleased enough to exclaim,
“You are not vain, Mr. Knightley. I will say that for you.”

He seemed hardly to hear her; he was thoughtful—and in a manner which shewed him not pleased, soon afterwards said,

“So you have been settling that I should marry Jane Fairfax?”

“No indeed I have not. You have scolded me too much for match-making, for me to presume to take such a liberty with you. What I said just now, meant nothing. One says those sort of things, of course, without any idea of a serious meaning. Oh! no, upon my word I have not the smallest wish for your marrying Jane Fairfax or Jane any body. You would not come in and sit with us in this comfortable way, if you were married.”

Mr. Knightley was thoughtful again. The result of his reverie was, “No, Emma, I do not think the extent of my admiration for her will ever take me by surprize.—I never had a thought of her in that way, I assure you.” And soon afterwards, “Jane Fairfax is a very charming young woman—but not even Jane Fairfax is perfect. She has a fault. She has not the open temper which a man would wish for in a wife.”

Emma could not but rejoice to hear that she had a fault. “Well,” said she, “and you soon silenced Mr. Cole, I suppose?”

“Yes, very soon. He gave me a quiet hint; I told him he was mistaken; he asked my pardon and said no more. Cole does not want to be wiser or wittier than his neighbours.”

“In that respect how unlike dear Mrs. Elton, who wants to be wiser and wittier than all the world! I wonder how she speaks of the Coles—what she calls them! How can she find any appellation for them, deep enough in familiar vulgarity? She calls you, Knightley—what can she do for Mr. Cole? And so I am not to be surprized that Jane Fairfax accepts her civilities and consents to be with her. Mrs. Weston, your argument weighs most with me. I can much more readily enter into the temptation of getting away from Miss Bates, than I can believe in the triumph of Miss Fairfax’s mind over Mrs. Elton. I have no faith in Mrs. Elton’s acknowledging herself the inferior in thought, word, or deed; or in her being under any restraint beyond her own scanty rule of good-breeding. I cannot imagine that she will not be continually insulting her visitor with praise, encouragement, and offers of service; that she will not be continually detailing her magnificent intentions, from the procuring her a permanent situation to the including her in those delightful exploring parties which are to take place in the barouche-landau.”

“Jane Fairfax has feeling,” said Mr. Knightley—“I do not accuse her of want of feeling. Her sensibilities, I suspect, are strong—and her temper excellent in its power of forbearance, patience, self-control; but it wants openness. She is reserved, more reserved, I think, than she used to be—And I love an open temper. No—till Cole alluded to my supposed attachment, it had never entered my head. I saw Jane Fairfax and conversed with her, with admiration and pleasure always—but with no thought beyond.”

“Well, Mrs. Weston,” said Emma triumphantly when he left them, “what do you say now to Mr. Knightley’s marrying Jane Fairfax?”
“Why, really, dear Emma, I say that he is so very much occupied by the idea of not being in love with her, that I should not wonder if it were to end in his being so at last. Do not beat me.”

CHAPTER XVI

Every body in and about Highbury who had ever visited Mr. Elton, was disposed to pay him attention on his marriage. Dinner-parties and evening-parties were made for him and his lady; and invitations flowed in so fast that she had soon the pleasure of apprehending they were never to have a disengaged day.

“I see how it is,” said she. “I see what a life I am to lead among you. Upon my word we shall be absolutely dissipated. We really seem quite the fashion. If this is living in the country, it is nothing very formidable. From Monday next to Saturday, I assure you we have not a disengaged day!—A woman with fewer resources than I have, need not have been at a loss.”

No invitation came amiss to her. Her Bath habits made evening-parties perfectly natural to her, and Maple Grove had given her a taste for dinners. She was a little shocked at the want of two drawing rooms, at the poor attempt at rout-cakes, and there being no ice in the Highbury card-parties. Mrs. Bates, Mrs. Perry, Mrs. Goddard and others, were a good deal behind-hand in knowledge of the world, but she would soon shew them how every thing ought to be arranged. In the course of the spring she must return their civilities by one very superior party—in which her card-tables should be set out with their separate candles and unbroken packs in the true style—and more waiters engaged for the evening than their own establishment could furnish, to carry round the refreshments at exactly the proper hour, and in the proper order.

Emma, in the meanwhile, could not be satisfied without a dinner at Hartfield for the Eltons. They must not do less than others, or she should be exposed to odious suspicions, and imagined capable of pitiful resentment. A dinner there must be. After Emma had talked about it for ten minutes, Mr. Woodhouse felt no unwillingness, and only made the usual stipulation of not sitting at the bottom of the table himself, with the usual regular difficulty of deciding who should do it for him.

The persons to be invited, required little thought. Besides the Eltons, it must be the Westons and Mr. Knightley; so far it was all of course—and it was hardly less inevitable that poor little Harriet must be asked to make the eighth:—but this invitation was not given with equal satisfaction, and on many accounts Emma was particularly pleased by Harriet’s begging to be allowed to decline it. “She would rather not be in his company more than she could help. She was not yet quite able to see him and his charming happy wife together, without feeling uncomfortable. If Miss Woodhouse would not be displeased, she would rather stay at home.” It was precisely what Emma would have wished, had she deemed it possible enough for wishing. She was delighted with the fortitude of her little friend—for fortitude she knew it was in her to give up being in company and stay at home; and she could now invite the very person whom she really wanted to make the eighth, Jane Fairfax.—Since her last conversation with Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley, she was more conscience-stricken about Jane Fairfax than she had often been.—Mr. Knightley’s words dwelt with her. He had said that Jane Fairfax received attentions from Mrs. Elton which nobody else paid her.
“This is very true,” said she, “at least as far as relates to me, which was all that was meant—and it is very shameful.—Of the same age—and always knowing her—I ought to have been more her friend.—She will never like me now. I have neglected her too long. But I will shew her greater attention than I have done.”

Every invitation was successful. They were all disengaged and all happy.—The preparatory interest of this dinner, however, was not yet over. A circumstance rather unlucky occurred. The two eldest little Knightleys were engaged to pay their grandpapa and aunt a visit of some weeks in the spring, and their papa now proposed bringing them, and staying one whole day at Hartfield—which one day would be the very day of this party.—His professional engagements did not allow of his being put off, but both father and daughter were disturbed by its happening so. Mr. Woodhouse considered eight persons at dinner together as the utmost that his nerves could bear—and here would be a ninth—and Emma apprehended that it would be a ninth very much out of humour at not being able to come even to Hartfield for forty-eight hours without falling in with a dinner-party.

She comforted her father better than she could comfort herself, by representing that though he certainly would make them nine, yet he always said so little, that the increase of noise would be very immaterial. She thought it in reality a sad exchange for herself, to have him with his grave looks and reluctant conversation opposed to her instead of his brother.

The event was more favourable to Mr. Woodhouse than to Emma. John Knightley came; but Mr. Weston was unexpectedly summoned to town and must be absent on the very day. He might be able to join them in the evening, but certainly not to dinner. Mr. Woodhouse was quite at ease; and the seeing him so, with the arrival of the little boys and the philosophic composure of her brother on hearing his fate, removed the chief of even Emma’s vexation.

The day came, the party were punctually assembled, and Mr. John Knightley seemed early to devote himself to the business of being agreeable. Instead of drawing his brother off to a window while they waited for dinner, he was talking to Miss Fairfax. Mrs. Elton, as elegant as lace and pearls could make her, he looked at in silence—wanting only to observe enough for Isabella’s information—but Miss Fairfax was an old acquaintance and a quiet girl, and he could talk to her. He had met her before breakfast as he was returning from a walk with his little boys, when it had been just beginning to rain. It was natural to have some civil hopes on the subject, and he said,

“I hope you did not venture far, Miss Fairfax, this morning, or I am sure you must have been wet.—We scarcely got home in time. I hope you turned directly.”

“I went only to the post-office,” said she, “and reached home before the rain was much. It is my daily errand. I always fetch the letters when I am here. It saves trouble, and is a something to get me out. A walk before breakfast does me good.”

“Not a walk in the rain, I should imagine.”

“No, but it did not absolutely rain when I set out.”

Mr. John Knightley smiled, and replied,

“That is to say, you chose to have your walk, for you were not six yards from your own door when I had the pleasure of meeting you; and Henry and John had seen more drops than they could count
long before. The post-office has a great charm at one period of our lives. When you have lived to my age, you will begin to think letters are never worth going through the rain for.”

There was a little blush, and then this answer,

“I must not hope to be ever situated as you are, in the midst of every dearest connexion, and therefore I cannot expect that simply growing older should make me indifferent about letters.”

“Indifferent! Oh! no—I never conceived you could become indifferent. Letters are no matter of indifference; they are generally a very positive curse.”

“You are speaking of letters of business; mine are letters of friendship.”

“I have often thought them the worst of the two,” replied he coolly. “Business, you know, may bring money, but friendship hardly ever does.”

“Ah! you are not serious now. I know Mr. John Knightley too well—I am very sure he understands the value of friendship as well as any body. I can easily believe that letters are very little to you, much less than to me, but it is not your being ten years older than myself which makes the difference, it is not age, but situation. You have every body dearest to you always at hand, I, probably, never shall again; and therefore till I have outlived all my affections, a post-office, I think, must always have power to draw me out, in worse weather than to-day.”

“When I talked of your being altered by time, by the progress of years,” said John Knightley, “I meant to imply the change of situation which time usually brings. I consider one as including the other. Time will generally lessen the interest of every attachment not within the daily circle—but that is not the change I had in view for you. As an old friend, you will allow me to hope, Miss Fairfax, that ten years hence you may have as many concentrated objects as I have.”

It was kindly said, and very far from giving offence. A pleasant “thank you” seemed meant to laugh it off, but a blush, a quivering lip, a tear in the eye, shewed that it was felt beyond a laugh. Her attention was now claimed by Mr. Woodhouse, who being, according to his custom on such occasions, making the circle of his guests, and paying his particular compliments to the ladies, was ending with her—and with all his mildest urbanity, said,

“I am very sorry to hear, Miss Fairfax, of your being out this morning in the rain. Young ladies should take care of themselves.—Young ladies are delicate plants. They should take care of their health and their complexion. My dear, did you change your stockings?”

“Yes, sir, I did indeed; and I am very much obliged by your kind solicitude about me.”

“My dear Miss Fairfax, young ladies are very sure to be cared for.—I hope your good grand-mama and aunt are well. They are some of my very old friends. I wish my health allowed me to be a better neighbour. You do us a great deal of honour to-day, I am sure. My daughter and I are both highly sensible of your goodness, and have the greatest satisfaction in seeing you at Hartfield.”

The kind-hearted, polite old man might then sit down and feel that he had done his duty, and made every fair lady welcome and easy.
By this time, the walk in the rain had reached Mrs. Elton, and her remonstrances now opened upon Jane.

“My dear Jane, what is this I hear?—Going to the post-office in the rain!—This must not be, I assure you.—You sad girl, how could you do such a thing?—It is a sign I was not there to take care of you.”

Jane very patiently assured her that she had not caught any cold.

“Oh! do not tell me. You really are a very sad girl, and do not know how to take care of yourself.—To the post-office indeed! Mrs. Weston, did you ever hear the like? You and I must positively exert our authority.”

“My advice,” said Mrs. Weston kindly and persuasively, “I certainly do feel tempted to give. Miss Fairfax, you must not run such risks.—Liable as you have been to severe colds, indeed you ought to be particularly careful, especially at this time of year. The spring I always think requires more than common care. Better wait an hour or two, or even half a day for your letters, than run the risk of bringing on your cough again. Now do not you feel that you had? Yes, I am sure you are much too reasonable. You look as if you would not do such a thing again.”

“Oh! she shall not do such a thing again,” eagerly rejoined Mrs. Elton. “We will not allow her to do such a thing again;”—and nodding significantly—“there must be some arrangement made, there must indeed. I shall speak to Mr. E. The man who fetches our letters every morning (one of our men, I forget his name) shall inquire for yours too and bring them to you. That will obviate all difficulties you know; and from us I really think, my dear Jane, you can have no scruple to accept such an accommodation.”

“You are extremely kind,” said Jane; “but I cannot give up my early walk. I am advised to be out of doors as much as I can, I must walk somewhere, and the post-office is an object; and upon my word, I have scarcely ever had a bad morning before.”

“My dear Jane, say no more about it. The thing is determined, that is (laughing affectedly) as far as I can presume to determine any thing without the concurrence of my lord and master. You know, Mrs. Weston, you and I must be cautious how we express ourselves. But I do flatter myself, my dear Jane, that my influence is not entirely worn out. If I meet with no insuperable difficulties therefore, consider that point as settled.”

“Excuse me,” said Jane earnestly, “I cannot by any means consent to such an arrangement, so needlessly troublesome to your servant. If the errand were not a pleasure to me, it could be done, as it always is when I am not here, by my grandmama’s.”

“Oh! my dear; but so much as Patty has to do!—And it is a kindness to employ our men.”

Jane looked as if she did not mean to be conquered; but instead of answering, she began speaking again to Mr. John Knightley.

“The post-office is a wonderful establishment!” said she.—“The regularity and despatch of it! If one thinks of all that it has to do, and all that it does so well, it is really astonishing!”

“It is certainly very well regulated.”
“So seldom that any negligence or blunder appears! So seldom that a letter, among the thousands that are constantly passing about the kingdom, is even carried wrong—and not one in a million, I suppose, actually lost! And when one considers the variety of hands, and of bad hands too, that are to be deciphered, it increases the wonder.”

“The clerks grow expert from habit.—They must begin with some quickness of sight and hand, and exercise improves them. If you want any farther explanation,” continued he, smiling, “they are paid for it. That is the key to a great deal of capacity. The public pays and must be served well.”

The varieties of handwriting were farther talked of, and the usual observations made.

“I have heard it asserted,” said John Knightley, “that the same sort of handwriting often prevails in a family; and where the same master teaches, it is natural enough. But for that reason, I should imagine the likeness must be chiefly confined to the females, for boys have very little teaching after an early age, and scramble into any hand they can get. Isabella and Emma, I think, do write very much alike. I have not always known their writing apart.”

“Yes,” said his brother hesitantly, “there is a likeness. I know what you mean—but Emma’s hand is the strongest.”

“Isabella and Emma both write beautifully,” said Mr. Woodhouse; “and always did. And so does poor Mrs. Weston”—with half a sigh and half a smile at her.

“I never saw any gentleman’s handwriting”—Emma began, looking also at Mrs. Weston; but stopped, on perceiving that Mrs. Weston was attending to some one else—and the pause gave her time to reflect, “Now, how am I going to introduce him?—Am I unequal to speaking his name at once before all these people? Is it necessary for me to use any roundabout phrase?—Your Yorkshire friend—your correspondent in Yorkshire;—that would be the way, I suppose, if I were very bad.—No, I can pronounce his name without the smallest distress. I certainly get better and better.—Now for it.”

Mrs. Weston was disengaged and Emma began again—“Mr. Frank Churchill writes one of the best gentleman’s hands I ever saw.”

“I do not admire it,” said Mr. Knightley. “It is too small—wants strength. It is like a woman’s writing.”

This was not submitted to by either lady. They vindicated him against the base aspersion. “No, it by no means wanted strength—it was not a large hand, but very clear and certainly strong. Had not Mrs. Weston any letter about her to produce?” No, she had heard from him very lately, but having answered the letter, had put it away.

“If we were in the other room,” said Emma, “if I had my writing-desk, I am sure I could produce a specimen. I have a note of his.—Do not you remember, Mrs. Weston, employing him to write for you one day?”

“He chose to say he was employed”—

“Well, well, I have that note; and can shew it after dinner to convince Mr. Knightley.”
“Oh! when a gallant young man, like Mr. Frank Churchill,” said Mr. Knightley dryly, "writes to a fair lady like Miss Woodhouse, he will, of course, put forth his best.”

Dinner was on table.—Mrs. Elton, before she could be spoken to, was ready; and before Mr. Woodhouse had reached her with his request to be allowed to hand her into the dining-parlour, was saying—

"Must I go first? I really am ashamed of always leading the way."

Jane’s solicitude about fetching her own letters had not escaped Emma. She had heard and seen it all; and felt some curiosity to know whether the wet walk of this morning had produced any. She suspected that it had; that it would not have been so resolutely encountered but in full expectation of hearing from some one very dear, and that it had not been in vain. She thought there was an air of greater happiness than usual—a glow both of complexion and spirits.

She could have made an inquiry or two, as to the expedition and the expense of the Irish mails;—it was at her tongue’s end—but she abstained. She was quite determined not to utter a word that should hurt Jane Fairfax’s feelings; and they followed the other ladies out of the room, arm in arm, with an appearance of good-will highly becoming to the beauty and grace of each.

VOLUME III
CHAPTER II

No misfortune occurred, again to prevent the ball. The day approached, the day arrived; and after a morning of some anxious watching, Frank Churchill, in all the certainty of his own self, reached Randalls before dinner, and every thing was safe.

No second meeting had there yet been between him and Emma. The room at the Crown was to witness it;—but it would be better than a common meeting in a crowd. Mr. Weston had been so very earnest in his entreaties for her arriving there as soon as possible after themselves, for the purpose of taking her opinion as to the propriety and comfort of the rooms before any other persons came, that she could not refuse him, and must therefore spend some quiet interval in the young man’s company. She was to convey Harriet, and they drove to the Crown in good time, the Randalls party just sufficiently before them.

Frank Churchill seemed to have been on the watch; and though he did not say much, his eyes declared that he meant to have a delightful evening. They all walked about together, to see that every thing was as it should be; and within a few minutes were joined by the contents of another carriage, which Emma could not hear the sound of at first, without great surprize. "So unreasonably early!" she was going to exclaim; but she presently found that it was a family of old friends, who were coming, like herself, by particular desire, to help Mr. Weston’s judgment; and they were so very closely followed by another carriage of cousins, who had been entreated to come early with the same distinguishing earnestness, on the same errand, that it seemed as if half the company might soon be collected together for the purpose of preparatory inspection.

Emma perceived that her taste was not the only taste on which Mr. Weston depended, and felt, that to be the favourite and intimate of a man who had so many intimates and confidantes, was not the very first distinction in the scale of vanity. She liked his open manners, but a little less of open-heartedness would have made him a higher character.—General benevolence, but not general
friendship, made a man what he ought to be.—She could fancy such a man. The whole party walked about, and looked, and praised again; and then, having nothing else to do, formed a sort of half-circle round the fire, to observe in their various modes, till other subjects were started, that, though May, a fire in the evening was still very pleasant.

Emma found that it was not Mr. Weston’s fault that the number of privy councillors was not yet larger. They had stopped at Mrs. Bates’s door to offer the use of their carriage, but the aunt and niece were to be brought by the Eltons.

Frank was standing by her, but not steadily; there was a restlessness, which shewed a mind not at ease. He was looking about, he was going to the door, he was watching for the sound of other carriages,—impatient to begin, or afraid of being always near her.

Mrs. Elton was spoken of. “I think she must be here soon,” said he. “I have a great curiosity to see Mrs. Elton, I have heard so much of her. It cannot be long, I think, before she comes.”

A carriage was heard. He was on the move immediately; but coming back, said,

“I am forgetting that I am not acquainted with her. I have never seen either Mr. or Mrs. Elton. I have no business to put myself forward.”

Mr. and Mrs. Elton appeared; and all the smiles and the proprieties passed.

“But Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax!” said Mr. Weston, looking about. “We thought you were to bring them.”

The mistake had been slight. The carriage was sent for them now. Emma longed to know what Frank’s first opinion of Mrs. Elton might be; how he was affected by the studied elegance of her dress, and her smiles of graciousness. He was immediately qualifying himself to form an opinion, by giving her very proper attention, after the introduction had passed.

In a few minutes the carriage returned.—Somebody talked of rain.—“I will see that there are umbrellas, sir,” said Frank to his father. “Miss Bates must not be forgotten.” and away he went. Mr. Weston was following; but Mrs. Elton detained him, to gratify him by her opinion of his son; and so briskly did she begin, that the young man himself, though by no means moving slowly, could hardly be out of hearing.

“A very fine young man indeed, Mr. Weston. You know I candidly told you I should form my own opinion; and I am happy to say that I am extremely pleased with him.—You may believe me. I never compliment. I think him a very handsome young man, and his manners are precisely what I like and approve—so truly the gentleman, without the least conceit or puppyism. You must know I have a vast dislike to puppies—quite a horror of them. They were never tolerated at Maple Grove. Neither Mr. Suckling nor me had ever any patience with them; and we used sometimes to say very cutting things! Selina, who is mild almost to a fault, bore with them much better.”

While she talked of his son, Mr. Weston’s attention was chained; but when she got to Maple Grove, he could recollect that there were ladies just arriving to be attended to, and with happy smiles must hurry away.
Mrs. Elton turned to Mrs. Weston. "I have no doubt of its being our carriage with Miss Bates and Jane. Our coachman and horses are so extremely expeditious!—I believe we drive faster than any body.—What a pleasure it is to send one's carriage for a friend!—I understand you were so kind as to offer, but another time it will be quite unnecessary. You may be very sure I shall always take care of them."

Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax, escorted by the two gentlemen, walked into the room; and Mrs. Elton seemed to think it as much her duty as Mrs. Weston's to receive them. Her gestures and movements might be understood by any one who looked on like Emma; but her words, every body's words, were soon lost under the incessant flow of Miss Bates, who came in talking, and had not finished her speech under many minutes after her being admitted into the circle at the fire. As the door opened she was heard,

"So very obliging of you!—No rain at all. Nothing to signify. I do not care for myself. Quite thick shoes. And Jane declares—Well!—(as soon as she was within the door) Well! This is brilliant indeed!—This is admirable!—Excellently contrived, upon my word. Nothing wanting. Could not have imagined it.—So well lighted up!—Jane, Jane, look!—did you ever see any thing? Oh! Mr. Weston, you must really have had Aladdin's lamp. Good Mrs. Stokes would not know her own room again. I saw her as I came in; she was standing in the entrance. 'Oh! Mrs. Stokes,' said I—but I had not time for more." She was now met by Mrs. Weston.—"Very well, I thank you, ma'am. I hope you are quite well. Very happy to hear it. So afraid you might have a headache!—seeing you pass by so often, and knowing how much trouble you must have. Delighted to hear it indeed. Ah! dear Mrs. Elton, so obliged to you for the carriage!—excellent time. Jane and I quite ready. Did not keep the horses a moment. Most comfortable carriage.—Oh! and I am sure our thanks are due to you, Mrs. Weston, on that score. Mrs. Elton had most kindly sent Jane a note, or we should have been.—But two such offers in one day!—Never were such neighbours. I said to my mother, 'Upon my word, ma'am—'. Thank you, my mother is remarkably well. Gone to Mr. Woodhouse's. I made her take her shawl—for the evenings are not warm—her large new shawl—Mrs. Dixon's wedding-present.—So kind of her to think of my mother! Bought at Weymouth, you know—Mr. Dixon's choice. There were three others, Jane says, which they hesitated about some time. Colonel Campbell rather preferred an olive. My dear Jane, are you sure you did not wet your feet?—It was but a drop or two, but I am so afraid:—but Mr. Frank Churchill was so extremely—and there was a mat to step upon—I shall never forget his extreme politeness.—Oh! Mr. Frank Churchill, I must tell you my mother's spectacles have never been in fault since; the rivet never came out again. My mother often talks of your good-nature. Does not she, Jane?—Do not we often talk of Mr. Frank Churchill?—Ah! here's Miss Woodhouse.—Dear Miss Woodhouse, how do you do?—Very well I thank you, quite well. This is meeting quite in fairy-land!—Such a transformation!—Must not compliment, I know (eyeing Emma most complacently)—that would be rude—but upon my word, Miss Woodhouse, you do look—how do you like Jane's hair?—You are a judge.—She did it all herself. Quite wonderful how she does her hair!—No hairdresser from London I think could.—Ah! Dr. Hughes I declare—and Mrs. Hughes. Must go and speak to Dr. and Mrs. Hughes for a moment.—How do you do? How do you do?—Very well, I thank you. This is delightful, is not it?—Where's dear Mr. Richard?—Oh! there he is. Don't disturb him. Much better employed talking to the young ladies. How do you do, Mr. Richard?—I saw you the other day as you rode through the town—Mrs. Otway, I protest!—and good Mr. Otway, and Miss Otway and Miss Caroline.—Such a host of friends!—and Mr. George and Mr. Arthur!—How do you do? How do you all do?—Quite well, I am much obliged to you. Never better.—Don't I hear another carriage?—Who can this be?—very likely the worthy Coles.—Upon my word, this is charming to be standing about among such friends! And such a noble fire!—I am quite roasted. No coffee, I thank you, for me—never take coffee.—A little tea if you please, sir, by and bye,—no hurry—Oh! here it comes. Everything so good!"
Frank Churchill returned to his station by Emma; and as soon as Miss Bates was quiet, she found herself necessarily overhearing the discourse of Mrs. Elton and Miss Fairfax, who were standing a little way behind her.—He was thoughtful. Whether he were overhearing too, she could not determine. After a good many compliments to Jane on her dress and look, compliments very quietly and properly taken, Mrs. Elton was evidently wanting to be complimented herself—and it was, “How do you like my gown?—How do you like my trimming?—How has Wright done my hair?”—with many other relative questions, all answered with patient politeness. Mrs. Elton then said, “Nobody can think less of dress in general than I do—but upon such an occasion as this, when every body’s eyes are so much upon me, and in compliment to the Westons—who I have no doubt are giving this ball chiefly to do me honour—I would not wish to be inferior to others. And I see very few pearls in the room except mine.—So Frank Churchill is a capital dancer, I understand.—We shall see if our styles suit.—A fine young man certainly is Frank Churchill. I like him very well.”

At this moment Frank began talking so vigorously, that Emma could not but imagine he had overheard his own praises, and did not want to hear more;—and the voices of the ladies were drowned for a while, till another suspension brought Mrs. Elton’s tones again distinctly forward.—Mr. Elton had just joined them, and his wife was exclaiming, “Oh! you have found us out at last, have you, in our seclusion?—I was this moment telling Jane, I thought you would begin to be impatient for tidings of us.”

“Jane!”—repeated Frank Churchill, with a look of surprize and displeasure.—“That is easy—but Miss Fairfax does not disapprove it, I suppose.”

“How do you like Mrs. Elton?” said Emma in a whisper.

“Not at all.”

“You are ungrateful.”

“Ungrateful!—What do you mean?” Then changing from a frown to a smile—“No, do not tell me—I do not want to know what you mean.—Where is my father?—When are we to begin dancing?”

Emma could hardly understand him; he seemed in an odd humour. He walked off to find his father, but was quickly back again with both Mr. and Mrs. Weston. He had met with them in a little perplexity, which must be laid before Emma. It had just occurred to Mrs. Weston that Mrs. Elton must be asked to begin the ball; that she would expect it; which interfered with all their wishes of giving Emma that distinction.—Emma heard the sad truth with fortitude.

“And what are we to do for a proper partner for her?” said Mr. Weston. “She will think Frank ought to ask her.”

Frank turned instantly to Emma, to claim her former promise; and boasted himself an engaged man, which his father looked his most perfect approbation of—and it then appeared that Mrs. Weston was wanting him to dance with Mrs. Elton himself, and that their business was to help to persuade him into it, which was done pretty soon.—Mr. Weston and Mrs. Elton led the way, Mr. Frank Churchill and Miss Woodhouse followed. Emma must submit to stand second to Mrs. Elton, though she had always considered the ball as peculiarly for her. It was almost enough to make her think of marrying. Mrs. Elton had undoubtedly the advantage, at this time, in vanity completely gratified; for
though she had intended to begin with Frank Churchill, she could not lose by the change. Mr. Weston might be his son's superior.—In spite of this little rub, however, Emma was smiling with enjoyment, delighted to see the respectable length of the set as it was forming, and to feel that she had so many hours of unusual festivity before her.—She was more disturbed by Mr. Knightley's not dancing than by any thing else.—There he was, among the standers-by, where he ought not to be; he ought to be dancing,—not classing himself with the husbands, and fathers, and whist-players, who were pretending to feel an interest in the dance till their rubbers were made up,—so young as he looked!—He could not have appeared to greater advantage perhaps anywhere, than where he had placed himself. His tall, firm, upright figure, among the bulky forms and stooping shoulders of the elderly men, was such as Emma felt must draw every body's eyes; and, excepting her own partner, there was not one among the whole row of young men who could be compared with him.—He moved a few steps nearer, and those few steps were enough to prove in how gentlemanlike a manner, with what natural grace, he must have danced, would he but take the trouble. —Whenever she caught his eye, she forced him to smile; but in general he was looking grave. She wished he could love a ballroom better, and could like Frank Churchill better.—He seemed often observing her. She must not flatter herself that he thought of her dancing, but if he were criticising her behaviour, she did not feel afraid. There was nothing like flirtation between her and her partner. They seemed more like cheerful, easy friends, than lovers. That Frank Churchill thought less of her than he had done, was indubitable.

The ball proceeded pleasantly. The anxious cares, the incessant attentions of Mrs. Weston, were not thrown away. Every body seemed happy; and the praise of being a delightful ball, which is seldom bestowed till after a ball has ceased to be, was repeatedly given in the very beginning of the existence of this. Of very important, very recordable events, it was not more productive than such meetings usually are. There was one, however, which Emma thought something of.—The two last dances before supper were begun, and Harriet had no partner;—the only young lady sitting down;—and so equal had been hitherto the number of dancers, that how there could be any one disengaged was the wonder!—But Emma's wonder lessened soon afterwards, on seeing Mr. Elton sauntering about. He would not ask Harriet to dance if it were possible to be avoided: she was sure he would not—and she was expecting him every moment to escape into the card-room.

Escape, however, was not his plan. He came to the part of the room where the sitters-by were collected, spoke to some, and walked about in front of them, as if to shew his liberty, and his resolution of maintaining it. He did not omit being sometimes directly before Miss Smith, or speaking to those who were close to her.—Emma saw it. She was not yet dancing; she was working her way up from the bottom, and had therefore leisure to look around, and by only turning her head a little she saw it all. When she was half-way up the set, the whole group were exactly behind her, and she would no longer allow her eyes to watch; but Mr. Elton was so near, that she heard every syllable of a dialogue which just then took place between him and Mrs. Weston; and she perceived that his wife, who was standing immediately above her, was not only listening also, but even encouraging him by significant glances.—The kind-hearted, gentle Mrs. Weston had left her seat to join him and say, "Do not you dance, Mr. Elton?" to which his prompt reply was, "Most readily, Mrs. Weston, if you will dance with me."

"Me!—oh! no—I would get you a better partner than myself. I am no dancer."

"If Mrs. Gilbert wishes to dance," said he, "I shall have great pleasure, I am sure—for, though beginning to feel myself rather an old married man, and that my dancing days are over, it would give me very great pleasure at any time to stand up with an old friend like Mrs. Gilbert."

“Mrs. Gilbert does not mean to dance, but there is a young lady disengaged whom I should be very glad to see dancing—Miss Smith.” “Miss Smith!—oh!—I had not observed.—You are extremely obliging—and if I were not an old married man.—But my dancing days are over, Mrs. Weston. You will excuse me. Any thing else I should be most happy to do, at your command—but my dancing days are over.”

Mrs. Weston said no more; and Emma could imagine with what surprise and mortification she must be returning to her seat. This was Mr. Elton! the amiable, obliging, gentle Mr. Elton.—She looked round for a moment; he had joined Mr. Knightley at a little distance, and was arranging himself for settled conversation, while smiles of high glee passed between him and his wife.

She would not look again. Her heart was in a glow, and she feared her face might be as hot.

In another moment a happier sight caught her;—Mr. Knightley leading Harriet to the set!—Never had she been more surprized, seldom more delighted, than at that instant. She was all pleasure and gratitude, both for Harriet and herself; and longed to be thanking him; and though too distant for speech, her countenance said much, as soon as she could catch his eye again.

His dancing proved to be just what she had believed it, extremely good; and Harriet would have seemed almost too lucky, if it had not been for the cruel state of things before, and for the very complete enjoyment and very high sense of the distinction which her happy features announced. It was not thrown away on her, she bounded higher than ever, flew farther down the middle, and was in a continual course of smiles.

Mr. Elton had retreated into the card-room, looking (Emma trusted) very foolish. She did not think he was quite so hardened as his wife, though growing very like her;—she spoke some of her feelings, by observing audibly to her partner,

“Knightley has taken pity on poor little Miss Smith!—Very good-natured, I declare.”

Supper was announced. The move began; and Miss Bates might be heard from that moment, without interruption, till her being seated at table and taking up her spoon.

“Jane, Jane, my dear Jane, where are you?—Here is your tippet. Mrs. Weston begs you to put on your tippet. She says she is afraid there will be draughts in the passage, though every thing has been done—One door nailed up—Quantities of matting—My dear Jane, indeed you must. Mr. Churchill, oh! you are too obliging! How well you put it on!—so gratified! Excellent dancing indeed!—Yes, my dear, I ran home, as I said I should, to help grandmama to bed, and got back again, and nobody missed me.—I set off without saying a word, just as I told you. Grandmama was quite well, had a charming evening with Mr. Woodhouse, a vast deal of chat, and backgammon.—Tea was made downstairs, biscuits and baked apples and wine before she came away: amazing luck in some of her throws: and she inquired a great deal about you, how you were amused, and who were your partners. ’Oh!’ said I, ’I shall not forestall Jane; I left her dancing with Mr. George Otway; she will love to tell you all about it herself to-morrow: her first partner was Mr. Elton, I do not know who will ask her next, perhaps Mr. William Cox.’ My dear sir, you are too obliging.—Is there nobody you would not rather?—I am not helpless. Sir, you are most kind. Upon my word, Jane on one arm, and me on the other!—Stop, stop, let us stand a little back, Mrs. Elton is going; dear Mrs. Elton, how elegant she looks!—Beautiful lace!—Now we all follow in her train. Quite the queen of the evening!—Well, here we are at the passage. Two steps, Jane, take care of the two steps. Oh! no,
there is but one. Well, I was persuaded there were two. How very odd! I was convinced there were two, and there is but one. I never saw anything equal to the comfort and style—Candles everywhere.—I was telling you of your grandmama, Jane,—There was a little disappointment.—The baked apples and biscuits, excellent in their way, you know; but there was a delicate fricassee of sweetbread and some asparagus brought in at first, and good Mr. Woodhouse, not thinking the asparagus quite boiled enough, sent it all out again. Now there is nothing grandmama loves better than sweetbread and asparagus—so she was rather disappointed, but we agreed we would not speak of it to any body, for fear of its getting round to dear Miss Woodhouse, who would be so very much concerned!—Well, this is brilliant! I am all amazement! could not have supposed anything!—Such elegance and profusion!—I have seen nothing like it since—Well, where shall we sit? where shall we sit? Anywhere, so that Jane is not in a draught. Where I sit is of no consequence. Oh! do you recommend this side?—Well, I am sure, Mr. Churchill—only it seems too good—but just as you please. What you direct in this house cannot be wrong. Dear Jane, how shall we ever recollect half the dishes for grandmama? Soup too! Bless me! I should not be helped so soon, but it smells most excellent, and I cannot help beginning.”

Emma had no opportunity of speaking to Mr. Knightley till after supper; but, when they were all in the ballroom again, her eyes invited him irresistibly to come to her and be thanked. He was warm in his reprobation of Mr. Elton's conduct; it had been unpardonable rudeness; and Mrs. Elton's looks also received the due share of censure.

“They aimed at wounding more than Harriet,” said he. “Emma, why is it that they are your enemies?”

He looked with smiling penetration; and, on receiving no answer, added, “She ought not to be angry with you, I suspect, whatever he may be.—To that surmise, you say nothing, of course; but confess, Emma, that you did want him to marry Harriet.”

“I did,” replied Emma, “and they cannot forgive me.”

He shook his head; but there was a smile of indulgence with it, and he only said,

“I shall not scold you. I leave you to your own reflections.”

“Can you trust me with such flatterers?—Does my vain spirit ever tell me I am wrong?”

“Not your vain spirit, but your serious spirit.—If one leads you wrong, I am sure the other tells you of it.”

“I do own myself to have been completely mistaken in Mr. Elton. There is a littleness about him which you discovered, and which I did not: and I was fully convinced of his being in love with Harriet. It was through a series of strange blunders!”

“And, in return for your acknowledging so much, I will do you the justice to say, that you would have chosen for him better than he has chosen for himself.—Harriet Smith has some first-rate qualities, which Mrs. Elton is totally without. An unpretending, single-minded, artless girl—infinitely to be preferred by any man of sense and taste to such a woman as Mrs. Elton. I found Harriet more conversable than I expected.”
Emma was extremely gratified.—They were interrupted by the bustle of Mr. Weston calling on every body to begin dancing again.

“Come Miss Woodhouse, Miss Otway, Miss Fairfax, what are you all doing?—Come Emma, set your companions the example. Every body is lazy! Every body is asleep!”

“I am ready,” said Emma, “whenever I am wanted.”

“Whom are you going to dance with?” asked Mr. Knightley.

She hesitated a moment, and then replied, “With you, if you will ask me.”

“Will you?” said he, offering his hand.

“Indeed I will. You have shewn that you can dance, and you know we are not really so much brother and sister as to make it at all improper.”

“Brother and sister! no, indeed.”

CHAPTER III

This little explanation with Mr. Knightley gave Emma considerable pleasure. It was one of the agreeable recollections of the ball, which she walked about the lawn the next morning to enjoy.—She was extremely glad that they had come to so good an understanding respecting the Eltons, and that their opinions of both husband and wife were so much alike; and his praise of Harriet, his concession in her favour, was peculiarly gratifying. The impertinence of the Eltons, which for a few minutes had threatened to ruin the rest of her evening, had been the occasion of some of its highest satisfactions; and she looked forward to another happy result—the cure of Harriet’s infatuation.—From Harriet’s manner of speaking of the circumstance before they quitted the ballroom, she had strong hopes. It seemed as if her eyes were suddenly opened, and she were enabled to see that Mr. Elton was not the superior creature she had believed him. The fever was over, and Emma could harbour little fear of the pulse being quickened again by injurious courtesy. She depended on the evil feelings of the Eltons for supplying all the discipline of pointed neglect that could be farther requisite.—Harriet rational, Frank Churchill not too much in love, and Mr. Knightley not wanting to quarrel with her, how very happy a summer must be before her!

She was not to see Frank Churchill this morning. He had told her that he could not allow himself the pleasure of stopping at Hartfield, as he was to be at home by the middle of the day. She did not regret it.

Having arranged all these matters, looked them through, and put them all to rights, she was just turning to the house with spirits freshened up for the demands of the two little boys, as well as of their grandpapa, when the great iron sweep-gate opened, and two persons entered whom she had never less expected to see together—Frank Churchill, with Harriet leaning on his arm—actually Harriet!—A moment sufficed to convince her that something extraordinary had happened. Harriet
looked white and frightened, and he was trying to cheer her.—The iron gates and the front-door were not twenty yards asunder;—they were all three soon in the hall, and Harriet immediately sinking into a chair fainted away.

A young lady who faints, must be recovered; questions must be answered, and surprizes be explained. Such events are very interesting, but the suspense of them cannot last long. A few minutes made Emma acquainted with the whole.

Miss Smith, and Miss Bickerton, another parlour boarder at Mrs. Goddard's, who had been also at the ball, had walked out together, and taken a road, the Richmond road, which, though apparently public enough for safety, had led them into alarm.—About half a mile beyond Highbury, making a sudden turn, and deeply shaded by elms on each side, it became for a considerable stretch very retired; and when the young ladies had advanced some way into it, they had suddenly perceived at a small distance before them, on a broader patch of greensward by the side, a party of gipsies. A child on the watch, came towards them to beg; and Miss Bickerton, excessively frightened, gave a great scream, and calling on Harriet to follow her, ran up a steep bank, cleared a slight hedge at the top, and made the best of her way by a short cut back to Highbury. But poor Harriet could not follow. She had suffered very much from cramp after dancing, and her first attempt to mount the bank brought on such a return of it as made her absolutely powerless—and in this state, and exceedingly terrified, she had been obliged to remain.

How the trampers might have behaved, had the young ladies been more courageous, must be doubtful; but such an invitation for attack could not be resisted; and Harriet was soon assailed by half a dozen children, headed by a stout woman and a great boy, all clamorous, and impertinent in look, though not absolutely in word.—More and more frightened, she immediately promised them money, and taking out her purse, gave them a shilling, and begged them not to want more, or to use her ill.—She was then able to walk, though but slowly, and was moving away—but her terror and her purse were too tempting, and she was followed, or rather surrounded, by the whole gang, demanding more.

In this state Frank Churchill had found her, she trembling and conditioning, they loud and insolent. By a most fortunate chance his leaving Highbury had been delayed so as to bring him to her assistance at this critical moment. The pleasantness of the morning had induced him to walk forward, and leave his horses to meet him by another road, a mile or two beyond Highbury—and happening to have borrowed a pair of scissors the night before of Miss Bates, and to have forgotten to restore them, he had been obliged to stop at her door, and go in for a few minutes: he was therefore later than he had intended; and being on foot, was unseen by the whole party till almost close to them. The terror which the woman and boy had been creating in Harriet was then their own portion. He had left them completely frightened; and Harriet eagerly clinging to him, and hardly able to speak, had just strength enough to reach Hartfield, before her spirits were quite overcome. It was his idea to bring her to Hartfield: he had thought of no other place.

This was the amount of the whole story,—of his communication and of Harriet's as soon as she had recovered her senses and speech.—He dared not stay longer than to see her well; these several delays left him not another minute to lose; and Emma engaging to give assurance of her safety to Mrs. Goddard, and notice of there being such a set of people in the neighbourhood to Mr. Knightley, he set off, with all the grateful blessings that she could utter for her friend and herself.
Such an adventure as this,—a fine young man and a lovely young woman thrown together in such a way, could hardly fail of suggesting certain ideas to the coldest heart and the steadiest brain. So Emma thought, at least. Could a linguist, could a grammarian, could even a mathematician have seen what she did, have witnessed their appearance together, and heard their history of it, without feeling that circumstances had been at work to make them peculiarly interesting to each other?—How much more must an imaginist, like herself, be on fire with speculation and foresight!—especially with such a groundwork of anticipation as her mind had already made.

It was a very extraordinary thing! Nothing of the sort had ever occurred before to any young ladies in the place, within her memory; no rencontre, no alarm of the kind;—and now it had happened to the very person, and at the very hour, when the other very person was chancing to pass by to rescue her!—It certainly was very extraordinary!—And knowing, as she did, the favourable state of mind of each at this period, it struck her the more. He was wishing to get the better of his attachment to herself, she just recovering from her mania for Mr. Elton. It seemed as if every thing united to promise the most interesting consequences. It was not possible that the occurrence should not be strongly recommending each to the other.

In the few minutes' conversation which she had yet had with him, while Harriet had been partially insensible, he had spoken of her terror, her naivete, her fervour as she seized and clung to his arm, with a sensibility amused and delighted; and just at last, after Harriet's own account had been given, he had expressed his indignation at the abominable folly of Miss Bickerton in the warmest terms. Every thing was to take its natural course, however, neither impelled nor assisted. She would not stir a step, nor drop a hint. No, she had had enough of interference. There could be no harm in a scheme, a mere passive scheme. It was no more than a wish. Beyond it she would on no account proceed.

Emma's first resolution was to keep her father from the knowledge of what had passed,—aware of the anxiety and alarm it would occasion: but she soon felt that concealment must be impossible. Within half an hour it was known all over Highbury. It was the very event to engage those who talk most, the young and the low; and all the youth and servants in the place were soon in the happiness of frightful news. The last night's ball seemed lost in the gipsies. Poor Mr. Woodhouse trembled as he sat, and, as Emma had foreseen, would scarcely be satisfied without their promising never to go beyond the shrubbery again. It was some comfort to him that many inquiries after himself and Miss Woodhouse (for his neighbours knew that he loved to be inquired after), as well as Miss Smith, were coming in during the rest of the day; and he had the pleasure of returning for answer, that they were all very indifferent—which, though not exactly true, for she was perfectly well, and Harriet not much otherwise, Emma would not interfere with. She had an unhappy state of health in general for the child of such a man, for she hardly knew what indisposition was; and if he did not invent illnesses for her, she could make no figure in a message.

The gipsies did not wait for the operations of justice; they took themselves off in a hurry. The young ladies of Highbury might have walked again in safety before their panic began, and the whole history dwindled soon into a matter of little importance but to Emma and her nephews:—in her imagination it maintained its ground, and Henry and John were still asking every day for the story of Harriet and the gipsies, and still tenaciously setting her right if she varied in the slightest particular from the original recital.
CHAPTER IV

A very few days had passed after this adventure, when Harriet came one morning to Emma with a small parcel in her hand, and after sitting down and hesitating, thus began:

“Miss Woodhouse—if you are at leisure—I have something that I should like to tell you—a sort of confession to make—and then, you know, it will be over.”

Emma was a good deal surprized; but begged her to speak. There was a seriousness in Harriet’s manner which prepared her, quite as much as her words, for something more than ordinary.

“It is my duty, and I am sure it is my wish,” she continued, “to have no reserves with you on this subject. As I am happily quite an altered creature in one respect, it is very fit that you should have the satisfaction of knowing it. I do not want to say more than is necessary—I am too much ashamed of having given way as I have done, and I dare say you understand me.”

“Yes,” said Emma, “I hope I do.”

“How I could so long a time be fancying myself!...” cried Harriet, warmly. “It seems like madness! I can see nothing at all extraordinary in him now.—I do not care whether I meet him or not—except that of the two I had rather not see him—and indeed I would go any distance round to avoid him—but I do not envy his wife in the least; I neither admire her nor envy her, as I have done: she is very charming, I dare say, and all that, but I think her very ill-tempered and disagreeable—I shall never forget her look the other night!—However, I assure you, Miss Woodhouse, I wish her no evil.—No, let them be ever so happy together, it will not give me another moment’s pang: and to convince you that I have been speaking truth, I am now going to destroy—what I ought to have destroyed long ago—what I ought never to have kept—I know that very well (blushing as she spoke).—However, now I will destroy it all—and it is my particular wish to do it in your presence, that you may see how rational I am grown. Cannot you guess what this parcel holds?” said she, with a conscious look.

“No, indeed I do not.”

She held the parcel towards her, and Emma read the words Most precious treasures on the top. Her curiosity was greatly excited. Harriet unfolded the parcel, and she looked on with impatience. Within abundance of silver paper was a pretty little Tunbridge-ware box, which Harriet opened: it was well lined with the softest cotton; but, excepting the cotton, Emma saw only a small piece of court-plaister.

“No, indeed I do not.”
“Dear me! I should not have thought it possible you could forget what passed in this very room about court-plaister, one of the very last times we ever met in it!—It was but a very few days before I had my sore throat—just before Mr. and Mrs. John Knightley came—I think the very evening.—Do not you remember his cutting his finger with your new penknife, and your recommending court-plaister?—But, as you had none about you, and knew I had, you desired me to supply him; and so I took mine out and cut him a piece; but it was a great deal too large, and he cut it smaller, and kept playing some time with what was left, before he gave it back to me. And so then, in my nonsense, I could not help making a treasure of it—so I put it by never to be used, and looked at it now and then as a great treat.”

“My dearest Harriet!” cried Emma, putting her hand before her face, and jumping up, “you make me more ashamed of myself than I can bear. Remember it? Aye, I remember it all now; all, except your saving this relic—I knew nothing of that till this moment—but the cutting the finger, and my recommending court-plaister, and saying I had none about me!—Oh! my sins, my sins!—And I had plenty all the while in my pocket!—One of my senseless tricks!—I deserve to be under a continual blush all the rest of my life.—Well—(sitting down again)—go on—what else?”

“And had you really some at hand yourself? I am sure I never suspected it, you did it so naturally.”

“And so you actually put this piece of court-plaister by for his sake!” said Emma, recovering from her state of shame and feeling divided between wonder and amusement. And secretly she added to herself, “Lord bless me! when should I ever have thought of putting by in cotton a piece of court-plaister that Frank Churchill had been pulling about! I never was equal to this.”

“Here,” resumed Harriet, turning to her box again, “here is something still more valuable, I mean that has been more valuable, because this is what did really once belong to him, which the court-plaister never did.”

Emma was quite eager to see this superior treasure. It was the end of an old pencil,—the part without any lead.

“This was really his,” said Harriet.—“Do not you remember one morning?—no, I dare say you do not. But one morning—I forget exactly the day—but perhaps it was the Tuesday or Wednesday before that evening, he wanted to make a memorandum in his pocket-book; it was about spruce-beer. Mr. Knightley had been telling him something about brewing spruce-beer, and he wanted to put it down; but when he took out his pencil, there was so little lead that he soon cut it all away, and it would not do, so you lent him another, and this was left upon the table as good for nothing. But I kept my eye on it; and, as soon as I dared, caught it up, and never parted with it again from that moment.”

“I do remember it,” cried Emma; “I perfectly remember it.—Talking about spruce-beer.—Oh! yes—Mr. Knightley and I both saying we liked it, and Mr. Elton’s seeming resolved to learn to like it too. I perfectly remember it.—Stop; Mr. Knightley was standing just here, was not he? I have an idea he was standing just here.”

“Ah! I do not know. I cannot recollect.—It is very odd, but I cannot recollect.—Mr. Elton was sitting here, I remember, much about where I am now.”—

“Well, go on.”
“Oh! that’s all. I have nothing more to shew you, or to say—except that I am now going to throw them both behind the fire, and I wish you to see me do it.”

“My poor dear Harriet! and have you actually found happiness in treasuring up these things?”

“Yes, simpleton as I was!—but I am quite ashamed of it now, and wish I could forget as easily as I can burn them. It was very wrong of me, you know, to keep any remembrances, after he was married. I knew it was—but had not resolution enough to part with them.”

“But, Harriet, is it necessary to burn the court-plaister?—I have not a word to say for the bit of old pencil, but the court-plaister might be useful.”

“I shall be happier to burn it,” replied Harriet. “It has a disagreeable look to me. I must get rid of every thing.—There it goes, and there is an end, thank Heaven! of Mr. Elton.”

“And when,” thought Emma, “will there be a beginning of Mr. Churchill?”

She had soon afterwards reason to believe that the beginning was already made, and could not but hope that the gipsy, though she had told no fortune, might be proved to have made Harriet’s.—About a fortnight after the alarm, they came to a sufficient explanation, and quite undesignedly. Emma was not thinking of it at the moment, which made the information she received more valuable. She merely said, in the course of some trivial chat, “Well, Harriet, whenever you marry I would advise you to do so and so”—and thought no more of it, till after a minute’s silence she heard Harriet say in a very serious tone, “I shall never marry.”

Emma then looked up, and immediately saw how it was; and after a moment’s debate, as to whether it should pass unnoticed or not, replied,

“Never marry!—This is a new resolution.”

“It is one that I shall never change, however.”

After another short hesitation, “I hope it does not proceed from—I hope it is not in compliment to Mr. Elton?”

“Mr. Elton indeed!” cried Harriet indignantly.—“Oh! no”—and Emma could just catch the words, “so superior to Mr. Elton!”

She then took a longer time for consideration. Should she proceed no farther?—should she let it pass, and seem to suspect nothing?—Perhaps Harriet might think her cold or angry if she did; or perhaps if she were totally silent, it might only drive Harriet into asking her to hear too much; and against any thing like such an unreserve as had been, such an open and frequent discussion of hopes and chances, she was perfectly resolved.—She believed it would be wiser for her to say and know at once, all that she meant to say and know. Plain dealing was always best. She had previously determined how far she would proceed, on any application of the sort; and it would be safer for both, to have the judicious law of her own brain laid down with speed.—She was decided, and thus spoke—
“Harriet, I will not affect to be in doubt of your meaning. Your resolution, or rather your expectation of never marrying, results from an idea that the person whom you might prefer, would be too greatly your superior in situation to think of you. Is not it so?”

“Oh! Miss Woodhouse, believe me I have not the presumption to suppose— Indeed I am not so mad.— But it is a pleasure to me to admire him at a distance—and to think of his infinite superiority to all the rest of the world, with the gratitude, wonder, and veneration, which are so proper, in me especially.”

“I am not at all surprized at you, Harriet. The service he rendered you was enough to warm your heart.”

“Service! oh! it was such an inexpressible obligation!—The very recollection of it, and all that I felt at the time—when I saw him coming—his noble look—and my wretchedness before. Such a change! In one moment such a change! From perfect misery to perfect happiness!”

“It is very natural. It is natural, and it is honourable.—Yes, honourable, I think, to chuse so well and so gratefully.—But that it will be a fortunate preference is more than I can promise. I do not advise you to give way to it, Harriet. I do not by any means engage for its being returned. Consider what you are about. Perhaps it will be wisest in you to check your feelings while you can: at any rate do not let them carry you far, unless you are persuaded of his liking you. Be observant of him. Let his behaviour be the guide of your sensations. I give you this caution now, because I shall never speak to you again on the subject. I am determined against all interference. Henceforward I know nothing of the matter. Let no name ever pass our lips. We were very wrong before; we will be cautious now.—He is your superior, no doubt, and there do seem objections and obstacles of a very serious nature; but yet, Harriet, more wonderful things have taken place, there have been matches of greater disparity. But take care of yourself. I would not have you too sanguine; though, however it may end, be assured your raising your thoughts to him, is a mark of good taste which I shall always know how to value.”

Harriet kissed her hand in silent and submissive gratitude. Emma was very decided in thinking such an attachment no bad thing for her friend. Its tendency would be to raise and refine her mind—and it must be saving her from the danger of degradation.

CHAPTER VI

After being long fed with hopes of a speedy visit from Mr. and Mrs. Suckling, the Highbury world were obliged to endure the mortification of hearing that they could not possibly come till the autumn. No such importation of novelties could enrich their intellectual stores at present. In the daily interchange of news, they must be again restricted to the other topics with which for a while the Sucklings' coming had been united, such as the last accounts of Mrs. Churchill, whose health seemed every day to supply a different report, and the situation of Mrs. Weston, whose happiness it was to be hoped might eventually be as much increased by the arrival of a child, as that of all her neighbours was by the approach of it.

Mrs. Elton was very much disappointed. It was the delay of a great deal of pleasure and parade. Her introductions and recommendations must all wait, and every projected party be still only talked of. So she thought at first;—but a little consideration convinced her that every thing need not be put off. Why should not they explore to Box Hill though the Sucklings did not come? They could go there
again with them in the autumn. It was settled that they should go to Box Hill. That there was to be
such a party had been long generally known: it had even given the idea of another. Emma had never
been to Box Hill; she wished to see what everybody found so well worth seeing, and she and Mr.
Weston had agreed to choose some fine morning and drive thither. Two or three more of the chosen
only were to be admitted to join them, and it was to be done in a quiet, unpretending, elegant way,
infinently superior to the bustle and preparation, the regular eating and drinking, and picnic parade
of the Eltons and the Sucklings.

This was so very well understood between them, that Emma could not but feel some surprise, and a
little displeasure, on hearing from Mr. Weston that he had been proposing to Mrs. Elton, as her
brother and sister had failed her, that the two parties should unite, and go together; and that as Mrs.
Elton had very readily acceded to it, so it was to be, if she had no objection. Now, as her objection
was nothing but her very great dislike of Mrs. Elton, of which Mr. Weston must already be perfectly
aware, it was not worth bringing forward again:—it could not be done without a reproof to him,
which would be giving pain to his wife; and she found herself therefore obliged to consent to an
arrangement which she would have done a great deal to avoid; an arrangement which would
probably expose her even to the degradation of being said to be of Mrs. Elton's party! Every feeling
was offended; and the forbearance of her outward submission left a heavy arrear due of secret
severity in her reflections on the unmanageable goodwill of Mr. Weston's temper.

"I am glad you approve of what I have done," said he very comfortably. "But I thought you would.
Such schemes as these are nothing without numbers. One cannot have too large a party. A large
party secures its own amusement. And she is a good-natured woman after all. One could not leave
her out."

Emma denied none of it aloud, and agreed to none of it in private.

It was now the middle of June, and the weather fine; and Mrs. Elton was growing impatient to name
the day, and settle with Mr. Weston as to pigeon-pies and cold lamb, when a lame carriage-horse
threw everything into sad uncertainty. It might be weeks, it might be only a few days, before the
horse were useable; but no preparations could be ventured on, and it was all melancholy
stagnation. Mrs. Elton's resources were inadequate to such an attack.

"Is not this most vexatious, Knightley?" she cried.—"And such weather for exploring!—These delays
and disappointments are quite odious. What are we to do?—The year will wear away at this rate,
and nothing done. Before this time last year I assure you we had had a delightful exploring party
from Maple Grove to Kings Weston."

"You had better explore to Donwell," replied Mr. Knightley. "That may be done without horses.
Come, and eat my strawberries. They are ripening fast."

If Mr. Knightley did not begin seriously, he was obliged to proceed so, for his proposal was caught at
with delight; and the "Oh! I should like it of all things," was not plainer in words than manner.
Donwell was famous for its strawberry-beds, which seemed a plea for the invitation: but no plea
was necessary; cabbage-beds would have been enough to tempt the lady, who only wanted to be
going somewhere. She promised him again and again to come—much oftener than he doubted—
and was extremely gratified by such a proof of intimacy, such a distinguishing compliment as she
chose to consider it.
"You may depend upon me," said she. "I certainly will come. Name your day, and I will come. You will allow me to bring Jane Fairfax?"

"I cannot name a day," said he, "till I have spoken to some others whom I would wish to meet you."

"Oh! leave all that to me. Only give me a carte-blanche. —I am Lady Patroness, you know. It is my party. I will bring friends with me."

"I hope you will bring Elton," said he: "but I will not trouble you to give any other invitations."

"Oh! now you are looking very sly. But consider—you need not be afraid of delegating power to me. I am no young lady on her preferment. Married women, you know, may be safely authorised. It is my party. Leave it all to me. I will invite your guests."

"No,"—he calmly replied,—"there is but one married woman in the world whom I can ever allow to invite what guests she pleases to Donwell, and that one is—"

"—Mrs. Weston, I suppose," interrupted Mrs. Elton, rather mortified.

"No—Mrs. Knightley;—and till she is in being, I will manage such matters myself."

"Ah! you are an odd creature!" she cried, satisfied to have no one preferred to herself.—"You are a humourist, and may say what you like. Quite a humourist. Well, I shall bring Jane with me—Jane and her aunt.—The rest I leave to you. I have no objections at all to meeting the Hartfield family. Don't scruple. I know you are attached to them."

"You certainly will meet them if I can prevail; and I shall call on Miss Bates in my way home."

"That's quite unnecessary; I see Jane every day:—but as you like. It is to be a morning scheme, you know, Knightley; quite a simple thing. I shall wear a large bonnet, and bring one of my little baskets hanging on my arm. Here,—probably this basket with pink ribbon. Nothing can be more simple, you see. And Jane will have such another. There is to be no form or parade—a sort of gipsy party. We are to walk about your gardens, and gather the strawberries ourselves, and sit under trees;—and whatever else you may like to provide, it is to be all out of doors—a table spread in the shade, you know. Every thing as natural and simple as possible. Is not that your idea?"

"Not quite. My idea of the simple and the natural will be to have the table spread in the dining-room. The nature and the simplicity of gentlemen and ladies, with their servants and furniture, I think is best observed by meals within doors. When you are tired of eating strawberries in the garden, there shall be cold meat in the house."

"Well—as you please; only don't have a great set out. And, by the bye, can I or my housekeeper be of any use to you with our opinion?—Pray be sincere, Knightley. If you wish me to talk to Mrs. Hodges, or to inspect anything—"

"I have not the least wish for it, I thank you."

"Well—but if any difficulties should arise, my housekeeper is extremely clever."
“I will answer for it, that mine thinks herself full as clever, and would spurn any body’s assistance.”

“I wish we had a donkey. The thing would be for us all to come on donkeys, Jane, Miss Bates, and me—and my caro sposo walking by. I really must talk to him about purchasing a donkey. In a country life I conceive it to be a sort of necessary; for, let a woman have ever so many resources, it is not possible for her to be always shut up at home;—and very long walks, you know—in summer there is dust, and in winter there is dirt.”

“You will not find either, between Donwell and Highbury. Donwell Lane is never dusty, and now it is perfectly dry. Come on a donkey, however, if you prefer it. You can borrow Mrs. Cole’s. I would wish every thing to be as much to your taste as possible.”

“That I am sure you would. Indeed I do you justice, my good friend. Under that peculiar sort of dry, blunt manner, I know you have the warmest heart. As I tell Mr. E., you are a thorough humourist.—Yes, believe me, Knightley, I am fully sensible of your attention to me in the whole of this scheme. You have hit upon the very thing to please me.”

Mr. Knightley had another reason for avoiding a table in the shade. He wished to persuade Mr. Woodhouse, as well as Emma, to join the party; and he knew that to have any of them sitting down out of doors to eat would inevitably make him ill. Mr. Woodhouse must not, under the specious pretence of a morning drive, and an hour or two spent at Donwell, be tempted away to his misery.

He was invited on good faith. No lurking horrors were to upbraid him for his easy credulity. He did consent. He had not been at Donwell for two years. “Some very fine morning, he, and Emma, and Harriet, could go very well; and he could sit still with Mrs. Weston, while the dear girls walked about the gardens. He did not suppose they could be damp now, in the middle of the day. He should like to see the old house again exceedingly, and should be very happy to meet Mr. and Mrs. Elton, and any other of his neighbours.—He could not see any objection at all to his, and Emma’s, and Harriet’s going there some very fine morning. He thought it very well done of Mr. Knightley to invite them—very kind and sensible—much cleverer than dining out.—He was not fond of dining out.”

Mr. Knightley was fortunate in everybody’s most ready concurrence. The invitation was everywhere so well received, that it seemed as if, like Mrs. Elton, they were all taking the scheme as a particular compliment to themselves.—Emma and Harriet professed very high expectations of pleasure from it; and Mr. Weston, unasked, promised to get Frank over to join them, if possible; a proof of approbation and gratitude which could have been dispensed with.—Mr. Knightley was then obliged to say that he should be glad to see him; and Mr. Weston engaged to lose no time in writing, and spare no arguments to induce him to come.

In the meanwhile the lame horse recovered so fast, that the party to Box Hill was again under happy consideration; and at last Donwell was settled for one day, and Box Hill for the next,—the weather appearing exactly right.

Under a bright mid-day sun, at almost Midsummer, Mr. Woodhouse was safely conveyed in his carriage, with one window down, to partake of this al-fresco party; and in one of the most comfortable rooms in the Abbey, especially prepared for him by a fire all the morning, he was happily placed, quite at his ease, ready to talk with pleasure of what had been achieved, and advise everybody to come and sit down, and not to heat themselves.—Mrs. Weston, who seemed to have
walked there on purpose to be tired, and sit all the time with him, remained, when all the others were invited or persuaded out, his patient listener and sympathiser.

It was so long since Emma had been at the Abbey, that as soon as she was satisfied of her father's comfort, she was glad to leave him, and look around her; eager to refresh and correct her memory with more particular observation, more exact understanding of a house and grounds which must ever be so interesting to her and all her family.

She felt all the honest pride and complacency which her alliance with the present and future proprietor could fairly warrant, as she viewed the respectable size and style of the building, its suitable, becoming, characteristic situation, low and sheltered—its ample gardens stretching down to meadows washed by a stream, of which the Abbey, with all the old neglect of prospect, had scarcely a sight—and its abundance of timber in rows and avenues, which neither fashion nor extravagance had rooted up.—The house was larger than Hartfield, and totally unlike it, covering a good deal of ground, rambling and irregular, with many comfortable, and one or two handsome rooms.—It was just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was—and Emma felt an increasing respect for it, as the residence of a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding.—Some faults of temper John Knightley had; but Isabella had connected herself unexceptionably. She had given them neither men, nor names, nor places, that could raise a blush. These were pleasant feelings, and she walked about and indulged them till it was necessary to do as the others did, and collect round the strawberry-beds.—The whole party were assembled, excepting Frank Churchill, who was expected every moment from Richmond; and Mrs. Elton, in all her apparatus of happiness, her large bonnet and her basket, was very ready to lead the way in gathering, accepting, or talking—strawberries, and only strawberries, could now be thought or spoken of.—"The best fruit in England—every body's favourite—always wholesome.—These the finest beds and finest sorts.—Delightful to gather for one's self—the only way of really enjoying them.—Morning decidedly the best time—never tired—every sort good—hautboy infinitely superior—no comparison—the others hardly eatable—hautboys very scarce—Chili preferred—white wood finest flavour of all—price of strawberries in London—abundance about Bristol—Maple Grove—cultivation—beds when to be renewed—gardeners thinking exactly different—no general rule—gardeners never to be put out of their way—delicious fruit—only too rich to be eaten much of—inferior to cherries—currants more refreshing—only objection to gathering strawberries the stooping—glaring sun—tired to death—could bear it no longer—must go and sit in the shade."

Such, for half an hour, was the conversation—interrupted only once by Mrs. Weston, who came out, in her solicitude after her son-in-law, to inquire if he were come—and she was a little uneasy.—She had some fears of his horse.

Seats tolerably in the shade were found; and now Emma was obliged to overhear what Mrs. Elton and Jane Fairfax were talking of.—A situation, a most desirable situation, was in question. Mrs. Elton had received notice of it that morning, and was in raptures. It was not with Mrs. Suckling, it was not with Mrs. Bragge, but in felicity and splendour it fell short only of them: it was with a cousin of Mrs. Bragge, an acquaintance of Mrs. Suckling, a lady known at Maple Grove. Delightful, charming, superior, first circles, spheres, lines, ranks, every thing—and Mrs. Elton was wild to have the offer closed with immediately.—On her side, all was warmth, energy, and triumph—and she positively refused to take her friend's negative, though Miss Fairfax continued to assure her that she would not at present engage in any thing, repeating the same motives which she had been heard to urge before.—Still Mrs. Elton insisted on being authorised to write an acquiescence by the morrow's post.—How Jane could bear it at all, was astonishing to Emma.—She did look vexed, she
Women Writers – Novels - 94

did speak pointedly—and at last, with a decision of action unusual to her, proposed a removal.—
“Should not they walk? Would not Mr. Knightley shew them the gardens—all the gardens?—She
wished to see the whole extent.”—The pertinacity of her friend seemed more than she could bear.

It was hot; and after walking some time over the gardens in a scattered, dispersed way, scarcely any
three together, they insensibly followed one another to the delicious shade of a broad short avenue
of limes, which stretching beyond the garden at an equal distance from the river, seemed the finish
of the pleasure grounds.—It led to nothing; nothing but a view at the end over a low stone wall with
high pillars, which seemed intended, in their erection, to give the appearance of an approach to the
house, which never had been there. Disputable, however, as might be the taste of such a
termination, it was in itself a charming walk, and the view which closed it extremely pretty.—The
considerable slope, at nearly the foot of which the Abbey stood, gradually acquired a steeper form
beyond its grounds; and at half a mile distant was a bank of considerable abruptness and grandeur,
well clothed with wood;—and at the bottom of this bank, favourably placed and sheltered, rose the
Abbey Mill Farm, with meadows in front, and the river making a close and handsome curve around
it.

It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English
comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive.

In this walk Emma and Mr. Weston found all the others assembled; and towards this view she
immediately perceived Mr. Knightley and Harriet distinct from the rest, quietly leading the way. Mr.
Knightley and Harriet!—It was an odd tete-a-tete; but she was glad to see it.—There had been a
time when he would have scorned her as a companion, and turned from her with little ceremony.
Now they seemed in pleasant conversation. There had been a time also when Emma would have
been sorry to see Harriet in a spot so favourable for the Abbey Mill Farm; but now she feared it not.
It might be safely viewed with all its appendages of prosperity and beauty, its rich pastures,
spreading flocks, orchard in blossom, and light column of smoke ascending.—She joined them at the
wall, and found them more engaged in talking than in looking around. He was giving Harriet
information as to modes of agriculture, etc. and Emma received a smile which seemed to say,
“These are my own concerns. I have a right to talk on such subjects, without being suspected of
introducing Robert Martin.”—She did not suspect him. It was too old a story.—Robert Martin had
probably ceased to think of Harriet.—They took a few turns together along the walk.—The shade
was most refreshing, and Emma found it the pleasantest part of the day.

The next remove was to the house; they must all go in and eat;—and they were all seated and busy,
and still Frank Churchill did not come. Mrs. Weston looked, and looked in vain. His father would not
own himself uneasy, and laughed at her fears; but she could not be cured of wishing that he would
part with his black mare. He had expressed himself as to coming, with more than common certainty.
“His aunt was so much better, that he had not a doubt of getting over to them.”—Mrs. Churchill’s
state, however, as many were ready to remind her, was liable to such sudden variation as might
disappoint her nephew in the most reasonable dependence—and Mrs. Weston was at last
persuaded to believe, or to say, that it must be by some attack of Mrs. Churchill that he was
prevented coming.—Emma looked at Harriet while the point was under consideration; she behaved
very well, and betrayed no emotion.

The cold repast was over, and the party were to go out once more to see what had not yet been
seen, the old Abbey fish-ponds; perhaps get as far as the clover, which was to be begun cutting on
the morrow, or, at any rate, have the pleasure of being hot, and growing cool again.—Mr.
Woodhouse, who had already taken his little round in the highest part of the gardens, where no damps from the river were imagined even by him, stirred no more; and his daughter resolved to remain with him, that Mrs. Weston might be persuaded away by her husband to the exercise and variety which her spirits seemed to need.

Mr. Knightley had done all in his power for Mr. Woodhouse's entertainment. Books of engravings, drawers of medals, cameos, corals, shells, and every other family collection within his cabinets, had been prepared for his old friend, to while away the morning; and the kindness had perfectly answered. Mr. Woodhouse had been exceedingly well amused. Mrs. Weston had been shewing them all to him, and now he would shew them all to Emma;—fortunate in having no other resemblance to a child, than in a total want of taste for what he saw, for he was slow, constant, and methodical.—Before this second looking over was begun, however, Emma walked into the hall for the sake of a few moments' free observation of the entrance and ground-plot of the house—and was hardly there, when Jane Fairfax appeared, coming quickly in from the garden, and with a look of escape.—Little expecting to meet Miss Woodhouse so soon, there was a start at first; but Miss Woodhouse was the very person she was in quest of.

"Will you be so kind," said she, "when I am missed, as to say that I am gone home?—I am going this moment.—My aunt is not aware how late it is, nor how long we have been absent—but I am sure we shall be wanted, and I am determined to go directly.—I have said nothing about it to any body. It would only be giving trouble and distress. Some are gone to the ponds, and some to the lime walk. Till they all come in I shall not be missed; and when they do, will you have the goodn—"

"Certainly, if you wish it;—but you are not going to walk to Highbury alone?"

"Yes—what should hurt me?—I walk fast. I shall be at home in twenty minutes."

"But it is too far, indeed it is, to be walking quite alone. Let my father's servant go with you.—Let me order the carriage. It can be round in five minutes."

"Thank you, thank you—but on no account.—I would rather walk.—And for me to be afraid of walking alone!—I, who may so soon have to guard others!"

She spoke with great agitation; and Emma very feelingly replied, "That can be no reason for your being exposed to danger now. I must order the carriage. The heat even would be danger.—You are fatigued already."

"I am,"—she answered—"I am fatigued; but it is not the sort of fatigue—quick walking will refresh me.—Miss Woodhouse, we all know at times what it is to be wearied in spirits. Mine, I confess, are exhausted. The greatest kindness you can shew me, will be to let me have my own way, and only say that I am gone when it is necessary."

Emma had not another word to oppose. She saw it all; and entering into her feelings, promoted her quitting the house immediately, and watched her safely off with the zeal of a friend. Her parting look was grateful—and her parting words, "Oh! Miss Woodhouse, the comfort of being sometimes alone!"—seemed to burst from an overcharged heart, and to describe somewhat of the continual endurance to be practised by her, even towards some of those who loved her best.
“Such a home, indeed! such an aunt!” said Emma, as she turned back into the hall again. “I do pity you. And the more sensibility you betray of their just horrors, the more I shall like you.”

Jane had not been gone a quarter of an hour, and they had only accomplished some views of St. Mark’s Place, Venice, when Frank Churchill entered the room. Emma had not been thinking of him, she had forgotten to think of him—but she was very glad to see him. Mrs. Weston would be at ease. The black mare was blameless; they were right who had named Mrs. Churchill as the cause. He had been detained by a temporary increase of illness in her; a nervous seizure, which had lasted some hours—and he had quite given up every thought of coming, till very late;—and had he known how hot a ride he should have, and how late, with all his hurry, he must be, he believed he should not have come at all. The heat was excessive; he had never suffered any thing like it—almost wished he had staid at home—nothing killed him like heat—he could bear any degree of cold, etc., but heat was intolerable—and he sat down, at the greatest possible distance from the slight remains of Mr. Woodhouse’s fire, looking very deplorable.

“You will soon be cooler, if you sit still,” said Emma.

“As soon as I am cooler I shall go back again. I could very ill be spared—but such a point had been made of my coming! You will all be going soon I suppose; the whole party breaking up. I met one as I came—Madness in such weather!—absolute madness!”

Emma listened, and looked, and soon perceived that Frank Churchill’s state might be best defined by the expressive phrase of being out of humour. Some people were always cross when they were hot. Such might be his constitution; and as she knew that eating and drinking were often the cure of such incidental complaints, she recommended his taking some refreshment; he would find abundance of every thing in the dining-room—and she humanely pointed out the door.

“No—he should not eat. He was not hungry; it would only make him hotter.” In two minutes, however, he relented in his own favour; and muttering something about spruce-beer, walked off. Emma returned all her attention to her father, saying in secret—

“I am glad I have done being in love with him. I should not like a man who is so soon discomposed by a hot morning. Harriet’s sweet easy temper will not mind it.”

He was gone long enough to have had a very comfortable meal, and came back all the better—grown quite cool—and, with good manners, like himself—able to draw a chair close to them, take an interest in their employment; and regret, in a reasonable way, that he should be so late. He was not in his best spirits, but seemed trying to improve them; and, at last, made himself talk nonsense very agreeably. They were looking over views in Swisserland.

“As soon as my aunt gets well, I shall go abroad,” said he. “I shall never be easy till I have seen some of these places. You will have my sketches, some time or other, to look at—or my tour to read—or my poem. I shall do something to expose myself.”

“That may be—but not by sketches in Swisserland. You will never go to Swisserland. Your uncle and aunt will never allow you to leave England.”

“They may be induced to go too. A warm climate may be prescribed for her. I have more than half an expectation of our all going abroad. I assure you I have. I feel a strong persuasion, this morning,
that I shall soon be abroad. I ought to travel. I am tired of doing nothing. I want a change. I am serious, Miss Woodhouse, whatever your penetrating eyes may fancy—I am sick of England—and would leave it to-morrow, if I could.”

“You are sick of prosperity and indulgence. Cannot you invent a few hardships for yourself, and be contented to stay?”

“I am sick of prosperity and indulgence! You are quite mistaken. I do not look upon myself as either prosperous or indulged. I am thwarted in every thing material. I do not consider myself at all a fortunate person.”

“You are not quite so miserable, though, as when you first came. Go and eat and drink a little more, and you will do very well. Another slice of cold meat, another draught of Madeira and water, will make you nearly on a par with the rest of us.”

“No—I shall not stir. I shall sit by you. You are my best cure.”

“We are going to Box Hill to-morrow;—you will join us. It is not Switzerland, but it will be something for a young man so much in want of a change. You will stay, and go with us?”

“No, certainly not; I shall go home in the cool of the evening.”

“But you may come again in the cool of to-morrow morning.”

“No—it will not be worth while. If I come, I shall be cross.”

“Then pray stay at Richmond.”

“But if I do, I shall be crosser still. I can never bear to think of you all there without me.”

“These are difficulties which you must settle for yourself. Chuse your own degree of crossness. I shall press you no more.”

The rest of the party were now returning, and all were soon collected. With some there was great joy at the sight of Frank Churchill; others took it very composedly; but there was a very general distress and disturbance on Miss Fairfax’s disappearance being explained. That it was time for every body to go, concluded the subject; and with a short final arrangement for the next day’s scheme, they parted. Frank Churchill’s little inclination to exclude himself increased so much, that his last words to Emma were,

“Well;—if you wish me to stay and join the party, I will.”

She smiled her acceptance; and nothing less than a summons from Richmond was to take him back before the following evening.
They had a very fine day for Box Hill; and all the other outward circumstances of arrangement, accommodation, and punctuality, were in favour of a pleasant party. Mr. Weston directed the whole, officiating safely between Hartfield and the Vicarage, and every body was in good time. Emma and Harriet went together; Miss Bates and her niece, with the Eltons; the gentlemen on horseback. Mrs. Weston remained with Mr. Woodhouse. Nothing was wanting but to be happy when they got there. Seven miles were travelled in expectation of enjoyment, and every body had a burst of admiration on first arriving; but in the general amount of the day there was deficiency. There was a languor, a want of spirits, a want of union, which could not be got over. They separated too much into parties. The Eltons walked together; Mr. Knightley took charge of Miss Bates and Jane; and Emma and Harriet belonged to Frank Churchill. And Mr. Weston tried, in vain, to make them harmonise better. It seemed at first an accidental division, but it never materially varied. Mr. and Mrs. Elton, indeed, shewed no unwillingness to mix, and be as agreeable as they could; but during the two whole hours that were spent on the hill, there seemed a principle of separation, between the other parties, too strong for any fine prospects, or any cold collation, or any cheerful Mr. Weston, to remove.

At first it was downright dulness to Emma. She had never seen Frank Churchill so silent and stupid. He said nothing worth hearing—looked without seeing—admired without intelligence—listened without knowing what she said. While he was so dull, it was no wonder that Harriet should be dull likewise; and they were both insufferable.

When they all sat down it was better; to her taste a great deal better, for Frank Churchill grew talkative and gay, making her his first object. Every distinguishing attention that could be paid, was paid to her. To amuse her, and be agreeable in her eyes, seemed all that he cared for—and Emma, glad to be enlivened, not sorry to be flattered, was gay and easy too, and gave him all the friendly encouragement, the admission to be gallant, which she had ever given in the first and most animating period of their acquaintance; but which now, in her own estimation, meant nothing, though in the judgment of most people looking on it must have had such an appearance as no English word but flirtation could very well describe. "Mr. Frank Churchill and Miss Woodhouse flirted together excessively." They were laying themselves open to that very phrase—and to having it sent off in a letter to Maple Grove by one lady, to Ireland by another. Not that Emma was gay and thoughtless from any real felicity; it was rather because she felt less happy than she had expected. She laughed because she was disappointed; and though she liked him for his attentions, and thought them all, whether in friendship, admiration, or playfulness, extremely judicious, they were not winning back her heart. She still intended him for her friend.

"How much I am obliged to you," said he, "for telling me to come to-day!—If it had not been for you, I should certainly have lost all the happiness of this party. I had quite determined to go away again."

"Yes, you were very cross; and I do not know what about, except that you were too late for the best strawberries. I was a kinder friend than you deserved. But you were humble. You begged hard to be commanded to come."

"Don't say I was cross. I was fatigued. The heat overcame me."

"It is hotter to-day."

"Not to my feelings. I am perfectly comfortable to-day."
“You are comfortable because you are under command.”

“Your command?—Yes.”

“Perhaps I intended you to say so, but I meant self-command. You had, somehow or other, broken bounds yesterday, and run away from your own management; but to-day you are got back again—and as I cannot be always with you, it is best to believe your temper under your own command rather than mine.”

“It comes to the same thing. I can have no self-command without a motive. You order me, whether you speak or not. And you can be always with me. You are always with me.”

“Dating from three o’clock yesterday. My perpetual influence could not begin earlier, or you would not have been so much out of humour before.”

“Three o’clock yesterday! That is your date. I thought I had seen you first in February.”

“Your gallantry is really unanswerable. But (lowering her voice)—nobody speaks except ourselves, and it is rather too much to be talking nonsense for the entertainment of seven silent people.”

“I say nothing of which I am ashamed,” replied he, with lively impudence. “I saw you first in February. Let every body on the Hill hear me if they can. Let my accents swell to Mickleham on one side, and Dorking on the other. I saw you first in February.” And then whispering—“Our companions are excessively stupid. What shall we do to rouse them? Any nonsense will serve. They shall talk. Ladies and gentlemen, I am ordered by Miss Woodhouse (who, wherever she is, presides) to say, that she desires to know what you are all thinking of?”

Some laughed, and answered good-humouredly. Miss Bates said a great deal; Mrs. Elton swelled at the idea of Miss Woodhouse's presiding; Mr. Knightley's answer was the most distinct.

“Is Miss Woodhouse sure that she would like to hear what we are all thinking of?”

“Oh! no, no”—cried Emma, laughing as carelessly as she could—“Upon no account in the world. It is the very last thing I would stand the brunt of just now. Let me hear any thing rather than what you are all thinking of. I will not say quite all. There are one or two, perhaps, (glancing at Mr. Weston and Harriet,) whose thoughts I might not be afraid of knowing.”

“It is a sort of thing,” cried Mrs. Elton emphatically, “which I should not have thought myself privileged to inquire into. Though, perhaps, as the Chaperon of the party—I never was in any circle—exploring parties—young ladies—married women—”

Her mutterings were chiefly to her husband; and he murmured, in reply,

“Very true, my love, very true. Exactly so, indeed—quite unheard of—but some ladies say any thing. Better pass it off as a joke. Every body knows what is due to you.”

“It will not do,” whispered Frank to Emma; “they are most of them affronted. I will attack them with more address. Ladies and gentlemen—I am ordered by Miss Woodhouse to say, that she waives her right of knowing exactly what you may all be thinking of, and only requires something very
entertaining from each of you, in a general way. Here are seven of you, besides myself, (who, she is pleased to say, am very entertaining already,) and she only demands from each of you either one thing very clever, be it prose or verse, original or repeated—or two things moderately clever—or three things very dull indeed, and she engages to laugh heartily at them all.”

“Oh! very well,” exclaimed Miss Bates, “then I need not be uneasy. ’Three things very dull indeed.’ That will just do for me, you know. I shall be sure to say three dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth, shan’t I? (looking round with the most good-humoured dependence on every body’s assent)—Do not you all think I shall?”

Emma could not resist.

“Ah! ma’am, but there may be a difficulty. Pardon me—but you will be limited as to number—only three at once.”

Miss Bates, deceived by the mock ceremony of her manner, did not immediately catch her meaning; but, when it burst on her, it could not anger, though a slight blush shewed that it could pain her.

“Oh!—well—to be sure. Yes, I see what she means, (turning to Mr. Knightley,) and I will try to hold my tongue. I must make myself very disagreeable, or she would not have said such a thing to an old friend.”

“I like your plan,” cried Mr. Weston. “Agreed, agreed. I will do my best. I am making a conundrum. How will a conundrum reckon?”

“Low, I am afraid, sir, very low,” answered his son;—“but we shall be indulgent—especially to any one who leads the way.”

“No, no,” said Emma, “it will not reckon low. A conundrum of Mr. Weston’s shall clear him and his next neighbour. Come, sir, pray let me hear it.”

“I doubt its being very clever myself,” said Mr. Weston. “It is too much a matter of fact, but here it is.—What two letters of the alphabet are there, that express perfection?”

“What two letters!—express perfection! I am sure I do not know.”

“Ah! you will never guess. You, (to Emma), I am certain, will never guess.—I will tell you.—M. and A.—Em-ma.—Do you understand?”

Understanding and gratification came together. It might be a very indifferent piece of wit, but Emma found a great deal to laugh at and enjoy in it—and so did Frank and Harriet.—It did not seem to touch the rest of the party equally; some looked very stupid about it, and Mr. Knightley gravely said,

“This explains the sort of clever thing that is wanted, and Mr. Weston has done very well for himself; but he must have knocked up every body else. Perfection should not have come quite so soon.”
“Oh! for myself, I protest I must be excused,” said Mrs. Elton; “I really cannot attempt—I am not at all fond of the sort of thing. I had an acrostic once sent to me upon my own name, which I was not at all pleased with. I knew who it came from. An abominable puppy!—You know who I mean (nodding to her husband). These kind of things are very well at Christmas, when one is sitting round the fire; but quite out of place, in my opinion, when one is exploring about the country in summer. Miss Woodhouse must excuse me. I am not one of those who have witty things at every body’s service. I do not pretend to be a wit. I have a great deal of vivacity in my own way, but I really must be allowed to judge when to speak and when to hold my tongue. Pass us, if you please, Mr. Churchill. Pass Mr. E., Knightley, Jane, and myself. We have nothing clever to say—not one of us.

“Yes, yes, pray pass me,” added her husband, with a sort of sneering consciousness; “I have nothing to say that can entertain Miss Woodhouse, or any other young lady. An old married man—quite good for nothing. Shall we walk, Augusta?”

“With all my heart. I am really tired of exploring so long on one spot. Come, Jane, take my other arm.”

Jane declined it, however, and the husband and wife walked off. "Happy couple!" said Frank Churchill, as soon as they were out of hearing:—“How well they suit one another!—Very lucky—marrying as they did, upon an acquaintance formed only in a public place!—They only knew each other, I think, a few weeks in Bath! Peculiarly lucky!—for as to any real knowledge of a person’s disposition that Bath, or any public place, can give—it is all nothing; there can be no knowledge. It is only by seeing women in their own homes, among their own set, just as they always are, that you can form any just judgment. Short of that, it is all guess and luck—and will generally be ill-luck. How many a man has committed himself on a short acquaintance, and rued it all the rest of his life!”

Miss Fairfax, who had seldom spoken before, except among her own confederates, spoke now.

“Such things do occur, undoubtedly.”—She was stopped by a cough. Frank Churchill turned towards her to listen.

“You were speaking,” said he, gravely. She recovered her voice.

“I was only going to observe, that though such unfortunate circumstances do sometimes occur both to men and women, I cannot imagine them to be very frequent. A hasty and imprudent attachment may arise—but there is generally time to recover from it afterwards. I would be understood to mean, that it can be only weak, irresolute characters, (whose happiness must be always at the mercy of chance,) who will suffer an unfortunate acquaintance to be an inconvenience, an oppression for ever.”

He made no answer; merely looked, and bowed in submission; and soon afterwards said, in a lively tone,

“Well, I have so little confidence in my own judgment, that whenever I marry, I hope some body will chuse my wife for me. Will you? (turning to Emma.) Will you chuse a wife for me?—I am sure I should like any body fixed on by you. You provide for the family, you know, (with a smile at his father). Find some body for me. I am in no hurry. Adopt her, educate her.”

“And make her like myself.”
“By all means, if you can.”

“Very well. I undertake the commission. You shall have a charming wife.”

“She must be very lively, and have hazle eyes. I care for nothing else. I shall go abroad for a couple of years—and when I return, I shall come to you for my wife. Remember.”

Emma was in no danger of forgetting. It was a commission to touch every favourite feeling. Would not Harriet be the very creature described? Hazle eyes excepted, two years more might make her all that he wished. He might even have Harriet in his thoughts at the moment; who could say? Referring the education to her seemed to imply it.

“Now, ma'am,” said Jane to her aunt, “shall we join Mrs. Elton?”

“If you please, my dear. With all my heart. I am quite ready. I was ready to have gone with her, but this will do just as well. We shall soon overtake her. There she is—no, that's somebody else. That's one of the ladies in the Irish car party, not at all like her.—Well, I declare—”

They walked off, followed in half a minute by Mr. Knightley. Mr. Weston, his son, Emma, and Harriet, only remained; and the young man’s spirits now rose to a pitch almost unpleasant. Even Emma grew tired at last of flattery and merriment, and wished herself rather walking quietly about with any of the others, or sitting almost alone, and quite unattended to, in tranquil observation of the beautiful views beneath her. The appearance of the servants looking out for them to give notice of the carriages was a joyful sight; and even the bustle of collecting and preparing to depart, and the solicitude of Mrs. Elton to have her carriage first, were gladly endured, in the prospect of the quiet drive home which was to close the very questionable enjoyments of this day of pleasure. Such another scheme, composed of so many ill-assorted people, she hoped never to be betrayed into again.

While waiting for the carriage, she found Mr. Knightley by her side. He looked around, as if to see that no one were near, and then said,

“Emma, I must once more speak to you as I have been used to do: a privilege rather endured than allowed, perhaps, but I must still use it. I cannot see you acting wrong, without a remonstrance. How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation?—Emma, I had not thought it possible.”

Emma recollected, blushed, was sorry, but tried to laugh it off.

“Nay, how could I help saying what I did?—Nobody could have helped it. It was not so very bad. I dare say she did not understand me.”

“I assure you she did. She felt your full meaning. She has talked of it since. I wish you could have heard how she talked of it—with what candour and generosity. I wish you could have heard her honouring your forbearance, in being able to pay her such attentions, as she was for ever receiving from yourself and your father, when her society must be so irksome.”

“Oh!” cried Emma, “I know there is not a better creature in the world: but you must allow, that what is good and what is ridiculous are most unfortunately blended in her.”
“They are blended,” said he, “I acknowledge; and, were she prosperous, I could allow much for the occasional prevalence of the ridiculous over the good. Were she a woman of fortune, I would leave every harmless absurdity to take its chance, I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner. Were she your equal in situation—but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done, indeed! You, whom she had known from an infant, whom she had seen grow up from a period when her notice was an honour, to have you now, in thoughtless spirits, and the pride of the moment, laugh at her, humble her—and before her niece, too—and before others, many of whom (certainly some,) would be entirely guided by your treatment of her.—This is not pleasant to you, Emma—and it is very far from pleasant to me; but I must, I will,—I will tell you truths while I can; satisfied with proving myself your friend by very faithful counsel, and trusting that you will some time or other do me greater justice than you can do now.”

While they talked, they were advancing towards the carriage; it was ready; and, before she could speak again, he had handed her in. He had misinterpreted the feelings which had kept her face averted, and her tongue motionless. They were combined only of anger against herself, mortification, and deep concern. She had not been able to speak; and, on entering the carriage, sunk back for a moment overcome—then reproaching herself for having taken no leave, making no acknowledgment, parting in apparent sullenness, she looked out with voice and hand eager to shew a difference; but it was just too late. He had turned away, and the horses were in motion. She continued to look back, but in vain; and soon, with what appeared unusual speed, they were half way down the hill, and every thing left far behind. She was vexed beyond what could have been expressed—almost beyond what she could conceal. Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life. She was most forcibly struck. The truth of this representation there was no denying. She felt it at her heart. How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates! How could she have exposed herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued! And how suffer him to leave her without saying one word of gratitude, of concurrence, of common kindness!

Time did not compose her. As she reflected more, she seemed but to feel it more. She never had been so depressed. Happily it was not necessary to speak. There was only Harriet, who seemed not in spirits herself, fagged, and very willing to be silent; and Emma felt the tears running down her cheeks almost all the way home, without being at any trouble to check them, extraordinary as they were.

CHAPTER X

One morning, about ten days after Mrs. Churchill’s decease, Emma was called downstairs to Mr. Weston, who “could not stay five minutes, and wanted particularly to speak with her.”—He met her at the parlour-door, and hardly asking her how she did, in the natural key of his voice, sunk it immediately, to say, unheard by her father,

“Can you come to Randalls at any time this morning?—Do, if it be possible. Mrs. Weston wants to see you. She must see you.”

“Is she unwell?”
“No, no, not at all—only a little agitated. She would have ordered the carriage, and come to you, but she must see you alone, and that you know—(nodding towards her father)—Humph!—Can you come?”

“Certainly. This moment, if you please. It is impossible to refuse what you ask in such a way. But what can be the matter?—Is she really not ill?”

“Depend upon me—but ask no more questions. You will know it all in time. The most unaccountable business! But hush, hush!”

To guess what all this meant, was impossible even for Emma. Something really important seemed announced by his looks; but, as her friend was well, she endeavoured not to be uneasy, and settling it with her father, that she would take her walk now, she and Mr. Weston were soon out of the house together and on their way at a quick pace for Randalls.

“Now,”—said Emma, when they were fairly beyond the sweep gates,—“now Mr. Weston, do let me know what has happened.”

“No, no,”—he gravely replied.—“Don’t ask me. I promised my wife to leave it all to her. She will break it to you better than I can. Do not be impatient, Emma; it will all come out too soon.”

“Break it to me,” cried Emma, standing still with terror,—“Good God!—Mr. Weston, tell me at once.—Something has happened in Brunswick Square. I know it has. Tell me, I charge you tell me this moment what it is.”

“No, indeed you are mistaken.”—

“Mr. Weston do not trifle with me.—Consider how many of my dearest friends are now in Brunswick Square. Which of them is it?—I charge you by all that is sacred, not to attempt concealment.”

“Upon my word, Emma.”—

“Your word!—why not your honour!—why not say upon your honour, that it has nothing to do with any of them? Good Heavens!—What can be to be broke to me, that does not relate to one of that family?”

“Upon my honour,” said he very seriously, “it does not. It is not in the smallest degree connected with any human being of the name of Knightley.”

Emma’s courage returned, and she walked on.

“I was wrong,” he continued, “in talking of its being broke to you. I should not have used the expression. In fact, it does not concern you—it concerns only myself,—that is, we hope.—Humph!—In short, my dear Emma, there is no occasion to be so uneasy about it. I don’t say that it is not a disagreeable business—but things might be much worse.—If we walk fast, we shall soon be at Randalls.”
Emma found that she must wait; and now it required little effort. She asked no more questions therefore, merely employed her own fancy, and that soon pointed out to her the probability of its being some money concern—something just come to light, of a disagreeable nature in the circumstances of the family,—something which the late event at Richmond had brought forward. Her fancy was very active. Half a dozen natural children, perhaps—and poor Frank cut off!—This, though very undesirable, would be no matter of agony to her. It inspired little more than an animating curiosity.

"Who is that gentleman on horseback?" said she, as they proceeded—speaking more to assist Mr. Weston in keeping his secret, than with any other view.

"I do not know.—One of the Otways.—Not Frank;—it is not Frank, I assure you. You will not see him. He is half way to Windsor by this time."

"Has your son been with you, then?"

"Oh! yes—did not you know?—Well, well, never mind."

For a moment he was silent; and then added, in a tone much more guarded and demure,

"Yes, Frank came over this morning, just to ask us how we did."

They hurried on, and were speedily at Randalls.—"Well, my dear," said he, as they entered the room—"I have brought her, and now I hope you will soon be better. I shall leave you together. There is no use in delay. I shall not be far off, if you want me."—And Emma distinctly heard him add, in a lower tone, before he quitted the room,—"I have been as good as my word. She has not the least idea."

Mrs. Weston was looking so ill, and had an air of so much perturbation, that Emma's uneasiness increased; and the moment they were alone, she eagerly said,

"What is it my dear friend? Something of a very unpleasant nature, I find, has occurred;—do let me know directly what it is. I have been walking all this way in complete suspense. We both abhor suspense. Do not let mine continue longer. It will do you good to speak of your distress, whatever it may be."

"Have you indeed no idea?" said Mrs. Weston in a trembling voice. "Cannot you, my dear Emma—cannot you form a guess as to what you are to hear?"

"So far as that it relates to Mr. Frank Churchill, I do guess."

"You are right. It does relate to him, and I will tell you directly;" (resuming her work, and seeming resolved against looking up.) "He has been here this very morning, on a most extraordinary errand. It is impossible to express our surprize. He came to speak to his father on a subject,—to announce an attachment—"

She stopped to breathe. Emma thought first of herself, and then of Harriet.
“More than an attachment, indeed,” resumed Mrs. Weston; “an engagement—a positive engagement.—What will you say, Emma—what will any body say, when it is known that Frank Churchill and Miss Fairfax are engaged;—nay, that they have been long engaged!”

Emma even jumped with surprize;—and, horror-struck, exclaimed,

“Jane Fairfax!—Good God! You are not serious? You do not mean it?”

“You may well be amazed,” returned Mrs. Weston, still averting her eyes, and talking on with eagerness, that Emma might have time to recover— “You may well be amazed. But it is even so. There has been a solemn engagement between them ever since October—formed at Weymouth, and kept a secret from every body. Not a creature knowing it but themselves—neither the Campbells, nor her family, nor his.—It is so wonderful, that though perfectly convinced of the fact, it is yet almost incredible to myself. I can hardly believe it.—I thought I knew him.”

Emma scarcely heard what was said.—Her mind was divided between two ideas—her own former conversations with him about Miss Fairfax; and poor Harriet;—and for some time she could only exclaim, and require confirmation, repeated confirmation.

“Well,” said she at last, trying to recover herself; “this is a circumstance which I must think of at least half a day, before I can at all comprehend it. What!—engaged to her all the winter—before either of them came to Highbury?”

“Engaged since October,—secretly engaged.—It has hurt me, Emma, very much. It has hurt his father equally. Some part of his conduct we cannot excuse.”

Emma pondered a moment, and then replied, “I will not pretend not to understand you; and to give you all the relief in my power, be assured that no such effect has followed his attentions to me, as you are apprehensive of.”

Mrs. Weston looked up, afraid to believe; but Emma’s countenance was as steady as her words.

“That you may have less difficulty in believing this boast, of my present perfect indifference,” she continued, “I will farther tell you, that there was a period in the early part of our acquaintance, when I did like him, when I was very much disposed to be attached to him—nay, was attached—and how it came to cease, is perhaps the wonder. Fortunately, however, it did cease. I have really for some time past, for at least these three months, cared nothing about him. You may believe me, Mrs. Weston. This is the simple truth.”

Mrs. Weston kissed her with tears of joy; and when she could find utterance, assured her, that this protestation had done her more good than any thing else in the world could do.

“Mr. Weston will be almost as much relieved as myself,” said she. “On this point we have been wretched. It was our darling wish that you might be attached to each other—and we were persuaded that it was so.— Imagine what we have been feeling on your account.”

“I have escaped; and that I should escape, may be a matter of grateful wonder to you and myself. But this does not acquit him, Mrs. Weston; and I must say, that I think him greatly to blame. What right had he to come among us with affection and faith engaged, and with manners so very
disengaged? What right had he to endeavour to please, as he certainly did—to distinguish any one young woman with persevering attention, as he certainly did—while he really belonged to another?—How could he tell what mischief he might be doing?—How could he tell that he might not be making me in love with him?—very wrong, very wrong indeed.”

“From something that he said, my dear Emma, I rather imagine—”

“And how could she bear such behaviour! Composure with a witness! to look on, while repeated attentions were offering to another woman, before her face, and not resent it.—That is a degree of placidity, which I can neither comprehend nor respect.”

“There were misunderstandings between them, Emma; he said so expressly. He had not time to enter into much explanation. He was here only a quarter of an hour, and in a state of agitation which did not allow the full use even of the time he could stay—but that there had been misunderstandings he decidedly said. The present crisis, indeed, seemed to be brought on by them; and those misunderstandings might very possibly arise from the impropriety of his conduct.”

“Impropriety! Oh! Mrs. Weston—it is too calm a censure. Much, much beyond impropriety!—It has sunk him, I cannot say how it has sunk him in my opinion. So unlike what a man should be!—None of that upright integrity, that strict adherence to truth and principle, that disdain of trick and littleness, which a man should display in every transaction of his life.”

“Nay, dear Emma, now I must take his part; for though he has been wrong in this instance, I have known him long enough to answer for his having many, very many, good qualities; and—”

“Good God!” cried Emma, not attending to her.—“Mrs. Smallridge, too! Jane actually on the point of going as governess! What could he mean by such horrible indelicacy? To suffer her to engage herself—to suffer her even to think of such a measure!”

“He knew nothing about it, Emma. On this article I can fully acquit him. It was a private resolution of hers, not communicated to him—or at least not communicated in a way to carry conviction.—Till yesterday, I know he said he was in the dark as to her plans. They burst on him, I do not know how, but by some letter or message—and it was the discovery of what she was doing, of this very project of hers, which determined him to come forward at once, own it all to his uncle, throw himself on his kindness, and, in short, put an end to the miserable state of concealment that had been carrying on so long.”

Emma began to listen better.

“I am to hear from him soon,” continued Mrs. Weston. “He told me at parting, that he should soon write; and he spoke in a manner which seemed to promise me many particulars that could not be given now. Let us wait, therefore, for this letter. It may bring many extenuations. It may make many things intelligible and excusable which now are not to be understood. Don’t let us be severe, don’t let us be in a hurry to condemn him. Let us have patience. I must love him; and now that I am satisfied on one point, the one material point, I am sincerely anxious for its all turning out well, and ready to hope that it may. They must both have suffered a great deal under such a system of secrecy and concealment.”
“His sufferings,” replied Emma dryly, “do not appear to have done him much harm. Well, and how did Mr. Churchill take it?”

“Most favourably for his nephew—gave his consent with scarcely a difficulty. Conceive what the events of a week have done in that family! While poor Mrs. Churchill lived, I suppose there could not have been a hope, a chance, a possibility;—but scarcely are her remains at rest in the family vault, than her husband is persuaded to act exactly opposite to what she would have required. What a blessing it is, when undue influence does not survive the grave!—He gave his consent with very little persuasion.”

“Ah!” thought Emma, “he would have done as much for Harriet.”

“This was settled last night, and Frank was off with the light this morning. He stopped at Highbury, at the Bates’s, I fancy, some time—and then came on hither; but was in such a hurry to get back to his uncle, to whom he is just now more necessary than ever, that, as I tell you, he could stay with us but a quarter of an hour. —He was very much agitated—very much, indeed—to a degree that made him appear quite a different creature from any thing I had ever seen him before.—In addition to all the rest, there had been the shock of finding her so very unwell, which he had had no previous suspicion of—and there was every appearance of his having been feeling a great deal.”

“And do you really believe the affair to have been carrying on with such perfect secrecy?—The Campbells, the Dixons, did none of them know of the engagement?”

Emma could not speak the name of Dixon without a little blush.

“None; not one. He positively said that it had been known to no being in the world but their two selves.”

“Well,” said Emma, “I suppose we shall gradually grow reconciled to the idea, and I wish them very happy. But I shall always think it a very abominable sort of proceeding. What has it been but a system of hypocrisy and deceit,—espionage, and treachery?—To come among us with professions of openness and simplicity; and such a league in secret to judge us all!—Here have we been, the whole winter and spring, completely duped, fancying ourselves all on an equal footing of truth and honour, with two people in the midst of us who may have been carrying round, comparing and sitting in judgment on sentiments and words that were never meant for both to hear.—They must take the consequence, if they have heard each other spoken of in a way not perfectly agreeable!”

“I am quite easy on that head,” replied Mrs. Weston. “I am very sure that I never said any thing of either to the other, which both might not have heard.”

“You are in luck.—Your only blunder was confined to my ear, when you imagined a certain friend of ours in love with the lady.”

“True. But as I have always had a thoroughly good opinion of Miss Fairfax, I never could, under any blunder, have spoken ill of her; and as to speaking ill of him, there I must have been safe.”

At this moment Mr. Weston appeared at a little distance from the window, evidently on the watch. His wife gave him a look which invited him in; and, while he was coming round, added, “Now, dearest Emma, let me intreat you to say and look every thing that may set his heart at ease, and
incline him to be satisfied with the match. Let us make the best of it—and, indeed, almost every thing may be fairly said in her favour. It is not a connexion to gratify; but if Mr. Churchill does not feel that, why should we? and it may be a very fortunate circumstance for him, for Frank, I mean, that he should have attached himself to a girl of such steadiness of character and good judgment as I have always given her credit for—and still am disposed to give her credit for, in spite of this one great deviation from the strict rule of right. And how much may be said in her situation for even that error!

“Much, indeed!” cried Emma feelingly. “If a woman can ever be excused for thinking only of herself, it is in a situation like Jane Fairfax’s.—Of such, one may almost say, that ‘the world is not their’s, nor the world’s law.’”

She met Mr. Weston on his entrance, with a smiling countenance, exclaiming,

“A very pretty trick you have been playing me, upon my word! This was a device, I suppose, to sport with my curiosity, and exercise my talent of guessing. But you really frightened me. I thought you had lost half your property, at least. And here, instead of its being a matter of condolence, it turns out to be one of congratulation.—I congratulate you, Mr. Weston, with all my heart, on the prospect of having one of the most lovely and accomplished young women in England for your daughter.”

A glance or two between him and his wife, convinced him that all was as right as this speech proclaimed; and its happy effect on his spirits was immediate. His air and voice recovered their usual briskness: he shook her heartily and gratefully by the hand, and entered on the subject in a manner to prove, that he now only wanted time and persuasion to think the engagement no very bad thing. His companions suggested only what could palliate imprudence, or smooth objections; and by the time they had talked it all over together, and he had talked it all over again with Emma, in their walk back to Hartfield, he was become perfectly reconciled, and not far from thinking it the very best thing that Frank could possibly have done.

CHAPTER XI

“Harriet, poor Harriet!”—Those were the words; in them lay the tormenting ideas which Emma could not get rid of, and which constituted the real misery of the business to her. Frank Churchill had behaved very ill by herself—very ill in many ways,—but it was not so much his behaviour as her own, which made her so angry with him. It was the scrape which he had drawn her into on Harriet’s account, that gave the deepest hue to his offence.—Poor Harriet! to be a second time the dupe of her misconceptions and flattery. Mr. Knightley had spoken prophetically, when he once said, “Emma, you have been no friend to Harriet Smith.”—She was afraid she had done her nothing but disservice.—It was true that she had not to charge herself, in this instance as in the former, with being the sole and original author of the mischief; with having suggested such feelings as might otherwise never have entered Harriet’s imagination; for Harriet had acknowledged her admiration and preference of Frank Churchill before she had ever given her a hint on the subject; but she felt completely guilty of having encouraged what she might have repressed. She might have prevented the indulgence and increase of such sentiments. Her influence would have been enough. And now she was very conscious that she ought to have prevented them.—She felt that she had been risking
her friend's happiness on most insufficient grounds. Common sense would have directed her to tell Harriet, that she must not allow herself to think of him, and that there were five hundred chances to one against his ever caring for her.—“But, with common sense,” she added, “I am afraid I have had little to do.”

She was extremely angry with herself. If she could not have been angry with Frank Churchill too, it would have been dreadful.—As for Jane Fairfax, she might at least relieve her feelings from any present solicitude on her account. Harriet would be anxiety enough; she need no longer be unhappy about Jane, whose troubles and whose ill-health having, of course, the same origin, must be equally under cure.—Her days of insignificance and evil were over.—She would soon be well, and happy, and prosperous.—Emma could now imagine why her own attentions had been slighted. This discovery laid many smaller matters open. No doubt it had been from jealousy.—In Jane's eyes she had been a rival; and well might any thing she could offer of assistance or regard be repulsed. An airing in the Hartfield carriage would have been the rack, and arrowroot from the Hartfield storeroom must have been poison. She understood it all; and as far as her mind could disengage itself from the injustice and selfishness of angry feelings, she acknowledged that Jane Fairfax would have neither elevation nor happiness beyond her desert. But poor Harriet was such an engrossing charge! There was little sympathy to be spared for any body else. Emma was sadly fearful that this second disappointment would be more severe than the first. Considering the very superior claims of the object, it ought; and judging by its apparently stronger effect on Harriet's mind, producing reserve and self-command, it would.—She must communicate the painful truth, however, and as soon as possible. An injunction of secrecy had been among Mr. Weston's parting words. “For the present, the whole affair was to be completely a secret. Mr. Churchill had made a point of it, as a token of respect to the wife he had so very recently lost; and every body admitted it to be no more than due decorum.”—Emma had promised; but still Harriet must be excepted. It was her superior duty.

In spite of her vexation, she could not help feeling it almost ridiculous, that she should have the very same distressing and delicate office to perform by Harriet, which Mrs. Weston had just gone through by herself. The intelligence, which had been so anxiously announced to her, she was now to be anxiously announcing to another. Her heart beat quick on hearing Harriet's footstep and voice; so, she supposed, had poor Mrs. Weston felt when she was approaching Randalls. Could the event of the disclosure bear an equal resemblance!—But of that, unfortunately, there could be no chance.

“Well, Miss Woodhouse!” cried Harriet, coming eagerly into the room—“is not this the oddest news that ever was?”

“What news do you mean?” replied Emma, unable to guess, by look or voice, whether Harriet could indeed have received any hint.

“About Jane Fairfax. Did you ever hear any thing so strange? Oh!—you need not be afraid of owning it to me, for Mr. Weston has told me himself. I met him just now. He told me it was to be a great secret; and, therefore, I should not think of mentioning it to any body but you, but he said you knew it.”

“What did Mr. Weston tell you?”—said Emma, still perplexed.

“Oh! he told me all about it; that Jane Fairfax and Mr. Frank Churchill are to be married, and that they have been privately engaged to one another this long while. How very odd!”
It was, indeed, so odd; Harriet's behaviour was so extremely odd, that Emma did not know how to understand it. Her character appeared absolutely changed. She seemed to propose shewing no agitation, or disappointment, or peculiar concern in the discovery. Emma looked at her, quite unable to speak.

“Had you any idea,” cried Harriet, “of his being in love with her?—You, perhaps, might.—You (blushing as she spoke) who can see into every body's heart; but nobody else—”

“Upon my word,” said Emma, “I begin to doubt my having any such talent. Can you seriously ask me, Harriet, whether I imagined him attached to another woman at the very time that I was—tacitly, if not openly—encouraging you to give way to your own feelings?—I never had the slightest suspicion, till within the last hour, of Mr. Frank Churchill's having the least regard for Jane Fairfax. You may be very sure that if I had, I should have cautioned you accordingly.”

“Me!” cried Harriet, colouring, and astonished. “Why should you caution me?—You do not think I care about Mr. Frank Churchill.”

“I am delighted to hear you speak so stoutly on the subject,” replied Emma, smiling; “but you do not mean to deny that there was a time—and not very distant either—when you gave me reason to understand that you did care about him?”

“Him!—never, never. Dear Miss Woodhouse, how could you so mistake me?” turning away distressed.

“Harriet!” cried Emma, after a moment's pause—“What do you mean?—Good Heaven! what do you mean?—Mistake you!—Am I to suppose then?—”

She could not speak another word.—Her voice was lost; and she sat down, waiting in great terror till Harriet should answer.

Harriet, who was standing at some distance, and with face turned from her, did not immediately say any thing; and when she did speak, it was in a voice nearly as agitated as Emma's.

“I should not have thought it possible,” she began, “that you could have misunderstood me! I know we agreed never to name him—but considering how infinitely superior he is to every body else, I should not have thought it possible that I could be supposed to mean any other person. Mr. Frank Churchill, indeed! I do not know who would ever look at him in the company of the other. I hope I have a better taste than to think of Mr. Frank Churchill, who is like nobody by his side. And that you should have been so mistaken, is amazing!—I am sure, but for believing that you entirely approved and meant to encourage me in my attachment, I should have considered it at first too great a presumption almost, to dare to think of him. At first, if you had not told me that more wonderful things had happened; that there had been matches of greater disparity (those were your very words);—I should not have dared to give way to—I should not have thought it possible—But if you, who had been always acquainted with him—”

“Harriet!” cried Emma, collecting herself resolutely—“Let us understand each other now, without the possibility of farther mistake. Are you speaking of—Mr. Knightley?”
“To be sure I am. I never could have an idea of any body else—and so I thought you knew. When we talked about him, it was as clear as possible.”

“Not quite,” returned Emma, with forced calmness, “for all that you then said, appeared to me to relate to a different person. I could almost assert that you had named Mr. Frank Churchill. I am sure the service Mr. Frank Churchill had rendered you, in protecting you from the gipsies, was spoken of.”

“Oh! Miss Woodhouse, how you do forget!”

“My dear Harriet, I perfectly remember the substance of what I said on the occasion. I told you that I did not wonder at your attachment; that considering the service he had rendered you, it was extremely natural:—and you agreed to it, expressing yourself very warmly as to your sense of that service, and mentioning even what your sensations had been in seeing him come forward to your rescue.—The impression of it is strong on my memory.”

“Oh, dear,” cried Harriet, “now I recollect what you mean; but I was thinking of something very different at the time. It was not the gipsies— it was not Mr. Frank Churchill that I meant. No! (with some elevation) I was thinking of a much more precious circumstance—of Mr. Knightley's coming and asking me to dance, when Mr. Elton would not stand up with me; and when there was no other partner in the room. That was the kind action; that was the noble benevolence and generosity; that was the service which made me begin to feel how superior he was to every other being upon earth.”

“Good God!” cried Emma, “this has been a most unfortunate—most deplorable mistake!—What is to be done?”

“You would not have encouraged me, then, if you had understood me? At least, however, I cannot be worse off than I should have been, if the other had been the person; and now—it is possible—”

She paused a few moments. Emma could not speak.

“I do not wonder, Miss Woodhouse,” she resumed, “that you should feel a great difference between the two, as to me or as to any body. You must think one five hundred million times more above me than the other. But I hope, Miss Woodhouse, that supposing—that if—strange as it may appear—. But you know they were your own words, that more wonderful things had happened, matches of greater disparity had taken place than between Mr. Frank Churchill and me; and, therefore, it seems as if such a thing even as this, may have occurred before—and if I should be so fortunate, beyond expression, as to—if Mr. Knightley should really—if he does not mind the disparity, I hope, dear Miss Woodhouse, you will not set yourself against it, and try to put difficulties in the way. But you are too good for that, I am sure.”

Harriet was standing at one of the windows. Emma turned round to look at her in consternation, and hastily said,

“Have you any idea of Mr. Knightley's returning your affection?”

“Yes,” replied Harriet modestly, but not fearfully—“I must say that I have.”
Emma's eyes were instantly withdrawn; and she sat silently meditating, in a fixed attitude, for a few minutes. A few minutes were sufficient for making her acquainted with her own heart. A mind like hers, once opening to suspicion, made rapid progress. She touched—she admitted—she acknowledged the whole truth. Why was it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr. Knightley, than with Frank Churchill? Why was the evil so dreadfully increased by Harriet's having some hope of a return? It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!

Her own conduct, as well as her own heart, was before her in the same few minutes. She saw it all with a clearness which had never blessed her before. How improperly had she been acting by Harriet! How inconsiderate, how indelicate, how irrational, how unfeeling had been her conduct! What blindness, what madness, had led her on! It struck her with dreadful force, and she was ready to give it every bad name in the world. Some portion of respect for herself, however, in spite of all these demerits—some concern for her own appearance, and a strong sense of justice by Harriet—(there would be no need of compassion to the girl who believed herself loved by Mr. Knightley—but justice required that she should not be made unhappy by any coldness now,) gave Emma the resolution to sit and endure farther with calmness, with even apparent kindness. For her own advantage indeed, it was fit that the utmost extent of Harriet's hopes should be enquired into; and Harriet had done nothing to forfeit the regard and interest which had been so voluntarily formed and maintained—or to deserve to be slighted by the person, whose counsels had never led her right.—Rousing from reflection, therefore, and subduing her emotion, she turned to Harriet again, and, in a more inviting accent, renewed the conversation; for as to the subject which had first introduced it, the wonderful story of Jane Fairfax, that was quite sunk and lost.—Neither of them thought but of Mr. Knightley and themselves.

Harriet, who had been standing in no unhappy reverie, was yet very glad to be called from it, by the now encouraging manner of such a judge, and such a friend as Miss Woodhouse, and only wanted invitation, to give the history of her hopes with great, though trembling delight.—Emma's tremblings as she asked, and as she listened, were better concealed than Harriet's, but they were not less. Her voice was not unsteady; but her mind was in all the perturbation that such a development of self, such a burst of threatening evil, such a confusion of sudden and perplexing emotions, must create.—She listened with much inward suffering, but with great outward patience, to Harriet's detail.—Methodical, or well arranged, or very well delivered, it could not be expected to be; but it contained, when separated from all the feebleness and tautology of the narration, a substance to sink her spirit—especially with the corroborating circumstances, which her own memory brought in favour of Mr. Knightley's most improved opinion of Harriet.

Harriet had been conscious of a difference in his behaviour ever since those two decisive dances.—Emma knew that he had, on that occasion, found her much superior to his expectation. From that evening, or at least from the time of Miss Woodhouse's encouraging her to think of him, Harriet had begun to be sensible of his talking to her much more than he had been used to do, and of his having indeed quite a different manner towards her; a manner of kindness and sweetness!—Latterly she had been more and more aware of it. When they had been all walking together, he had so often come and walked by her, and talked so very delightfully!—He seemed to want to be acquainted with her. Emma knew it to have been very much the case. She had often observed the change, to almost the same extent.—Harriet repeated expressions of approbation and praise from him—and Emma felt them to be in the closest agreement with what she had known of his opinion of Harriet. He praised her for being without art or affectation, for having simple, honest, generous, feelings.—She knew that he saw such recommendations in Harriet; he had dwelt on them to her more than
Women Writers – Novels - 114

once.—Much that lived in Harriet's memory, many little particulars of the notice she had received from him, a look, a speech, a removal from one chair to another, a compliment implied, a preference inferred, had been unnoticed, because unsuspected, by Emma. Circumstances that might swell to half an hour’s relation, and contained multiplied proofs to her who had seen them, had passed undiscerned by her who now heard them; but the two latest occurrences to be mentioned, the two of strongest promise to Harriet, were not without some degree of witness from Emma herself.—The first, was his walking with her apart from the others, in the lime-walk at Donwell, where they had been walking some time before Emma came, and he had taken pains (as she was convinced) to draw her from the rest to himself—and at first, he had talked to her in a more particular way than he had ever done before, in a very particular way indeed!—(Harriet could not recall it without a blush.) He seemed to be almost asking her, whether her affections were engaged.—But as soon as she (Miss Woodhouse) appeared likely to join them, he changed the subject, and began talking about farming:—The second, was his having sat talking with her nearly half an hour before Emma came back from her visit, the very last morning of his being at Hartfield—though, when he first came in, he had said that he could not stay five minutes—and his having told her, during their conversation, that though he must go to London, it was very much against his inclination that he left home at all, which was much more (as Emma felt) than he had acknowledged to her. The superior degree of confidence towards Harriet, which this one article marked, gave her severe pain.

On the subject of the first of the two circumstances, she did, after a little reflection, venture the following question. “Might he not?—Is not it possible, that when enquiring, as you thought, into the state of your affections, he might be alluding to Mr. Martin—he might have Mr. Martin's interest in view? But Harriet rejected the suspicion with spirit.

“Mr. Martin! No indeed!—There was not a hint of Mr. Martin. I hope I know better now, than to care for Mr. Martin, or to be suspected of it.”

When Harriet had closed her evidence, she appealed to her dear Miss Woodhouse, to say whether she had not good ground for hope.

“I never should have presumed to think of it at first,” said she, “but for you. You told me to observe him carefully, and let his behaviour be the rule of mine—and so I have. But now I seem to feel that I may deserve him; and that if he does chuse me, it will not be anything so very wonderful.”

The bitter feelings occasioned by this speech, the many bitter feelings, made the utmost exertion necessary on Emma’s side, to enable her to say on reply,

“Harriet, I will only venture to declare, that Mr. Knightley is the last man in the world, who would intentionally give any woman the idea of his feeling for her more than he really does.”

Harriet seemed ready to worship her friend for a sentence so satisfactory; and Emma was only saved from raptures and fondness, which at that moment would have been dreadful penance, by the sound of her father's footsteps. He was coming through the hall. Harriet was too much agitated to encounter him. “She could not compose herself—Mr. Woodhouse would be alarmed—she had better go;”—with most ready encouragement from her friend, therefore, she passed off through another door—and the moment she was gone, this was the spontaneous burst of Emma’s feelings: “Oh God! that I had never seen her!”
The rest of the day, the following night, were hardly enough for her thoughts.—She was bewildered amidst the confusion of all that had rushed on her within the last few hours. Every moment had brought a fresh surprize; and every surprize must be matter of humiliation to her.—How to understand it all! How to understand the deceptions she had been thus practising on herself, and living under!—The blunders, the blindness of her own head and heart!—she sat still, she walked about, she tried her own room, she tried the shrubbery—in every place, every posture, she perceived that she had acted most weakly; that she had been imposed on by others in a most mortifying degree; that she had been imposing on herself in a degree yet more mortifying; that she was wretched, and should probably find this day but the beginning of wretchedness.

To understand, thoroughly understand her own heart, was the first endeavour. To that point went every leisure moment which her father's claims on her allowed, and every moment of involuntary absence of mind.

How long had Mr. Knightley been so dear to her, as every feeling declared him now to be? When had his influence, such influence begun?— When had he succeeded to that place in her affection, which Frank Churchill had once, for a short period, occupied?—She looked back; she compared the two—compared them, as they had always stood in her estimation, from the time of the latter's becoming known to her—and as they must at any time have been compared by her, had it—oh! had it, by any blessed felicity, occurred to her, to institute the comparison.—She saw that there never had been a time when she did not consider Mr. Knightley as infinitely the superior, or when his regard for her had not been infinitely the most dear. She saw, that in persuading herself, in fancying, in acting to the contrary, she had been entirely under a delusion, totally ignorant of her own heart—and, in short, that she had never really cared for Frank Churchill at all!

This was the conclusion of the first series of reflection. This was the knowledge of herself, on the first question of inquiry, which she reached; and without being long in reaching it.—She was most sorrowfully indignant; ashamed of every sensation but the one revealed to her—her affection for Mr. Knightley.—Every other part of her mind was disgusting.

With insufferable vanity had she believed herself in the secret of every body's feelings; with unpardonable arrogance proposed to arrange every body's destiny. She was proved to have been universally mistaken; and she had not quite done nothing—for she had done mischief. She had brought evil on Harriet, on herself, and she too much feared, on Mr. Knightley.—Were this most unequal of all connexions to take place, on her must rest all the reproach of having given it a beginning; for his attachment, she must believe to be produced only by a consciousness of Harriet's;—and even were this not the case, he would never have known Harriet at all but for her folly.

Mr. Knightley and Harriet Smith!—It was a union to distance every wonder of the kind.—The attachment of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax became commonplace, threadbare, stale in the comparison, exciting no surprize, presenting no disparity, affording nothing to be said or thought.—Mr. Knightley and Harriet Smith!—Such an elevation on her side! Such a debasement on his! It was horrible to Emma to think how it must sink him in the general opinion, to foresee the smiles, the sneers, the merriment it would prompt at his expense; the mortification and disdain of his brother, the thousand inconveniences to himself.—Could it be?—No; it was impossible. And yet it was far, very far, from impossible.—Was it a new circumstance for a man of first-rate abilities to be captivated by very inferior powers? Was it new for one, perhaps too busy to seek, to be the prize of
a girl who would seek him?—Was it new for any thing in this world to be unequal, inconsistent, incongruous—or for chance and circumstance (as second causes) to direct the human fate?

Oh! had she never brought Harriet forward! Had she left her where she ought, and where he had told her she ought!—Had she not, with a folly which no tongue could express, prevented her marrying the unexceptionable young man who would have made her happy and respectable in the line of life to which she ought to belong—all would have been safe; none of this dreadful sequel would have been.

How Harriet could ever have had the presumption to raise her thoughts to Mr. Knightley!—How she could dare to fancy herself the chosen of such a man till actually assured of it!—But Harriet was less humble, had fewer scruples than formerly.—Her inferiority, whether of mind or situation, seemed little felt.—She had seemed more sensible of Mr. Elton’s being to stoop in marrying her, than she now seemed of Mr. Knightley’s.—Alas! was not that her own doing too? Who had been at pains to give Harriet notions of self-consequence but herself?—Who but herself had taught her, that she was to elevate herself if possible, and that her claims were great to a high worldly establishment?—If Harriet, from being humble, were grown vain, it was her doing too.

CHAPTER XII

Till now that she was threatened with its loss, Emma had never known how much of her happiness depended on being first with Mr. Knightley, first in interest and affection.—Satisfied that it was so, and feeling it her due, she had enjoyed it without reflection; and only in the dread of being supplanted, found how inexpressibly important it had been.—Long, very long, she felt she had been first; for, having no female connexions of his own, there had been only Isabella whose claims could be compared with hers, and she had always known exactly how far he loved and esteemed Isabella. She had herself been first with him for many years past. She had not deserved it; she had often been negligent or perverse, slighting his advice, or even wilfully opposing him, insensible of half his merits, and quarrelling with him because he would not acknowledge her false and insolent estimate of her own—but still, from family attachment and habit, and thorough excellence of mind, he had loved her, and watched over her from a girl, with an endeavour to improve her, and an anxiety for her doing right, which no other creature had at all shared. In spite of all her faults, she knew she was dear to him; might she not say, very dear?—When the suggestions of hope, however, which must follow here, presented themselves, she could not presume to indulge them. Harriet Smith might think herself not unworthy of being peculiarly, exclusively, passionately loved by Mr. Knightley. She could not. She could not flatter herself with any idea of blindness in his attachment to her. She had received a very recent proof of its impartiality.—How shocked had he been by her behaviour to Miss Bates! How directly, how strongly had he expressed himself to her on the subject!—Not too strongly for the offence—but far, far too strongly to issue from any feeling softer than upright justice and clear-sighted goodwill.—She had no hope, nothing to deserve the name of hope, that he could have that sort of affection for herself which was now in question; but there was a hope (at times a slight one, at times much stronger,) that Harriet might have deceived herself, and be overrating his regard for her.—Wish it she must, for his sake—be the consequence nothing to herself, but his remaining single all his life. Could she be secure of that, indeed, of his never marrying at all, she believed she should be perfectly satisfied.—Let him but continue the same Mr.
Knightley to her and her father, the same Mr. Knightley to all the world; let Donwell and Hartfield lose none of their precious intercourse of friendship and confidence, and her peace would be fully secured.—Marriage, in fact, would not do for her. It would be incompatible with what she owed to her father, and with what she felt for him. Nothing should separate her from her father. She would not marry, even if she were asked by Mr. Knightley.

It must be her ardent wish that Harriet might be disappointed; and she hoped, that when able to see them together again, she might at least be able to ascertain what the chances for it were.—She should see them henceforward with the closest observance; and wretchedly as she had hitherto misunderstood even those she was watching, she did not know how to admit that she could be blinded here.—He was expected back every day. The power of observation would be soon given—frightfully soon it appeared when her thoughts were in one course. In the meanwhile, she resolved against seeing Harriet.—It would do neither of them good, it would do the subject no good, to be talking of it farther.—She was resolved not to be convinced, as long as she could doubt, and yet had no authority for opposing Harriet’s confidence. To talk would be only to irritate.—She wrote to her, therefore, kindly, but decisively, to beg that she would not, at present, come to Hartfield; acknowledging it to be her conviction, that all farther confidential discussion of one topic had better be avoided; and hoping, that if a few days were allowed to pass before they met again, except in the company of others—she objected only to a tête-à-tête—they might be able to act as if they had forgotten the conversation of yesterday.—Harriet submitted, and approved, and was grateful.

This point was just arranged, when a visitor arrived to tear Emma’s thoughts a little from the one subject which had engrossed them, sleeping or waking, the last twenty-four hours—Mrs. Weston, who had been calling on her daughter-in-law elect, and took Hartfield in her way home, almost as much in duty to Emma as in pleasure to herself, to relate all the particulars of so interesting an interview.

Mr. Weston had accompanied her to Mrs. Bates’s, and gone through his share of this essential attention most handsomely; but she having then induced Miss Fairfax to join her in an airing, was now returned with much more to say, and much more to say with satisfaction, than a quarter of an hour spent in Mrs. Bates’s parlour, with all the encumbrance of awkward feelings, could have afforded.

A little curiosity Emma had; and she made the most of it while her friend related. Mrs. Weston had set off to pay the visit in a good deal of agitation herself; and in the first place had wished not to go at all at present, to be allowed merely to write to Miss Fairfax instead, and to defer this ceremonious call till a little time had passed, and Mr. Churchill could be reconciled to the engagement’s becoming known; as, considering every thing, she thought such a visit could not be paid without leading to reports:—but Mr. Weston had thought differently; he was extremely anxious to shew his approbation to Miss Fairfax and her family, and did not conceive that any suspicion could be excited by it; or if it were, that it would be of any consequence; for “such things,” he observed, “always got about.” Emma smiled, and felt that Mr. Weston had very good reason for saying so. They had gone, in short—and very great had been the evident distress and confusion of the lady. She had hardly been able to speak a word, and every look and action had shewn how deeply she was suffering from consciousness. The quiet, heart-felt satisfaction of the old lady, and the rapturous delight of her daughter—who proved even too joyous to talk as usual, had been a gratifying, yet almost an affecting, scene. They were both so truly respectable in their happiness, so disinterested in every sensation; thought so much of Jane; so much of every body, and so little of themselves, that every kindly feeling was at work for them. Miss Fairfax’s recent illness had offered
a fair plea for Mrs. Weston to invite her to an airing; she had drawn back and declined at first, but, on being pressed had yielded; and, in the course of their drive, Mrs. Weston had, by gentle encouragement, overcome so much of her embarrassment, as to bring her to converse on the important subject. Apologies for her seemingly ungracious silence in their first reception, and the warmest expressions of the gratitude she was always feeling towards herself and Mr. Weston, must necessarily open the cause; but when these effusions were put by, they had talked a good deal of the present and of the future state of the engagement. Mrs. Weston was convinced that such conversation must be the greatest relief to her companion, pent up within her own mind as everything had so long been, and was very much pleased with all that she had said on the subject.

"On the misery of what she had suffered, during the concealment of so many months," continued Mrs. Weston, "she was energetic. This was one of her expressions. 'I will not say, that since I entered into the engagement I have not had some happy moments; but I can say, that I have never known the blessing of one tranquil hour:' — and the quivering lip, Emma, which uttered it, was an attestation that I felt at my heart."

"Poor girl!" said Emma. "She thinks herself wrong, then, for having consented to a private engagement?"

"Wrong! No one, I believe, can blame her more than she is disposed to blame herself. 'The consequence,' said she, 'has been a state of perpetual suffering to me; and so it ought. But after all the punishment that misconduct can bring, it is still not less misconduct. Pain is no expiation. I never can be blameless. I have been acting contrary to all my sense of right; and the fortunate turn that everything has taken, and the kindness I am now receiving, is what my conscience tells me ought not to be.' 'Do not imagine, madam,' she continued, 'that I was taught wrong. Do not let any reflection fall on the principles or the care of the friends who brought me up. The error has been all my own; and I do assure you that, with all the excuse that present circumstances may appear to give, I shall yet dread making the story known to Colonel Campbell.'"

"Poor girl!" said Emma again. "She loves him then excessively, I suppose. It must have been from attachment only, that she could be led to form the engagement. Her affection must have overpowered her judgment."

"Yes, I have no doubt of her being extremely attached to him."

"I am afraid," returned Emma, sighing, "that I must often have contributed to make her unhappy."

"On your side, my love, it was very innocently done. But she probably had something of that in her thoughts, when alluding to the misunderstandings which he had given us hints of before. One natural consequence of the evil she had involved herself in," she said, "was that of making her unreasonable. The consciousness of having done amiss, had exposed her to a thousand inquietudes, and made her captious and irritable to a degree that must have been—that had been—hard for him to bear. 'I did not make the allowances,' said she, 'which I ought to have done, for his temper and spirits—his delightful spirits, and that gaiety, that playfulness of disposition, which, under any other circumstances, would, I am sure, have been as constantly bewitching to me, as they were at first.' She then began to speak of you, and of the great kindness you had shewn her during her illness; and with a blush which shewed me how it was all connected, desired me, whenever I had an opportunity, to thank you—I could not thank you too much—for every wish and every endeavour
to do her good. She was sensible that you had never received any proper acknowledgment from
herself."

“If I did not know her to be happy now,” said Emma, seriously, “which, in spite of every little
drawback from her scrupulous conscience, she must be, I could not bear these thanks;—for, oh!
Mrs. Weston, if there were an account drawn up of the evil and the good I have done Miss Fairfax!—
Well (checking herself, and trying to be more lively), this is all to be forgotten. You are very kind to
bring me these interesting particulars. They shew her to the greatest advantage. I am sure she is
very good—I hope she will be very happy. It is fit that the fortune should be on his side, for I think
the merit will be all on hers.”

Such a conclusion could not pass unanswered by Mrs. Weston. She thought well of Frank in almost
every respect; and, what was more, she loved him very much, and her defence was, therefore,
earnest. She talked with a great deal of reason, and at least equal affection—but she had too much
to urge for Emma's attention; it was soon gone to Brunswick Square or to Donwell; she forgot to
attempt to listen; and when Mrs. Weston ended with, “We have not yet had the letter we are so
anxious for, you know, but I hope it will soon come,” she was obliged to pause before she answered,
and at last obliged to answer at random, before she could at all recollect what letter it was which
they were so anxious for.

“Are you well, my Emma?” was Mrs. Weston’s parting question.

“Oh! perfectly. I am always well, you know. Be sure to give me intelligence of the letter as soon as
possible.”

Mrs. Weston’s communications furnished Emma with more food for unpleasant reflection, by
increasing her esteem and compassion, and her sense of past injustice towards Miss Fairfax. She
bitterly regretted not having sought a closer acquaintance with her, and blushed for the envious
feelings which had certainly been, in some measure, the cause. Had she followed Mr. Knightley’s
known wishes, in paying that attention to Miss Fairfax, which was every way her due; had she tried
to know her better; had she done her part towards intimacy; had she endeavoured to find a friend
there instead of in Harriet Smith; she must, in all probability, have been spared from every pain
which pressed on her now.—Birth, abilities, and education, had been equally marking one as an
associate for her, to be received with gratitude; and the other—what was she?—Supposing even
that they had never become intimate friends; that she had never been admitted into Miss Fairfax's
confidence on this important matter—which was most probable—still, in knowing her as she ought,
and as she might, she must have been preserved from the abominable suspicions of an improper
attachment to Mr. Dixon, which she had not only so foolishly fashioned and harboured herself, but
had so unpardonably imparted; an idea which she greatly feared had been made a subject of
material distress to the delicacy of Jane's feelings, by the levity or carelessness of Frank Churchill’s.
Of all the sources of evil surrounding the former, since her coming to Highbury, she was persuaded
that she must herself have been the worst. She must have been a perpetual enemy. They never
could have been all three together, without her having stabbed Jane Fairfax's peace in a thousand
instances; and on Box Hill, perhaps, it had been the agony of a mind that would bear no more.

The evening of this day was very long, and melancholy, at Hartfield. The weather added what it
could of gloom. A cold stormy rain set in, and nothing of July appeared but in the trees and shrubs,
which the wind was despoiling, and the length of the day, which only made such cruel sights the
longer visible.
The weather affected Mr. Woodhouse, and he could only be kept tolerably comfortable by almost ceaseless attention on his daughter's side, and by exertions which had never cost her half so much before. It reminded her of their first forlorn tête-a-tête, on the evening of Mrs. Weston's wedding-day; but Mr. Knightley had walked in then, soon after tea, and dissipated every melancholy fancy. Alas! such delightful proofs of Hartfield's attraction, as those sort of visits conveyed, might shortly be over. The picture which she had then drawn of the privations of the approaching winter, had proved erroneous; no friends had deserted them, no pleasures had been lost.—But her present forebodings she feared would experience no similar contradiction. The prospect before her now, was threatening to a degree that could not be entirely dispelled—that might not be even partially brightened. If all took place that might take place among the circle of her friends, Hartfield must be comparatively deserted; and she left to cheer her father with the spirits only of ruined happiness.

The child to be born at Randalls must be a tie there even dearer than herself; and Mrs. Weston's heart and time would be occupied by it. They should lose her; and, probably, in great measure, her husband also.—Frank Churchill would return among them no more; and Miss Fairfax, it was reasonable to suppose, would soon cease to belong to Highbury. They would be married, and settled either at or near Enscombe. All that were good would be withdrawn; and if to these losses, the loss of Donwell were to be added, what would remain of cheerful or of rational society within their reach? Mr. Knightley to be no longer coming there for his evening comfort!—No longer walking in at all hours, as if ever willing to change his own home for their's!—How was it to be endured? And if he were to be lost to them for Harriet's sake; if he were to be thought of hereafter, as finding in Harriet's society all that he wanted; if Harriet were to be the chosen, the first, the dearest, the friend, the wife to whom he looked for all the best blessings of existence; what could be increasing Emma's wretchedness but the reflection never far distant from her mind, that it had been all her own work.

When it came to such a pitch as this, she was not able to refrain from a start, or a heavy sigh, or even from walking about the room for a few seconds—and the only source whence any thing like consolation or composure could be drawn, was in the resolution of her own better conduct, and the hope that, however inferior in spirit and gaiety might be the following and every future winter of her life to the past, it would yet find her more rational, more acquainted with herself, and leave her less to regret when it were gone.

CHAPTER XIII

The weather continued much the same all the following morning; and the same loneliness, and the same melancholy, seemed to reign at Hartfield—but in the afternoon it cleared; the wind changed into a softer quarter; the clouds were carried off; the sun appeared; it was summer again. With all the eagerness which such a transition gives, Emma resolved to be out of doors as soon as possible. Never had the exquisite sight, smell, sensation of nature, tranquil, warm, and brilliant after a storm, been more attractive to her. She longed for the serenity they might gradually introduce; and on Mr. Perry's coming in soon after dinner, with a disengaged hour to give her father, she lost no time in hurrying into the shrubbery.—There, with spirits freshened, and thoughts a little relieved, she had taken a few turns, when she saw Mr. Knightley passing through the garden door, and coming towards her.—It was the first intimation of his being returned from London. She had been thinking
of him the moment before, as unquestionably sixteen miles distant.—There was time only for the quickest arrangement of mind. She must be collected and calm. In half a minute they were together. The "How d'ye do's" were quiet and constrained on each side. She asked after their mutual friends; they were all well.—When had he left them?—Only that morning. He must have had a wet ride.—Yes.—He meant to walk with her, she found. "He had just looked into the dining-room, and as he was not wanted there, preferred being out of doors."—She thought he neither looked nor spoke cheerfully; and the first possible cause for it, suggested by her fears, was, that he had perhaps been communicating his plans to his brother, and was pained by the manner in which they had been received.

They walked together. He was silent. She thought he was often looking at her, and trying for a fuller view of her face than it suited her to give. And this belief produced another dread. Perhaps he wanted to speak to her, of his attachment to Harriet; he might be watching for encouragement to begin.—She did not, could not, feel equal to lead the way to any such subject. He must do it all himself. Yet she could not bear this silence. With him it was most unnatural. She considered—resolved—and, trying to smile, began—

“You have some news to hear, now you are come back, that will rather surprize you.”

“Have I?” said he quietly, and looking at her; “of what nature?”

“Oh! the best nature in the world—a wedding.”

After waiting a moment, as if to be sure she intended to say no more, he replied,

“If you mean Miss Fairfax and Frank Churchill, I have heard that already.”

“How is it possible?” cried Emma, turning her glowing cheeks towards him; for, while she spoke, it occurred to her that he might have called at Mrs. Goddard’s in his way.

“I had a few lines on parish business from Mr. Weston this morning, and at the end of them he gave me a brief account of what had happened.”

Emma was quite relieved, and could presently say, with a little more composure,

“You probably have been less surprized than any of us, for you have had your suspicions.—I have not forgotten that you once tried to give me a caution.—I wish I had attended to it—but—(with a sinking voice and a heavy sigh) I seem to have been doomed to blindness.”

For a moment or two nothing was said, and she was unsuspicous of having excited any particular interest, till she found her arm drawn within his, and pressed against his heart, and heard him thus saying, in a tone of great sensibility, speaking low,

“Time, my dearest Emma, time will heal the wound.—Your own excellent sense—your exertions for your father’s sake—I know you will not allow yourself—.” Her arm was pressed again, as he added, in a more broken and subdued accent, “The feelings of the warmest friendship—Indignation—Abominable scoundrel!”—And in a louder, steadier tone, he concluded with, “He will soon be gone. They will soon be in Yorkshire. I am sorry for her. She deserves a better fate.”
Emma understood him; and as soon as she could recover from the flutter of pleasure, excited by such tender consideration, replied,

“You are very kind—but you are mistaken—and I must set you right.—I am not in want of that sort of compassion. My blindness to what was going on, led me to act by them in a way that I must always be ashamed of, and I was very foolishly tempted to say and do many things which may well lay me open to unpleasant conjectures, but I have no other reason to regret that I was not in the secret earlier.”

“Emma!” cried he, looking eagerly at her, “are you, indeed?”—but checking himself—“No, no, I understand you—forgive me—I am pleased that you can say even so much.—He is no object of regret, indeed! and it will not be very long, I hope, before that becomes the acknowledgment of more than your reason.—Fortunate that your affections were not farther entangled!—I could never, I confess, from your manners, assure myself as to the degree of what you felt—I could only be certain that there was a preference—and a preference which I never believed him to deserve.—He is a disgrace to the name of man.—And is he to be rewarded with that sweet young woman?—Jane, Jane, you will be a miserable creature.”

“Mr. Knightley,” said Emma, trying to be lively, but really confused—“I am in a very extraordinary situation. I cannot let you continue in your error; and yet, perhaps, since my manners gave such an impression, I have as much reason to be ashamed of confessing that I never have been at all attached to the person we are speaking of, as it might be natural for a woman to feel in confessing exactly the reverse.—But I never have.”

He listened in perfect silence. She wished him to speak, but he would not. She supposed she must say more before she were entitled to his clemency; but it was a hard case to be obliged still to lower herself in his opinion. She went on, however.

“I have very little to say for my own conduct.—I was tempted by his attentions, and allowed myself to appear pleased.—An old story, probably—a common case—and no more than has happened to hundreds of my sex before; and yet it may not be the more excusable in one who sets up as I do for Understanding. Many circumstances assisted the temptation. He was the son of Mr. Weston—he was continually here—I always found him very pleasant—and, in short, for (with a sigh) let me swell out the causes ever so ingeniously, they all centre in this at last—my vanity was flattered, and I allowed his attentions. Latterly, however—for some time, indeed—I have had no idea of their meaning any thing.—I thought them a habit, a trick, nothing that called for seriousness on my side. He has imposed on me, but he has not injured me. I have never been attached to him. And now I can tolerably comprehend his behaviour. He never wished to attach me. It was merely a blind to conceal his real situation with another.—It was his object to blind all about him; and no one, I am sure, could be more effectually blinded than myself—except that I was not blinded—that it was my good fortune—that, in short, I was somehow or other safe from him.”

She had hoped for an answer here—for a few words to say that her conduct was at least intelligible; but he was silent; and, as far as she could judge, deep in thought. At last, and tolerably in his usual tone, he said,

“I have never had a high opinion of Frank Churchill.—I can suppose, however, that I may have underrated him. My acquaintance with him has been but trifling.—And even if I have not underrated him hitherto, he may yet turn out well.—With such a woman he has a chance.—I have
no motive for wishing him ill—and for her sake, whose happiness will be involved in his good
caracter and conduct, I shall certainly wish him well.”

“I have no doubt of their being happy together,” said Emma; “I believe them to be very mutually and
very sincerely attached.”

“He is a most fortunate man!” returned Mr. Knightley, with energy. “So early in life—at three-and-
twenty—a period when, if a man chuses a wife, he generally chuses ill. At three-and-twenty to have
drawn such a prize! What years of felicity that man, in all human calculation, has before him!—
Assured of the love of such a woman—the disinterested love, for Jane Fairfax’s character vouches
for her disinterestedness; every thing in his favour,—equality of situation—I mean, as far as
regards society, and all the habits and manners that are important; equality in every point but
one—and that one, since the purity of her heart is not to be doubted, such as must increase his
felicity, for it will be his to bestow the only advantages she wants.—A man would always wish to
give a woman a better home than the one he takes her from; and he who can do it, where there is no
doubt of her regard, must, I think, be the happiest of mortals.—Frank Churchill is, indeed, the
favourite of fortune. Every thing turns out for his good.—He meets with a young woman at a
watering-place, gains her affection, cannot even weary her by negligent treatment—and had he and
all his family sought round the world for a perfect wife for him, they could not have found her
superior.—His aunt is in the way.—His aunt dies.—He has only to speak.—His friends are eager to
promote his happiness.—He had used every body ill—and they are all delighted to forgive him.—
He is a fortunate man indeed!”

“You speak as if you envied him.”

“And I do envy him, Emma. In one respect he is the object of my envy.”

Emma could say no more. They seemed to be within half a sentence of Harriet, and her immediate
feeling was to avert the subject, if possible. She made her plan; she would speak of something
totally different—the children in Brunswick Square; and she only waited for breath to begin, when
Mr. Knightley startled her, by saying,

“You will not ask me what is the point of envy.—You are determined, I see, to have no curiosity.—
You are wise—but I cannot be wise. Emma, I must tell you what you will not ask, though I may wish
it unsaid the next moment.”

“Oh! then, don’t speak it, don’t speak it,” she eagerly cried. “Take a little time, consider, do not
commit yourself.”

“Thank you,” said he, in an accent of deep mortification, and not another syllable followed.

Emma could not bear to give him pain. He was wishing to confide in her—perhaps to consult her;—
cost her what it would, she would listen. She might assist his resolution, or reconcile him to it; she
might give just praise to Harriet, or, by representing to him his own independence, relieve him from
that state of indecision, which must be more intolerable than any alternative to such a mind as
his.—They had reached the house.

“You are going in, I suppose?” said he.
“No,”—replied Emma—quite confirmed by the depressed manner in which he still spoke—"I should like to take another turn. Mr. Perry is not gone.” And, after proceeding a few steps, she added—"I stopped you ungraciously, just now, Mr. Knightley, and, I am afraid, gave you pain.—But if you have any wish to speak openly to me as a friend, or to ask my opinion of anything that you may have in contemplation—as a friend, indeed, you may command me.—I will hear whatever you like. I will tell you exactly what I think.”

“As a friend!”—repeated Mr. Knightley.—“Emma, that I fear is a word—No, I have no wish—Stay, yes, why should I hesitate?—I have gone too far already for concealment.—Emma, I accept your offer—Extraordinary as it may seem, I accept it, and refer myself to you as a friend.—Tell me, then, have I no chance of ever succeeding?”

He stopped in his earnestness to look the question, and the expression of his eyes overpowered her.

“My dearest Emma,” said he, "for dearest you will always be, whatever the event of this hour’s conversation, my dearest, most beloved Emma—tell me at once. Say 'No,' if it is to be said."—She could really say nothing.—“You are silent,” he cried, with great animation; “absolutely silent! at present I ask no more.”

Emma was almost ready to sink under the agitation of this moment. The dread of being awakened from the happiest dream, was perhaps the most prominent feeling.

“I cannot make speeches, Emma:” he soon resumed; and in a tone of such sincere, decided, intelligible tenderness as was tolerably convincing.—“If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more. But you know what I am.—You hear nothing but truth from me.—I have blamed you, and lectured you, and you have borne it as no other woman in England would have borne it.—Bear with the truths I would tell you now, dearest Emma, as well as you have borne with them. The manner, perhaps, may have as little to recommend them. God knows, I have been a very indifferent lover.—But you understand me.—Yes, you see, you understand my feelings—and will return them if you can. At present, I ask only to hear, once to hear your voice.”

While he spoke, Emma’s mind was most busy, and, with all the wonderful velocity of thought, had been able—and yet without losing a word—to catch and comprehend the exact truth of the whole; to see that Harriet’s hopes had been entirely groundless, a mistake, a delusion, as complete a delusion as any of her own—that Harriet was nothing; that she was every thing herself; that what she had been saying relative to Harriet had been all taken as the language of her own feelings; and that her agitation, her doubts, her reluctance, her discouragement, had been all received as discouragement from herself.—And not only was there time for these convictions, with all their glow of attendant happiness; there was time also to rejoice that Harriet’s secret had not escaped her, and to resolve that it need not, and should not.—It was all the service she could now render her poor friend; for as to any of that heroism of sentiment which might have prompted her to entreat him to transfer his affection from herself to Harriet, as infinitely the most worthy of the two—or even the more simple sublimity of resolving to refuse him at once and for ever, without vouchsafing any motive, because he could not marry them both, Emma had it not. She felt for Harriet, with pain and with contrition; but no flight of generosity run mad, opposing all that could be probable or reasonable, entered her brain. She had led her friend astray, and it would be a reproach to her for ever; but her judgment was as strong as her feelings, and as strong as it had ever been before, in reprobating any such alliance for him, as most unequal and degrading. Her way was clear, though not quite smooth.—She spoke then, on being so entreated.—What did she say?—Just what she
ought, of course. A lady always does.—She said enough to shew there need not be despair—and to invite him to say more himself. He had despaired at one period; he had received such an injunction to caution and silence, as for the time crushed every hope;—she had begun by refusing to hear him.—The change had perhaps been somewhat sudden;—her proposal of taking another turn, her renewing the conversation which she had just put an end to, might be a little extraordinary!—She felt its inconsistency; but Mr. Knightley was so obliging as to put up with it, and seek no farther explanation.

Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken; but where, as in this case, though the conduct is mistaken, the feelings are not, it may not be very material.—Mr. Knightley could not impute to Emma a more relenting heart than she possessed, or a heart more disposed to accept of his.

He had, in fact, been wholly unsuspicious of his own influence. He had followed her into the shrubbery with no idea of trying it. He had come, in his anxiety to see how she bore Frank Churchill’s engagement, with no selfish view, no view at all, but of endeavouring, if she allowed him an opening, to soothe or to counsel her.—The rest had been the work of the moment, the immediate effect of what he heard, on his feelings. The delightful assurance of her total indifference towards Frank Churchill, of her having a heart completely disengaged from him, had given birth to the hope, that, in time, he might gain her affection himself;—but it had been no present hope—he had only, in the momentary conquest of eagerness over judgment, aspired to be told that she did not forbid his attempt to attach her.—The superior hopes which gradually opened were so much the more enchanting.—The affection, which he had been asking to be allowed to create, if he could, was already his!—Within half an hour, he had passed from a thoroughly distressed state of mind, to something so like perfect happiness, that it could bear no other name.

*Her* change was equal.—This one half-hour had given to each the same precious certainty of being beloved, had cleared from each the same degree of ignorance, jealousy, or distrust.—On his side, there had been a long-standing jealousy, old as the arrival, or even the expectation, of Frank Churchill.—He had been in love with Emma, and jealous of Frank Churchill, from about the same period, one sentiment having probably enlightened him as to the other. It was his jealousy of Frank Churchill that had taken him from the country.—The Box Hill party had decided him on going away. He would save himself from witnessing again such permitted, encouraged attentions.—He had gone to learn to be indifferent.—But he had gone to a wrong place. There was too much domestic happiness in his brother’s house; woman wore too amiable a form in it; Isabella was too much like Emma—differing only in those striking inferiorities, which always brought the other in brilliancy before him, for much to have been done, even had his time been longer.—He had stayed on, however, vigorously, day after day—till this very morning’s post had conveyed the history of Jane Fairfax.—Then, with the gladness which must be felt, nay, which he did not scruple to feel, having never believed Frank Churchill to be at all deserving Emma, was there so much fond solicitude, so much keen anxiety for her, that he could stay no longer. He had ridden home through the rain; and had walked up directly after dinner, to see how this sweetest and best of all creatures, faultless in spite of all her faults, bore the discovery.

He had found her agitated and low.—Frank Churchill was a villain.— He heard her declare that she had never loved him. Frank Churchill’s character was not desperate.—She was his own Emma, by hand and word, when they returned into the house; and if he could have thought of Frank Churchill then, he might have deemed him a very good sort of fellow.
Pride and Prejudice:

Chapter 1

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

“My dear Mr. Bennet,” said his lady to him one day, “have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?”

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

“But it is,” returned she; “for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.”

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

“Do you not want to know who has taken it?” cried his wife impatiently.

“You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.”

This was invitation enough.

“Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it, that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week.”

“What is his name?”

“Bingley.”

“Is he married or single?”

“Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!”

“How so? How can it affect them?”

“My dear Mr. Bennet,” replied his wife, “how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.”
“Is that his design in settling here?”

“Design! Nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes.”

“I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley may like you the best of the party.”

“My dear, you flatter me. I certainly have had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown-up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty.”

“In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of.”

“But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood.”

“It is more than I engage for, I assure you.”

“But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general, you know, they visit no newcomers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him if you do not.”

“You are over-scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy.”

“I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving her the preference.”

“They have none of them much to recommend them,” replied he; “they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters.”

“Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion for my poor nerves.”

“You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least.”

“Ah, you do not know what I suffer.”

“But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood.”
“It will be no use to us, if twenty such should come, since you will not visit them.”

“Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty, I will visit them all.”

Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.

Chapter 2

Mr. Bennet was among the earliest of those who waited on Mr. Bingley. He had always intended to visit him, though to the last always assuring his wife that he should not go; and till the evening after the visit was paid she had no knowledge of it. It was then disclosed in the following manner. Observing his second daughter employed in trimming a hat, he suddenly addressed her with:

“I hope Mr. Bingley will like it, Lizzy.”

“We are not in a way to know what Mr. Bingley likes,” said her mother resentfully, “since we are not to visit.”

“But you forget, mamma,” said Elizabeth, “that we shall meet him at the assemblies, and that Mrs. Long promised to introduce him.”

“I do not believe Mrs. Long will do any such thing. She has two nieces of her own. She is a selfish, hypocritical woman, and I have no opinion of her.”

“No more have I,” said Mr. Bennet; “and I am glad to find that you do not depend on her serving you.”

Mrs. Bennet deigned not to make any reply, but, unable to contain herself, began scolding one of her daughters.

“Don’t keep coughing so, Kitty, for Heaven’s sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves. You tear them to pieces.”

“Kitty has no discretion in her coughs,” said her father; “she times them ill.”

“I do not cough for my own amusement,” replied Kitty fretfully. “When is your next ball to be, Lizzy?”
“To-morrow fortnight.”

“Aye, so it is,” cried her mother, “and Mrs. Long does not come back till the day before; so it will be impossible for her to introduce him, for she will not know him herself.”

“Then, my dear, you may have the advantage of your friend, and introduce Mr. Bingley to her.”

“Impossible, Mr. Bennet, impossible, when I am not acquainted with him myself; how can you be so teasing?”

“I honour your circumspection. A fortnight’s acquaintance is certainly very little. One cannot know what a man really is by the end of a fortnight. But if we do not venture somebody else will; and after all, Mrs. Long and her nieces must stand their chance; and, therefore, as she will think it an act of kindness, if you decline the office, I will take it on myself.”

The girls stared at their father. Mrs. Bennet said only, “Nonsense, nonsense!”

“What can be the meaning of that emphatic exclamation?” cried he. “Do you consider the forms of introduction, and the stress that is laid on them, as nonsense? I cannot quite agree with you there. What say you, Mary? For you are a young lady of deep reflection, I know, and read great books and make extracts.”

Mary wished to say something sensible, but knew not how.

“While Mary is adjusting her ideas,” he continued, “let us return to Mr. Bingley.”

“I am sick of Mr. Bingley,” cried his wife.

“I am sorry to hear that; but why did not you tell me that before? If I had known as much this morning I certainly would not have called on him. It is very unlucky; but as I have actually paid the visit, we cannot escape the acquaintance now.”

The astonishment of the ladies was just what he wished; that of Mrs. Bennet perhaps surpassing the rest; though, when the first tumult of joy was over, she began to declare that it was what she had expected all the while.

“How good it was in you, my dear Mr. Bennet! But I knew I should persuade you at last. I was sure you loved your girls too well to neglect such an acquaintance. Well, how pleased I am! and it is such a good joke, too, that you should have gone this morning and never said a word about it till now.”

“Now, Kitty, you may cough as much as you choose,” said Mr. Bennet; and, as he spoke, he left the room, fatigued with the raptures of his wife.

“What an excellent father you have, girls!” said she, when the door was shut. “I do not know how you will ever make him amends for his kindness; or me, either, for that matter. At our time of life it is not so pleasant, I can tell you, to be making new acquaintances every day; but for your sakes, we
would do anything. Lydia, my love, though you are the youngest, I dare say Mr. Bingley will dance with you at the next ball."

“Oh!” said Lydia stoutly, “I am not afraid; for though I am the youngest, I’m the tallest.”

The rest of the evening was spent in conjecturing how soon he would return Mr. Bennet’s visit, and determining when they should ask him to dinner.

Chapter 3

Not all that Mrs. Bennet, however, with the assistance of her five daughters, could ask on the subject, was sufficient to draw from her husband any satisfactory description of Mr. Bingley. They attacked him in various ways—with barefaced questions, ingenious suppositions, and distant surmises; but he eluded the skill of them all, and they were at last obliged to accept the second-hand intelligence of their neighbour, Lady Lucas. Her report was highly favourable. Sir William had been delighted with him. He was quite young, wonderfully handsome, extremely agreeable, and, to crown the whole, he meant to be at the next assembly with a large party. Nothing could be more delightful! To be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love; and very lively hopes of Mr. Bingley’s heart were entertained.

“If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield,” said Mrs. Bennet to her husband, “and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for.”

In a few days Mr. Bingley returned Mr. Bennet’s visit, and sat about ten minutes with him in his library. He had entertained hopes of being admitted to a sight of the young ladies, of whose beauty he had heard much; but he saw only the father. The ladies were somewhat more fortunate, for they had the advantage of ascertaining from an upper window that he wore a blue coat, and rode a black horse.

An invitation to dinner was soon afterwards dispatched; and already had Mrs. Bennet planned the courses that were to do credit to her housekeeping, when an answer arrived which deferred it all. Mr. Bingley was obliged to be in town the following day, and, consequently, unable to accept the honour of their invitation, etc. Mrs. Bennet was quite disconcerted. She could not imagine what business he could have in town so soon after his arrival in Hertfordshire; and she began to fear that he might be always flying about from one place to another, and never settled at Netherfield as he ought to be. Lady Lucas quieted her fears a little by starting the idea of his being gone to London only to get a large party for the ball; and a report soon followed that Mr. Bingley was to bring twelve ladies and seven gentlemen with him to the assembly. The girls grieved over such a number of ladies, but were comforted the day before the ball by hearing, that instead of twelve he brought only six with him from London—his five sisters and a cousin. And when the party entered the assembly room it consisted of only five altogether—Mr. Bingley, his two sisters, the husband of the eldest, and another young man.
Mr. Bingley was good-looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners. His sisters were fine women, with an air of decided fashion. His brother-in-law, Mr. Hurst, merely looked the gentleman; but his friend Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend.

Mr. Bingley had soon made himself acquainted with all the principal people in the room; he was lively and unreserved, danced every dance, was angry that the ball closed so early, and talked of giving one himself at Netherfield. Such amiable qualities must speak for themselves. What a contrast between him and his friend! Mr. Darcy danced only once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, declined being introduced to any other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room, speaking occasionally to one of his own party. His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again. Amongst the most violent against him was Mrs. Bennet, whose dislike of his general behaviour was sharpened into particular resentment by his having slighted one of her daughters.

Elizabeth Bennet had been obliged, by the scarcity of gentlemen, to sit down for two dances; and during part of that time, Mr. Darcy had been standing near enough for her to hear a conversation between him and Mr. Bingley, who came from the dance for a few minutes, to press his friend to join it.

"Come, Darcy," said he, "I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about in this stupid manner. You had much better dance."

"I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. At such an assembly as this it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with."

"I would not be so fastidious as you are," cried Mr. Bingley, "for a kingdom! Upon my honour, I never met with so many pleasant girls in my life as I have this evening; and there are several of them you see uncommonly pretty."

"You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room," said Mr. Darcy, looking at the eldest Miss Bennet.

"Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you."
“Which do you mean?” and turning round he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said: “She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me.”

Mr. Bingley followed his advice. Mr. Darcy walked off; and Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings toward him. She told the story, however, with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous.

The evening altogether passed off pleasantly to the whole family. Mrs. Bennet had seen her eldest daughter much admired by the Netherfield party. Mr. Bingley had danced with her twice, and she had been distinguished by his sisters. Jane was as much gratified by this as her mother could be, though in a quieter way. Elizabeth felt Jane’s pleasure. Mary had heard herself mentioned to Miss Bingley as the most accomplished girl in the neighbourhood; and Catherine and Lydia had been fortunate enough never to be without partners, which was all that they had yet learnt to care for at a ball. They returned, therefore, in good spirits to Longbourn, the village where they lived, and of which they were the principal inhabitants. They found Mr. Bennet still up. With a book he was regardless of time; and on the present occasion he had a good deal of curiosity as to the event of an evening which had raised such splendid expectations. He had rather hoped that his wife’s views on the stranger would be disappointed; but he soon found out that he had a different story to hear.

“Oh! my dear Mr. Bennet,” as she entered the room, “we have had a most delightful evening, a most excellent ball. I wish you had been there. Jane was so admired, nothing could be like it. Everybody said how well she looked; and Mr. Bingley thought her quite beautiful, and danced with her twice! Only think of that, my dear; he actually danced with her twice! and she was the only creature in the room that he asked a second time. First of all, he asked Miss Lucas. I was so vexed to see him stand up with her! But, however, he did not admire her at all; indeed, nobody can, you know; and he seemed quite struck with Jane as she was going down the dance. So he inquired who she was, and got introduced, and asked her for the two next. Then the two third he danced with Miss King, and the two fourth with Maria Lucas, and the two fifth with Jane again, and the two sixth with Lizzy, and the Boulanger—”

“If he had had any compassion for me,” cried her husband impatiently, “he would not have danced half so much! For God’s sake, say no more of his partners. Oh that he had sprained his ankle in the first dance!”

“Oh! my dear, I am quite delighted with him. He is so excessively handsome! And his sisters are charming women. I never in my life saw anything more elegant than their dresses. I dare say the lace upon Mrs. Hurst’s gown—”

Here she was interrupted again. Mr. Bennet protested against any description of finery. She was therefore obliged to seek another branch of the subject, and related, with much bitterness of spirit and some exaggeration, the shocking rudeness of Mr. Darcy.

“But I can assure you,” she added, “that Lizzy does not lose much by not suit ing his fancy; for he is a most disagreeable, horrid man, not at all worth pleasing. So high and so conceited that there was no
enduring him! He walked here, and he walked there, fancying himself so very great! Not handsome enough to dance with! I wish you had been there, my dear, to have given him one of your set-downs. I quite detest the man.”

Chapter 4

When Jane and Elizabeth were alone, the former, who had been cautious in her praise of Mr. Bingley before, expressed to her sister just how very much she admired him.

“He is just what a young man ought to be,” said she, “sensible, good-humoured, lively; and I never saw such happy manners!—so much ease, with such perfect good breeding!”

“He is also handsome,” replied Elizabeth, “which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete.”

“I was very much flattered by his asking me to dance a second time. I did not expect such a compliment.”

“Did not you? I did for you. But that is one great difference between us. Compliments always take you by surprise, and me never. What could be more natural than his asking you again? He could not help seeing that you were about five times as pretty as every other woman in the room. No thanks to his gallantry for that. Well, he certainly is very agreeable, and I give you leave to like him. You have liked many a stupider person.”

“Dear Lizzy!”

“Oh! you are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in your life.”

“I would not wish to be hasty in censuring anyone; but I always speak what I think.”

“I know you do; and it is that which makes the wonder. With your good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others! Affectation of candour is common enough—one meets with it everywhere. But to be candid without ostentation or design—to take the good of everybody’s character and make it still better, and say nothing of the bad—belongs to you alone. And so you like this man’s sisters, too, do you? Their manners are not equal to his.”

“Certainly not—at first. But they are very pleasing women when you converse with them. Miss Bingley is to live with her brother, and keep his house; and I am much mistaken if we shall not find a very charming neighbour in her.”
Elizabeth listened in silence, but was not convinced; their behaviour at the assembly had not been calculated to please in general; and with more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than her sister, and with a judgement too unassailed by any attention to herself, she was very little disposed to approve them. They were in fact very fine ladies; not deficient in good humour when they were pleased, nor in the power of making themselves agreeable when they chose it, but proud and conceited. They were rather handsome, had been educated in one of the first private seminaries in town, had a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, were in the habit of spending more than they ought, and of associating with people of rank, and were therefore in every respect entitled to think well of themselves, and meanly of others. They were of a respectable family in the north of England; a circumstance more deeply impressed on their memories than that their brother’s fortune and their own had been acquired by trade.

Mr. Bingley inherited property to the amount of nearly a hundred thousand pounds from his father, who had intended to purchase an estate, but did not live to do it. Mr. Bingley intended it likewise, and sometimes made choice of his county; but as he was now provided with a good house and the liberty of a manor, it was doubtful to many of those who best knew the easiness of his temper, whether he might not spend the remainder of his days at Netherfield, and leave the next generation to purchase.

His sisters were anxious for his having an estate of his own; but, though he was now only established as a tenant, Miss Bingley was by no means unwilling to preside at his table—nor was Mrs. Hurst, who had married a man of more fashion than fortune, less disposed to consider his house as her home when it suited her. Mr. Bingley had not been of age two years, when he was tempted by an accidental recommendation to look at Netherfield House. He did look at it, and into it for half-an-hour—was pleased with the situation and the principal rooms, satisfied with what the owner said in its praise, and took it immediately.

Between him and Darcy there was a very steady friendship, in spite of great opposition of character. Bingley was endeared to Darcy by the easiness, openness, and ductility of his temper, though no disposition could offer a greater contrast to his own, and though with his own he never appeared dissatisfied. On the strength of Darcy’s regard, Bingley had the firmest reliance, and of his judgement the highest opinion. In understanding, Darcy was the superior. Bingley was by no means deficient, but Darcy was clever. He was at the same time haughty, reserved, and fastidious, and his manners, though well-bred, were not inviting. In that respect his friend had greatly the advantage. Bingley was sure of being liked wherever he appeared, Darcy was continually giving offense.

The manner in which they spoke of the Meryton assembly was sufficiently characteristic. Bingley had never met with more pleasant people or prettier girls in his life; everybody had been most kind and attentive to him; there had been no formality, no stiffness; he had soon felt acquainted with all the room; and, as to Miss Bennet, he could not conceive an angel more beautiful. Darcy, on the contrary, had seen a collection of people in whom there was little beauty and no fashion, for none of whom he had felt the smallest interest, and from none received either attention or pleasure. Miss Bennet he acknowledged to be pretty, but she smiled too much.

Mrs. Hurst and her sister allowed it to be so—but still they admired her and liked her, and pronounced her to be a sweet girl, and one whom they would not object to know more of. Miss
Women Writers – Novels - 135

Bennet was therefore established as a sweet girl, and their brother felt authorized by such commendation to think of her as he chose.

Chapter 5

Within a short walk of Longbourn lived a family with whom the Bennets were particularly intimate. Sir William Lucas had been formerly in trade in Meryton, where he had made a tolerable fortune, and risen to the honour of knighthood by an address to the king during his mayoralty. The distinction had perhaps been felt too strongly. It had given him a disgust to his business, and to his residence in a small market town; and, in quitting them both, he had removed with his family to a house about a mile from Meryton, denominated from that period Lucas Lodge, where he could think with pleasure of his own importance, and, unshackled by business, occupy himself solely in being civil to all the world. For, though elated by his rank, it did not render him supercilious; on the contrary, he was all attention to everybody. By nature inoffensive, friendly, and obliging, his presentation at St. James’s had made him courteous.

Lady Lucas was a very good kind of woman, not too clever to be a valuable neighbour to Mrs. Bennet. They had several children. The eldest of them, a sensible, intelligent young woman, about twenty-seven, was Elizabeth’s intimate friend.

That the Miss Lucases and the Miss Bennets should meet to talk over a ball was absolutely necessary; and the morning after the assembly brought the former to Longbourn to hear and to communicate.

“You began the evening well, Charlotte,” said Mrs. Bennet with civil self-command to Miss Lucas. “You were Mr. Bingley’s first choice.”

“Yes; but he seemed to like his second better.”

“Oh! you mean Jane, I suppose, because he danced with her twice. To be sure that did seem as if he admired her—indeed I rather believe he did—I heard something about it—but I hardly know what—something about Mr. Robinson.”

“Perhaps you mean what I overheard between him and Mr. Robinson; did not I mention it to you? Mr. Robinson’s asking him how he liked our Meryton assemblies, and whether he did not think there were a great many pretty women in the room, and which he thought the prettiest? and his answering immediately to the last question: ‘Oh! the eldest Miss Bennet, beyond a doubt; there cannot be two opinions on that point.’”

“Upon my word! Well, that is very decided indeed—that does seem as if—but, however, it may all come to nothing, you know.”
“My overhearings were more to the purpose than yours, Eliza,” said Charlotte. “Mr. Darcy is not so well worth listening to as his friend, is he?—poor Eliza!—to be only just tolerable.”

“I beg you would not put it into Lizzy’s head to be vexed by his ill-treatment, for he is such a disagreeable man, that it would be quite a misfortune to be liked by him. Mrs. Long told me last night that he sat close to her for half-an-hour without once opening his lips.”

“Are you quite sure, ma’am?—is not there a little mistake?” said Jane. “I certainly saw Mr. Darcy speaking to her.”

“Aye—because she asked him at last how he liked Netherfield, and he could not help answering her; but she said he seemed quite angry at being spoke to.”

“Miss Bingley told me,” said Jane, “that he never speaks much, unless among his intimate acquaintances. With them he is remarkably agreeable.”

“I do not believe a word of it, my dear. If he had been so very agreeable, he would have talked to Mrs. Long. But I can guess how it was; everybody says that he is eat up with pride, and I dare say he had heard somehow that Mrs. Long does not keep a carriage, and had come to the ball in a hack chaise.”

“I do not mind his not talking to Mrs. Long,” said Miss Lucas, “but I wish he had danced with Eliza.”

“Another time, Lizzy,” said her mother, “I would not dance with him, if I were you.”

“I believe, ma’am, I may safely promise you never to dance with him.”

“His pride,” said Miss Lucas, “does not offend me so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, everything in his favour, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud.”

“That is very true,” replied Elizabeth, “and I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine.”

“Pride,” observed Mary, who piqued herself upon the solidity of her reflections, “is a very common failing, I believe. By all that I have ever read, I am convinced that it is very common indeed; that human nature is particularly prone to it, and that there are very few of us who do not cherish a feeling of self-complacency on the score of some quality or other, real or imaginary. Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us.”

“If I were as rich as Mr. Darcy,” cried a young Lucas, who came with his sisters, “I should not care how proud I was. I would keep a pack of foxhounds, and drink a bottle of wine a day.”
“Then you would drink a great deal more than you ought,” said Mrs. Bennet; “and if I were to see you at it, I should take away your bottle directly.”

The boy protested that she should not; she continued to declare that she would, and the argument ended only with the visit.

Chapter 16

As no objection was made to the young people's engagement with their aunt, and all Mr. Collins's scruples of leaving Mr. and Mrs. Bennet for a single evening during his visit were most steadily resisted, the coach conveyed him and his five cousins at a suitable hour to Meryton; and the girls had the pleasure of hearing, as they entered the drawing-room, that Mr. Wickham had accepted their uncle's invitation, and was then in the house.

When this information was given, and they had all taken their seats, Mr. Collins was at leisure to look around him and admire, and he was so much struck with the size and furniture of the apartment, that he declared he might almost have supposed himself in the small summer breakfast parlour at Rosings; a comparison that did not at first convey much gratification; but when Mrs. Phillips understood from him what Rosings was, and who was its proprietor—when she had listened to the description of only one of Lady Catherine's drawing-rooms, and found that the chimney-piece alone had cost eight hundred pounds, she felt all the force of the compliment, and would hardly have resented a comparison with the housekeeper's room.

In describing to her all the grandeur of Lady Catherine and her mansion, with occasional digressions in praise of his own humble abode, and the improvements it was receiving, he was happily employed until the gentlemen joined them; and he found in Mrs. Phillips a very attentive listener, whose opinion of his consequence increased with what she heard, and who was resolving to retail it all among her neighbours as soon as she could. To the girls, who could not listen to their cousin, and who had nothing to do but to wish for an instrument, and examine their own indifferent imitations of china on the mantelpiece, the interval of waiting appeared very long. It was over at last, however. The gentlemen did approach, and when Mr. Wickham walked into the room, Elizabeth felt that she had neither been seeing him before, nor thinking of him since, with the smallest degree of unreasonable admiration. The officers of the ——shire were in general a very creditable, gentlemanlike set, and the best of them were of the present party; but Mr. Wickham was as far beyond them all in person, countenance, air, and walk, as they were superior to the broad-faced, stuffy uncle Phillips, breathing port wine, who followed them into the room.

Mr. Wickham was the happy man towards whom almost every female eye was turned, and Elizabeth was the happy woman by whom he finally seated himself; and the agreeable manner in which he immediately fell into conversation, though it was only on its being a wet night, made her feel that the commonest, dullest, most threadbare topic might be rendered interesting by the skill of the speaker.

With such rivals for the notice of the fair as Mr. Wickham and the officers, Mr. Collins seemed to sink into insignificance; to the young ladies he certainly was nothing; but he had still at intervals a kind listener in Mrs. Phillips, and was by her watchfulness, most abundantly supplied with coffee and muffin. When the card-tables were placed, he had the opportunity of obliging her in turn, by sitting down to whist.
“I know little of the game at present,” said he, “but I shall be glad to improve myself, for in my situation in life—” Mrs. Phillips was very glad for his compliance, but could not wait for his reason.

Mr. Wickham did not play at whist, and with ready delight was he received at the other table between Elizabeth and Lydia. At first there seemed danger of Lydia’s engrossing him entirely, for she was a most determined talker; but being likewise extremely fond of lottery tickets, she soon grew too much interested in the game, too eager in making bets and exclaiming after prizes to have attention for anyone in particular. Allowing for the common demands of the game, Mr. Wickham was therefore at leisure to talk to Elizabeth, and she was very willing to hear him, though what she chiefly wished to hear she could not hope to be told—the history of his acquaintance with Mr. Darcy. She dared not even mention that gentleman. Her curiosity, however, was unexpectedly relieved. Mr. Wickham began the subject himself. He inquired how far Netherfield was from Meryton; and, after receiving her answer, asked in a hesitating manner how long Mr. Darcy had been staying there.

“About a month,” said Elizabeth; and then, unwilling to let the subject drop, added, “He is a man of very large property in Derbyshire, I understand.”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Wickham; “his estate there is a noble one. A clear ten thousand per annum. You could not have met with a person more capable of giving you certain information on that head than myself, for I have been connected with his family in a particular manner from my infancy.”

Elizabeth could not but look surprised.

“You may well be surprised, Miss Bennet, at such an assertion, after seeing, as you probably might, the very cold manner of our meeting yesterday. Are you much acquainted with Mr. Darcy?”

“As much as I ever wish to be,” cried Elizabeth very warmly. “I have spent four days in the same house with him, and I think him very disagreeable.”

“I have no right to give my opinion,” said Wickham, “as to his being agreeable or otherwise. I am not qualified to form one. I have known him too long and too well to be a fair judge. It is impossible for me to be impartial. But I believe your opinion of him would in general astonish—and perhaps you would not express it quite so strongly anywhere else. Here you are in your own family.”

“Upon my word, I say no more here than I might say in any house in the neighbourhood, except Netherfield. He is not at all liked in Hertfordshire. Everybody is disgusted with his pride. You will not find him more favourably spoken of by anyone.”

“I cannot pretend to be sorry,” said Wickham, after a short interruption, “that he or that any man should not be estimated beyond their deserts; but with him I believe it does not often happen. The world is blinded by his fortune and consequence, or frightened by his high and imposing manners, and sees him only as he chooses to be seen.”

“I should take him, even on my slight acquaintance, to be an ill-tempered man.” Wickham only shook his head.

“I wonder,” said he, at the next opportunity of speaking, “whether he is likely to be in this country much longer.”
“I do not at all know; but I heard nothing of his going away when I was at Netherfield. I hope your plans in favour of the ——shire will not be affected by his being in the neighbourhood.”

“Oh! no—it is not for me to be driven away by Mr. Darcy. If he wishes to avoid seeing me, he must go. We are not on friendly terms, and it always gives me pain to meet him, but I have no reason for avoiding him but what I might proclaim before all the world, a sense of very great ill-usage, and most painful regrets at his being what he is. His father, Miss Bennet, the late Mr. Darcy, was one of the best men that ever breathed, and the truest friend I ever had; and I can never be in company with this Mr. Darcy without being grieved to the soul by a thousand tender recollections. His behaviour to myself has been scandalous; but I verily believe I could forgive him anything and everything, rather than his disappointing the hopes and disgracing the memory of his father.”

Elizabeth found the interest of the subject increase, and listened with all her heart; but the delicacy of it prevented further inquiry.

Mr. Wickham began to speak on more general topics, Meryton, the neighbourhood, the society, appearing highly pleased with all that he had yet seen, and speaking of the latter with gentle but very intelligible gallantry.

“It was the prospect of constant society, and good society,” he added, “which was my chief inducement to enter the ——shire. I knew it to be a most respectable, agreeable corps, and my friend Denny tempted me further by his account of their present quarters, and the very great attentions and excellent acquaintances Meryton had procured them. Society, I own, is necessary to me. I have been a disappointed man, and my spirits will not bear solitude. I must have employment and society. A military life is not what I was intended for, but circumstances have now made it eligible. The church ought to have been my profession—I was brought up for the church, and I should at this time have been in possession of a most valuable living, had it pleased the gentleman we were speaking of just now.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes—the late Mr. Darcy bequeathed me the next presentation of the best living in his gift. He was my godfather, and excessively attached to me. I cannot do justice to his kindness. He meant to provide for me amply, and thought he had done it; but when the living fell, it was given elsewhere.”

“Good heavens!” cried Elizabeth; “but how could that be? How could his will be disregarded? Why did you not seek legal redress?”

“There was just such an informality in the terms of the bequest as to give me no hope from law. A man of honour could not have doubted the intention, but Mr. Darcy chose to doubt it—or to treat it as a merely conditional recommendation, and to assert that I had forfeited all claim to it by extravagance, imprudence—in short anything or nothing. Certain it is, that the living became vacant two years ago, exactly as I was of an age to hold it, and that it was given to another man; and no less certain is it, that I cannot accuse myself of having really done anything to deserve to lose it. I have a warm, unguarded temper, and I may have spoken my opinion of him, and to him, too freely. I can recall nothing worse. But the fact is, that we are very different sort of men, and that he hates me.”

“This is quite shocking! He deserves to be publicly disgraced.”
“Some time or other he will be—but it shall not be by me. Till I can forget his father, I can never defy or expose him.”

Elizabeth honoured him for such feelings, and thought him handsomer than ever as he expressed them.

“But what,” said she, after a pause, “can have been his motive? What can have induced him to behave so cruelly?”

“A thorough, determined dislike of me—a dislike which I cannot but attribute in some measure to jealousy. Had the late Mr. Darcy liked me less, his son might have borne with me better; but his father’s uncommon attachment to me irritated him, I believe, very early in life. He had not a temper to bear the sort of competition in which we stood—the sort of preference which was often given me.”

“I had not thought Mr. Darcy so bad as this—though I have never liked him. I had not thought so very ill of him. I had supposed him to be despising his fellow-creatures in general, but did not suspect him of descending to such malicious revenge, such injustice, such inhumanity as this.”

After a few minutes’ reflection, however, she continued, “I do remember his boasting one day, at Netherfield, of the implacability of his resentments, of his having an unforgiving temper. His disposition must be dreadful.”

“I will not trust myself on the subject,” replied Wickham; “I can hardly be just to him.”

Elizabeth was again deep in thought, and after a time exclaimed, “To treat in such a manner the godson, the friend, the favourite of his father!” She could have added, “A young man, too, like you, whose very countenance may vouch for your being amiable”—but she contented herself with, “and one, too, who had probably been his companion from childhood, connected together, as I think you said, in the closest manner!”

“We were born in the same parish, within the same park; the greatest part of our youth was passed together; inmates of the same house, sharing the same amusements, objects of the same parental care. My father began life in the profession which your uncle, Mr. Phillips, appears to do so much credit to—but he gave up everything to be of use to the late Mr. Darcy and devoted all his time to the care of the Pemberley property. He was most highly esteemed by Mr. Darcy, a most intimate, confidential friend. Mr. Darcy often acknowledged himself to be under the greatest obligations to my father’s active superintendence, and when, immediately before my father’s death, Mr. Darcy gave him a voluntary promise of providing for me, I am convinced that he felt it to be as much a debt of gratitude to him, as of his affection to myself.”

“How strange!” cried Elizabeth. “How abominable! I wonder that the very pride of this Mr. Darcy has not made him just to you! If from no better motive, that he should not have been too proud to be dishonest—for dishonesty I must call it.”

“It is wonderful,” replied Wickham, “for almost all his actions may be traced to pride; and pride had often been his best friend. It has connected him nearer with virtue than with any other feeling. But we are none of us consistent, and in his behaviour to me there were stronger impulses even than pride.”
“Can such abominable pride as his have ever done him good?”

“Yes. It has often led him to be liberal and generous, to give his money freely, to display hospitality, to assist his tenants, and relieve the poor. Family pride, and filial pride—for he is very proud of what his father was—have done this. Not to appear to disgrace his family, to degenerate from the popular qualities, or lose the influence of the Pemberley House, is a powerful motive. He has also brotherly pride, which, with some brotherly affection, makes him a very kind and careful guardian of his sister, and you will hear him generally cried up as the most attentive and best of brothers.”

“What sort of girl is Miss Darcy?”

He shook his head. “I wish I could call her amiable. It gives me pain to speak ill of a Darcy. But she is too much like her brother—very, very proud. As a child, she was affectionate and pleasing, and extremely fond of me; and I have devoted hours and hours to her amusement. But she is nothing to me now. She is a handsome girl, about fifteen or sixteen, and, I understand, highly accomplished. Since her father’s death, her home has been London, where a lady lives with her, and superintends her education.”

After many pauses and many trials of other subjects, Elizabeth could not help reverting once more to the first, and saying:

“I am astonished at his intimacy with Mr. Bingley! How can Mr. Bingley, who seems good humour itself, and is, I really believe, truly amiable, be in friendship with such a man? How can they suit each other? Do you know Mr. Bingley?”

“Not at all.”

“He is a sweet-tempered, amiable, charming man. He cannot know what Mr. Darcy is.”

“Probably not; but Mr. Darcy can please where he chooses. He does not want abilities. He can be a conversable companion if he thinks it worth his while. Among those who are at all his equals in consequence, he is a very different man from what he is to the less prosperous. His pride never deserts him; but with the rich he is liberal-minded, just, sincere, rational, honourable, and perhaps agreeable—allowing something for fortune and figure.”

The whist party soon afterwards breaking up, the players gathered round the other table and Mr. Collins took his station between his cousin Elizabeth and Mrs. Phillips. The usual inquiries as to his success were made by the latter. It had not been very great; he had lost every point; but when Mrs. Phillips began to express her concern thereupon, he assured her with much earnest gravity that it was not of the least importance, that he considered the money as a mere trifle, and begged that she would not make herself uneasy.

“I know very well, madam,” said he, “that when persons sit down to a card-table, they must take their chances of these things, and happily I am not in such circumstances as to make five shillings any object. There are undoubtedly many who could not say the same, but thanks to Lady Catherine de Bourgh, I am removed far beyond the necessity of regarding little matters.”
Mr. Wickham’s attention was caught; and after observing Mr. Collins for a few moments, he asked Elizabeth in a low voice whether her relation was very intimately acquainted with the family of de Bourgh.

“Lady Catherine de Bourgh,” she replied, “has very lately given him a living. I hardly know how Mr. Collins was first introduced to her notice, but he certainly has not known her long.”

“You know of course that Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Lady Anne Darcy were sisters; consequently that she is aunt to the present Mr. Darcy.”

“No, indeed, I did not. I knew nothing at all of Lady Catherine’s connections. I never heard of her existence till the day before yesterday.”

“Her daughter, Miss de Bourgh, will have a very large fortune, and it is believed that she and her cousin will unite the two estates.”

This information made Elizabeth smile, as she thought of poor Miss Bingley. Vain indeed must be all her attentions, vain and useless her affection for his sister and her praise of himself, if he were already self-destined for another.

“Mr. Collins,” said she, “speaks highly both of Lady Catherine and her daughter; but from some particulars that he has related of her ladyship, I suspect his gratitude misleads him, and that in spite of her being his patroness, she is an arrogant, conceited woman.”

“I believe her to be both in a great degree,” replied Wickham; “I have not seen her for many years, but I very well remember that I never liked her, and that her manners were dictatorial and insolent. She has the reputation of being remarkably sensible and clever; but I rather believe she derives part of her abilities from her rank and fortune, part from her authoritative manner, and the rest from the pride for her nephew, who chooses that everyone connected with him should have an understanding of the first class.”

Elizabeth allowed that he had given a very rational account of it, and they continued talking together, with mutual satisfaction till supper put an end to cards, and gave the rest of the ladies their share of Mr. Wickham’s attentions. There could be no conversation in the noise of Mrs. Phillips’s supper party, but his manners recommended him to everybody. Whatever he said, was said well; and whatever he did, done gracefully. Elizabeth went away with her head full of him. She could think of nothing but of Mr. Wickham, and of what he had told her, all the way home; but there was not time for her even to mention his name as they went, for neither Lydia nor Mr. Collins were once silent. Lydia talked incessantly of lottery tickets, of the fish she had lost and the fish she had won; and Mr. Collins in describing the civility of Mr. and Mrs. Phillips, protesting that he did not in the least regard his losses at whist, enumerating all the dishes at supper, and repeatedly fearing that he crowded his cousins, had more to say than he could well manage before the carriage stopped at Longbourn House.

Chapter 33

More than once did Elizabeth, in her ramble within the park, unexpectedly meet Mr. Darcy. She felt all the perverseness of the mischance that should bring him where no one else was brought, and, to prevent its ever happening again, took care to inform him at first that it was a favourite haunt of
hers. How it could occur a second time, therefore, was very odd! Yet it did, and even a third. It seemed like wilful ill-nature, or a voluntary penance, for on these occasions it was not merely a few formal inquiries and an awkward pause and then away, but he actually thought it necessary to turn back and walk with her. He never said a great deal, nor did she give herself the trouble of talking or of listening much; but it struck her in the course of their third rencontre that he was asking some odd unconnected questions—about her pleasure in being at Hunsford, her love of solitary walks, and her opinion of Mr. and Mrs. Collins’s happiness; and that in speaking of Rosings and her not perfectly understanding the house, he seemed to expect that whenever she came into Kent again she would be staying there too. His words seemed to imply it. Could he have Colonel Fitzwilliam in his thoughts? She supposed, if he meant anything, he must mean an allusion to what might arise in that quarter. It distressed her a little, and she was quite glad to find herself at the gate in the pales opposite the Parsonage.

She was engaged one day as she walked, in perusing Jane’s last letter, and dwelling on some passages which proved that Jane had not written in spirits, when, instead of being again surprised by Mr. Darcy, she saw on looking up that Colonel Fitzwilliam was meeting her. Putting away the letter immediately and forcing a smile, she said:

“I did not know before that you ever walked this way.”

“I have been making the tour of the park,” he replied, “as I generally do every year, and intend to close it with a call at the Parsonage. Are you going much farther?”

“No, I should have turned in a moment.”

And accordingly she did turn, and they walked towards the Parsonage together.

“Do you certainly leave Kent on Saturday?” said she.

“Yes—if Darcy does not put it off again. But I am at his disposal. He arranges the business just as he pleases.”

“And if not able to please himself in the arrangement, he has at least pleasure in the great power of choice. I do not know anybody who seems more to enjoy the power of doing what he likes than Mr. Darcy.”

“He likes to have his own way very well,” replied Colonel Fitzwilliam. “But so we all do. It is only that he has better means of having it than many others, because he is rich, and many others are poor. I speak feelingly. A younger son, you know, must be inured to self-denial and dependence.”

“In my opinion, the younger son of an earl can know very little of either. Now seriously, what have you ever known of self-denial and dependence? When have you been prevented by want of money from going wherever you chose, or procuring anything you had a fancy for?”

“These are home questions—and perhaps I cannot say that I have experienced many hardships of that nature. But in matters of greater weight, I may suffer from want of money. Younger sons cannot marry where they like.”

“Unless where they like women of fortune, which I think they very often do.”
“Our habits of expense make us too dependent, and there are not many in my rank of life who can afford to marry without some attention to money.”

“Is this,” thought Elizabeth, “meant for me?” and she coloured at the idea; but, recovering herself, said in a lively tone, “And pray, what is the usual price of an earl’s younger son? Unless the elder brother is very sickly, I suppose you would not ask above fifty thousand pounds.”

He answered her in the same style, and the subject dropped. To interrupt a silence which might make him fancy her affected with what had passed, she soon afterwards said:

“I imagine your cousin brought you down with him chiefly for the sake of having someone at his disposal. I wonder he does not marry, to secure a lasting convenience of that kind. But, perhaps, his sister does as well for the present, and, as she is under his sole care, he may do what he likes with her.”

“No,” said Colonel Fitzwilliam, “that is an advantage which he must divide with me. I am joined with him in the guardianship of Miss Darcy.”

“Are you indeed? And pray what sort of guardians do you make? Does your charge give you much trouble? Young ladies of her age are sometimes a little difficult to manage, and if she has the true Darcy spirit, she may like to have her own way.”

As she spoke she observed him looking at her earnestly; and the manner in which he immediately asked her why she supposed Miss Darcy likely to give them any uneasiness, convinced her that she somehow or other got pretty near the truth. She directly replied:

“You need not be frightened. I never heard any harm of her; and I dare say she is one of the most tractable creatures in the world. She is a very great favourite with some ladies of my acquaintance, Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley. I think I have heard you say that you know them.”

“I know them a little. Their brother is a pleasant gentlemanlike man—he is a great friend of Darcy’s.”

“Oh! yes,” said Elizabeth drily; “Mr. Darcy is uncommonly kind to Mr. Bingley, and takes a prodigious deal of care of him.”

“Care of him! Yes, I really believe Darcy does take care of him in those points where he most wants care. From something that he told me in our journey hither, I have reason to think Bingley very much indebted to him. But I ought to beg his pardon, for I have no right to suppose that Bingley was the person meant. It was all conjecture.”

“What is it you mean?”

“It is a circumstance which Darcy could not wish to be generally known, because if it were to get round to the lady’s family, it would be an unpleasant thing.”

“You may depend upon my not mentioning it.”
“And remember that I have not much reason for supposing it to be Bingley. What he told me was merely this: that he congratulated himself on having lately saved a friend from the inconveniences of a most imprudent marriage, but without mentioning names or any other particulars, and I only suspected it to be Bingley from believing him the kind of young man to get into a scrape of that sort, and from knowing them to have been together the whole of last summer.”

“Did Mr. Darcy give you reasons for this interference?”

“I understood that there were some very strong objections against the lady.”

“And what arts did he use to separate them?”

“He did not talk to me of his own arts,” said Fitzwilliam, smiling. “He only told me what I have now told you.”

Elizabeth made no answer, and walked on, her heart swelling with indignation. After watching her a little, Fitzwilliam asked her why she was so thoughtful.

“I am thinking of what you have been telling me,” said she. “Your cousin’s conduct does not suit my feelings. Why was he to be the judge?”

“You are rather disposed to call his interference officious?”

“I do not see what right Mr. Darcy had to decide on the propriety of his friend’s inclination, or why, upon his own judgement alone, he was to determine and direct in what manner his friend was to be happy. But,” she continued, recollecting herself, “as we know none of the particulars, it is not fair to condemn him. It is not to be supposed that there was much affection in the case.”

“That is not an unnatural surmise,” said Fitzwilliam, “but it is a lessening of the honour of my cousin’s triumph very sadly.”

This was spoken jestingly; but it appeared to her so just a picture of Mr. Darcy, that she would not trust herself with an answer, and therefore, abruptly changing the conversation talked on indifferent matters until they reached the Parsonage. There, shut into her own room, as soon as their visitor left them, she could think without interruption of all that she had heard. It was not to be supposed that any other people could be meant than those with whom she was connected. There could not exist in the world two men over whom Mr. Darcy could have such boundless influence. That he had been concerned in the measures taken to separate Bingley and Jane she had never doubted; but she had always attributed to Miss Bingley the principal design and arrangement of them. If his own vanity, however, did not mislead him, he was the cause, his pride and caprice were the cause, of all that Jane had suffered, and still continued to suffer. He had ruined for a while every hope of happiness for the most affectionate, generous heart in the world; and no one could say how lasting an evil he might have inflicted.

“There were some very strong objections against the lady,” were Colonel Fitzwilliam’s words; and those strong objections probably were, her having one uncle who was a country attorney, and another who was in business in London.
“To Jane herself,” she exclaimed, “there could be no possibility of objection; all loveliness and
goodness as she is!—her understanding excellent, her mind improved, and her manners
captivating. Neither could anything be urged against my father, who, though with some
peculiarities, has abilities Mr. Darcy himself need not disdain, and respectability which he will
probably never reach.” When she thought of her mother, her confidence gave way a little; but she
would not allow that any objections there had material weight with Mr. Darcy, whose pride, she was
convinced, would receive a deeper wound from the want of importance in his friend’s connections,
than from their want of sense; and she was quite decided, at last, that he had been partly governed
by this worst kind of pride, and partly by the wish of retaining Mr. Bingley for his sister.

The agitation and tears which the subject occasioned, brought on a headache; and it grew so much
worse towards the evening, that, added to her unwillingness to see Mr. Darcy, it determined her not
to attend her cousins to Rosings, where they were engaged to drink tea. Mrs. Collins, seeing that she
was really unwell, did not press her to go and as much as possible prevented her husband from
pressing her; but Mr. Collins could not conceal his apprehension of Lady Catherine’s being rather
displeased by her staying at home.

Chapter 34

When they were gone, Elizabeth, as if intending to exasperate herself as much as possible against
Mr. Darcy, chose for her employment the examination of all the letters which Jane had written to
her since her being in Kent. They contained no actual complaint, nor was there any revival of past
occurrences, or any communication of present suffering. But in all, and in almost every line of each,
there was a want of that cheerfulness which had been used to characterise her style, and which,
proceeding from the serenity of a mind at ease with itself and kindly disposed towards everyone,
had been scarcely ever clouded. Elizabeth noticed every sentence conveying the idea of uneasiness,
with an attention which it had hardly received on the first perusal. Mr. Darcy’s shameful boast of
what misery he had been able to inflict, gave her a keener sense of her sister’s sufferings. It was
some consolation to think that his visit to Rosings was to end on the day after the next—and, a still
greater, that in less than a fortnight she should herself be with Jane again, and enabled to contribute
to the recovery of her spirits, by all that affection could do.

She could not think of Darcy’s leaving Kent without remembering that his cousin was to go with
him; but Colonel Fitzwilliam had made it clear that he had no intentions at all, and agreeable as he
was, she did not mean to be unhappy about him.

While settling this point, she was suddenly roused by the sound of the door-bell, and her spirits
were a little fluttered by the idea of its being Colonel Fitzwilliam himself, who had once before
called late in the evening, and might now come to inquire particularly after her. But this idea was
soon banished, and her spirits were very differently affected, when, to her utter amazement, she
saw Mr. Darcy walk into the room. In an hurried manner he immediately began an inquiry after her
health, imputing his visit to a wish of hearing that she were better. She answered him with cold
civility. He sat down for a few moments, and then getting up, walked about the room. Elizabeth was
surprised, but said not a word. After a silence of several minutes, he came towards her in an
agitated manner, and thus began:
“In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.”

Elizabeth’s astonishment was beyond expression. She stared, coloured, doubted, and was silent. This he considered sufficient encouragement; and the avowal of all that he felt, and had long felt for her, immediately followed. He spoke well; but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed; and he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride. His sense of her inferiority—of its being a degradation—of the family obstacles which had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit.

In spite of her deeply-rooted dislike, she could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man’s affection, and though her intentions did not vary for an instant, she was at first sorry for the pain he was to receive; till, roused to resentment by his subsequent language, she lost all compassion in anger. She tried, however, to compose herself to answer him with patience, when he should have done. He concluded with representing to her the strength of that attachment which, in spite of all his endeavours, he had found impossible to conquer; and with expressing his hope that it would now be rewarded by her acceptance of his hand. As he said this, she could easily see that he had no doubt of a favourable answer. He spoke of apprehension and anxiety, but his countenance expressed real security. Such a circumstance could only exasperate farther, and, when he ceased, the colour rose into her cheeks, and she said:

“In such cases as this, it is, I believe, the established mode to express a sense of obligation for the sentiments avowed, however unequally they may be returned. It is natural that obligation should be felt, and if I could feel gratitude, I would now thank you. But I cannot—I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly. I am sorry to have occasioned pain to anyone. It has been most unconsciously done, however, and I hope will be of short duration. The feelings which, you tell me, have long prevented the acknowledgment of your regard, can have little difficulty in overcoming it after this explanation.”

Mr. Darcy, who was leaning against the mantelpiece with his eyes fixed on her face, seemed to catch her words with no less resentment than surprise. His complexion became pale with anger, and the disturbance of his mind was visible in every feature. He was struggling for the appearance of composure, and would not open his lips till he believed himself to have attained it. The pause was to Elizabeth’s feelings dreadful. At length, with a voice of forced calmness, he said:

“And this is all the reply which I am to have the honour of expecting! I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little endeavour at civility, I am thus rejected. But it is of small importance.”

“I might as well inquire,” replied she, “why with so evident a desire of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character? Was not this some excuse for incivility, if I was uncivil? But I have other provocations. You know I have. Had not my feelings decided against you—had they been indifferent, or had they even been favourable, do you think that any consideration would tempt me to accept the man who has been the means of ruining, perhaps for ever, the happiness of a most beloved sister?”

As she pronounced these words, Mr. Darcy changed colour; but the emotion was short, and he listened without attempting to interrupt her while she continued:
"I have every reason in the world to think ill of you. No motive can excuse the unjust and ungenerous part you acted there. You dare not, you cannot deny, that you have been the principal, if not the only means of dividing them from each other—of exposing one to the censure of the world for caprice and instability, and the other to its derision for disappointed hopes, and involving them both in misery of the acutest kind."

She paused, and saw with no slight indignation that he was listening with an air which proved him wholly unmoved by any feeling of remorse. He even looked at her with a smile of affected incredulity.

"Can you deny that you have done it?" she repeated.

With assumed tranquillity he then replied: "I have no wish of denying that I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister, or that I rejoice in my success. Towards him I have been kinder than towards myself."

Elizabeth disdained the appearance of noticing this civil reflection, but its meaning did not escape, nor was it likely to conciliate her.

"But it is not merely this affair," she continued, "on which my dislike is founded. Long before it had taken place my opinion of you was decided. Your character was unfolded in the recital which I received many months ago from Mr. Wickham. On this subject, what can you have to say? In what imaginary act of friendship can you here defend yourself? or under what misrepresentation can you here impose upon others?"

"You take an eager interest in that gentleman's concerns," said Darcy, in a less tranquil tone, and with a heightened colour.

"Who that knows what his misfortunes have been, can help feeling an interest in him?"

"His misfortunes!" repeated Darcy contemptuously; "yes, his misfortunes have been great indeed."

"And of your infliction," cried Elizabeth with energy. "You have reduced him to his present state of poverty—comparative poverty. You have withheld the advantages which you must know to have been designed for him. You have deprived the best years of his life of that independence which was no less his due than his desert. You have done all this! and yet you can treat the mention of his misfortune with contempt and ridicule."

"And this," cried Darcy, as he walked with quick steps across the room, "is your opinion of me! This is the estimation in which you hold me! I thank you for explaining it so fully. My faults, according to this calculation, are heavy indeed! But perhaps," added he, stopping in his walk, and turning towards her, "these offenses might have been overlooked, had not your pride been hurt by my honest confession of the scruples that had long prevented my forming any serious design. These bitter accusations might have been suppressed, had I, with greater policy, concealed my struggles, and flattered you into the belief of my being impelled by unqualified, unalloyed inclination; by reason, by reflection, by everything. But disguise of every sort is my abhorrence. Nor am I ashamed of the feelings I related. They were natural and just. Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections?—to congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?"
Elizabeth felt herself growing more angry every moment; yet she tried to the utmost to speak with composure when she said:

“You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner.”

She saw him start at this, but he said nothing, and she continued:

“You could not have made the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it.”

Again his astonishment was obvious; and he looked at her with an expression of mingled incredulity and mortification. She went on:

“From the very beginning—from the first moment, I may almost say—of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form the groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry.”

“You have said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings, and have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been. Forgive me for having taken up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness.”

And with these words he hastily left the room, and Elizabeth heard him the next moment open the front door and quit the house.

The tumult of her mind, was now painfully great. She knew not how to support herself, and from actual weakness sat down and cried for half-an-hour. Her astonishment, as she reflected on what had passed, was increased by every review of it. That she should receive an offer of marriage from Mr. Darcy! That he should have been in love with her for so many months! So much in love as to wish to marry her in spite of all the objections which had made him prevent his friend’s marrying her sister, and which must appear at least with equal force in his own case—was almost incredible! It was gratifying to have inspired unconsciously so strong an affection. But his pride, his abominable pride—his shameless avowal of what he had done with respect to Jane—his unpardonable assurance in acknowledging, though he could not justify it, and the unfeeling manner in which he had mentioned Mr. Wickham, his cruelty towards whom he had not attempted to deny, soon overcame the pity which the consideration of his attachment had for a moment excited. She continued in very agitated reflections till the sound of Lady Catherine’s carriage made her feel how unequal she was to encounter Charlotte’s observation, and hurried her away to her room.
Chapter 35

Elizabeth awoke the next morning to the same thoughts and meditations which had at length closed her eyes. She could not yet recover from the surprise of what had happened; it was impossible to think of anything else; and, totally indisposed for employment, she resolved, soon after breakfast, to indulge herself in air and exercise. She was proceeding directly to her favourite walk, when the recollection of Mr. Darcy's sometimes coming there stopped her, and instead of entering the park, she turned up the lane, which led farther from the turnpike-road. The park paling was still the boundary on one side, and she soon passed one of the gates into the ground.

After walking two or three times along that part of the lane, she was tempted, by the pleasantness of the morning, to stop at the gates and look into the park. The five weeks which she had now passed in Kent had made a great difference in the country, and every day was adding to the verdure of the early trees. She was on the point of continuing her walk, when she caught a glimpse of a gentleman within the sort of grove which edged the park; he was moving that way; and, fearful of its being Mr. Darcy, she was directly retreating. But the person who advanced was now near enough to see her, and stepping forward with eagerness, pronounced her name. She had turned away; but on hearing herself called, though in a voice which proved it to be Mr. Darcy, she moved again towards the gate. He had by that time reached it also, and, holding out a letter, which she instinctively took, said, with a look of haughty composure, “I have been walking in the grove some time in the hope of meeting you. Will you do me the honour of reading that letter?” And then, with a slight bow, turned again into the plantation, and was soon out of sight.

With no expectation of pleasure, but with the strongest curiosity, Elizabeth opened the letter, and, to her still increasing wonder, perceived an envelope containing two sheets of letter-paper, written quite through, in a very close hand. The envelope itself was likewise full. Pursuing her way along the lane, she then began it. It was dated from Rosings, at eight o’clock in the morning, and was as follows:—

“Be not alarmed, madam, on receiving this letter, by the apprehension of its containing any repetition of those sentiments or renewal of those offers which were last night so disgusting to you. I write without any intention of paining you, or humbling myself, by dwelling on wishes which, for the happiness of both, cannot be too soon forgotten; and the effort which the formation and the perusal of this letter must occasion, should have been spared, had not my character required it to be written and read. You must, therefore, pardon the freedom with which I demand your attention; your feelings, I know, will bestow it unwillingly, but I demand it of you for justice.

“Two offenses of a very different nature, and by no means of equal magnitude, you last night laid to my charge. The first mentioned was, that, regardless of the sentiments of either, I had detached Mr. Bingley from your sister, and the other, that I had, in defiance of various claims, in defiance of honour and humanity, ruined the immediate prosperity and blasted the prospects of Mr. Wickham. Wilfully and wantonly to have thrown off the companion of my youth, the acknowledged favourite of my father, a young man who had scarcely any other dependence than on our patronage, and who had been brought up to expect its exertion, would be a depravity, to which the separation of two young persons, whose affection could be the growth of only a few weeks, could bear no comparison. But from the severity of that blame which was last night so liberally bestowed, respecting each circumstance, I shall hope to be in the future secured, when the following account of my actions and their motives has been read. If, in the explanation of them, which is due to myself, I am under the
necessity of relating feelings which may be offensive to yours, I can only say that I am sorry. The necessity must be obeyed, and further apology would be absurd.

“I had not been long in Hertfordshire, before I saw, in common with others, that Bingley preferred your elder sister to any other young woman in the country. But it was not till the evening of the dance at Netherfield that I had any apprehension of his feeling a serious attachment. I had often seen him in love before. At that ball, while I had the honour of dancing with you, I was first made acquainted, by Sir William Lucas’s accidental information, that Bingley’s attentions to your sister had given rise to a general expectation of their marriage. He spoke of it as a certain event, of which the time alone could be undecided. From that moment I observed my friend’s behaviour attentively; and I could then perceive that his partiality for Miss Bennet was beyond what I had ever witnessed in him. Your sister I also watched. Her look and manners were open, cheerful, and engaging as ever, but without any symptom of peculiar regard, and I remained convinced from the evening’s scrutiny, that though she received his attentions with pleasure, she did not invite them by any participation of sentiment. If you have not been mistaken here, I must have been in error. Your superior knowledge of your sister must make the latter probable. If it be so, if I have been misled by such error to inflict pain on her, your resentment has not been unreasonable. But I shall not scruple to assert, that the serenity of your sister’s countenance and air was such as might have given the most acute observer a conviction that, however amiable her temper, her heart was not likely to be easily touched. That I was desirous of believing her indifferent is certain—but I will venture to say that my investigation and decisions are not usually influenced by my hopes or fears. I did not believe her to be indifferent because I wished it; I believed it on impartial conviction, as truly as I wished it in reason. My objections to the marriage were not merely those which I last night acknowledged to have the utmost force of passion to put aside, in my own case; the want of connection could not be so great an evil to my friend as to me. But there were other causes of repugnance; causes which, though still existing, and existing to an equal degree in both instances, I had myself endeavoured to forget, because they were not immediately before me. These causes must be stated, though briefly. The situation of your mother’s family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison to that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father. Pardon me. It pains me to offend you. But amidst your concern for the defects of your nearest relations, and your displeasure at this representation of them, let it give you consolation to consider that, to have conducted yourselves so as to avoid any share of the like censure, is praise no less generally bestowed on you and your elder sister, than it is honourable to the sense and disposition of both. I will only say farther that from what passed that evening, my opinion of all parties was confirmed, and every inducement heightened which could have led me before, to preserve my friend from what I esteemed a most unhappy connection. He left Netherfield for London, on the day following, as you, I am certain, remember, with the design of soon returning.

“The part which I acted is now to be explained. His sisters’ uneasiness had been equally excited with my own; our coincidence of feeling was soon discovered, and, alike sensible that no time was to be lost in detaching their brother, we shortly resolved on joining him directly in London. We accordingly went—and there I readily engaged in the office of pointing out to my friend the certain evils of such a choice. I described, and enforced them earnestly. But, however this remonstrance might have staggered or delayed his determination, I do not suppose that it would ultimately have prevented the marriage, had it not been seconded by the assurance that I hesitated not in giving, of your sister’s indifference. He had before believed her to return his affection with sincere, if not with equal regard. But Bingley has great natural modesty, with a stronger dependence on my judgement than on his own. To convince him, therefore, that he had deceived himself, was no very difficult point. To persuade him against returning into Hertfordshire, when that conviction had been given,
was scarcely the work of a moment. I cannot blame myself for having done thus much. There is but one part of my conduct in the whole affair on which I do not reflect with satisfaction; it is that I condescended to adopt the measures of art so far as to conceal from him your sister's being in town. I knew it myself, as it was known to Miss Bingley; but her brother is even yet ignorant of it. That they might have met without ill consequence is perhaps probable; but his regard did not appear to me enough extinguished for him to see her without some danger. Perhaps this concealment, this disguise was beneath me; it is done, however, and it was done for the best. On this subject I have nothing more to say, no other apology to offer. If I have wounded your sister's feelings, it was unknowingly done and though the motives which governed me may to you very naturally appear insufficient, I have not yet learnt to condemn them.

"With respect to that other, more weighty accusation, of having injured Mr. Wickham, I can only refute it by laying before you the whole of his connection with my family. Of what he has particularly accused me I am ignorant; but of the truth of what I shall relate, I can summon more than one witness of undoubted veracity.

"Mr. Wickham is the son of a very respectable man, who had for many years the management of all the Pemberley estates, and whose good conduct in the discharge of his trust naturally inclined my father to be of service to him; and on George Wickham, who was his godson, his kindness was therefore liberally bestowed. My father supported him at school, and afterwards at Cambridge—most important assistance, as his own father, always poor from the extravagance of his wife, would have been unable to give him a gentleman's education. My father was not only fond of this young man's society, whose manners were always engaging; he had also the highest opinion of him, and hoping the church would be his profession, intended to provide for him in it. As for myself, it is many, many years since I first began to think of him in a very different manner. The vicious propensities—the want of principle, which he was careful to guard from the knowledge of his best friend, could not escape the observation of a young man of nearly the same age with himself, and who had opportunities of seeing him in unguarded moments, which Mr. Darcy could not have. Here again I shall give you pain—to what degree you only can tell. But whatever may be the sentiments which Mr. Wickham has created, a suspicion of their nature shall not prevent me from unfolding his real character—it adds even another motive.

"My excellent father died about five years ago; and his attachment to Mr. Wickham was to the last so steady, that in his will he particularly recommended it to me, to promote his advancement in the best manner that his profession might allow—and if he took orders, desired that a valuable family living might be his as soon as it became vacant. There was also a legacy of one thousand pounds. His own father did not long survive mine, and within half a year from these events, Mr. Wickham wrote to inform me that, having finally resolved against taking orders, he hoped I should not think it unreasonable for him to expect some more immediate pecuniary advantage, in lieu of the preferment, by which he could not be benefited. He had some intention, he added, of studying law, and I must be aware that the interest of one thousand pounds would be a very insufficient support therein. I rather wished, than believed him to be sincere; but, at any rate, was perfectly ready to accede to his proposal. I knew that Mr. Wickham ought not to be a clergyman; the business was therefore soon settled—he resigned all claim to assistance in the church, were it possible that he could ever be in a situation to receive it, and accepted in return three thousand pounds. All connection between us seemed now dissolved. I thought too ill of him to invite him to Pemberley, or admit his society in town. In town I believe he chiefly lived, but his studying the law was a mere pretence, and being now free from all restraint, his life was a life of idleness and dissipation. For about three years I heard little of him; but on the decease of the incumbent of the living which had
been designed for him, he applied to me again by letter for the presentation. His circumstances, he assured me, and I had no difficulty in believing it, were exceedingly bad. He had found the law a most unprofitable study, and was now absolutely resolved on being ordained, if I would present him to the living in question—of which he trusted there could be little doubt, as he was well assured that I had no other person to provide for, and I could not have forgotten my revered father's intentions. You will hardly blame me for refusing to comply with this entreaty, or for resisting every repetition to it. His resentment was in proportion to the distress of his circumstances—and he was doubtless as violent in his abuse of me to others as in his reproaches to myself. After this period every appearance of acquaintance was dropped. How he lived I know not. But last summer he was again most painfully obtruded on my notice.

“I must now mention a circumstance which I would wish to forget myself, and which no obligation less than the present should induce me to unfold to any human being. Having said thus much, I feel no doubt of your secrecy. My sister, who is more than ten years my junior, was left to the guardianship of my mother's nephew, Colonel Fitzwilliam, and myself. About a year ago, she was taken from school, and an establishment formed for her in London; and last summer she went with the lady who presided over it, to Ramsgate; and thither also went Mr. Wickham, undoubtedly by design; for there proved to have been a prior acquaintance between him and Mrs. Younge, in whose character we were most unhappily deceived; and by her connivance and aid, he so far recommended himself to Georgiana, whose affectionate heart retained a strong impression of his kindness to her as a child, that she was persuaded to believe herself in love, and to consent to an elopement. She was then but fifteen, which must be her excuse; and after stating her imprudence, I am happy to add, that I owed the knowledge of it to herself. You may imagine what I felt and how I acted. Regard for my sister's credit and feelings prevented any public exposure; but I wrote to Mr. Wickham, who left the place immediately, and Mrs. Younge was of course removed from her charge. Mr. Wickham's chief object was unquestionably my sister's fortune, which is thirty thousand pounds; but I cannot help supposing that the hope of revenging himself on me was a strong inducement. His revenge would have been complete indeed.

“This, madam, is a faithful narrative of every event in which we have been concerned together; and if you do not absolutely reject it as false, you will, I hope, acquit me henceforth of cruelty towards Mr. Wickham. I know not in what manner, under what form of falsehood he had imposed on you; but his success is not perhaps to be wondered at. Ignorant as you previously were of everything concerning either, detection could not be in your power, and suspicion certainly not in your inclination.

“You may possibly wonder why all this was not told you last night; but I was not then master enough of myself to know what could or ought to be revealed. For the truth of everything here related, I can appeal more particularly to the testimony of Colonel Fitzwilliam, who, from our near relationship and constant intimacy, and, still more, as one of the executors of my father's will, has been unavoidably acquainted with every particular of these transactions. If your abhorrence of me should make my assertions valueless, you cannot be prevented by the same cause from confiding in my cousin; and that there may be the possibility of consulting him, I shall endeavour to find some opportunity of putting this letter in your hands in the course of the morning. I will only add, God bless you.

“FITZWILLIAM DARCY”
Chapter 46

Elizabeth had been a good deal disappointed in not finding a letter from Jane on their first arrival at Lambton; and this disappointment had been renewed on each of the mornings that had now been spent there; but on the third her repining was over, and her sister justified, by the receipt of two letters from her at once, on one of which was marked that it had been missent elsewhere. Elizabeth was not surprised at it, as Jane had written the direction remarkably ill.

They had just been preparing to walk as the letters came in; and her uncle and aunt, leaving her to enjoy them in quiet, set off by themselves. The one missent must first be attended to; it had been written five days ago. The beginning contained an account of all their little parties and engagements, with such news as the country afforded; but the latter half, which was dated a day later, and written in evident agitation, gave more important intelligence. It was to this effect:

“Since writing the above, dearest Lizzy, something has occurred of a most unexpected and serious nature; but I am afraid of alarming you—be assured that we are all well. What I have to say relates to poor Lydia. An express came at twelve last night, just as we were all gone to bed, from Colonel Forster, to inform us that she was gone off to Scotland with one of his officers; to own the truth, with Wickham! Imagine our surprise. To Kitty, however, it does not seem so wholly unexpected. I am very, very sorry. So imprudent a match on both sides! But I am willing to hope the best, and that his character has been misunderstood. Thoughtless and indiscreet I can easily believe him, but this step (and let us rejoice over it) marks nothing bad at heart. His choice is disinterested at least, for he must know my father can give her nothing. Our poor mother is sadly grieved. My father bears it better. How thankful am I that we never let them know what has been said against him; we must forget it ourselves. They were off Saturday night about twelve, as is conjectured, but were not missed till yesterday morning at eight. The express was sent off directly. My dear Lizzy, they must have passed within ten miles of us. Colonel Forster gives us reason to expect him here soon. Lydia left a few lines for his wife, informing her of their intention. I must conclude, for I cannot be long from my poor mother. I am afraid you will not be able to make it out, but I hardly know what I have written.”

Without allowing herself time for consideration, and scarcely knowing what she felt, Elizabeth on finishing this letter instantly seized the other, and opening it with the utmost impatience, read as follows: it had been written a day later than the conclusion of the first.

“By this time, my dearest sister, you have received my hurried letter; I wish this may be more intelligible, but though not confined for time, my head is so bewildered that I cannot answer for being coherent. Dearest Lizzy, I hardly know what I would write, but I have bad news for you, and it cannot be delayed. Imprudent as the marriage between Mr. Wickham and our poor Lydia would be, we are now anxious to be assured it has taken place, for there is but too much reason to fear they are not gone to Scotland. Colonel Forster came yesterday, having left Brighton the day before, not many hours after the express. Though Lydia’s short letter to Mrs. F. gave them to understand that they were going to Gretna Green, something was dropped by Denny expressing his belief that W. never intended to go there, or to marry Lydia at all, which was repeated to Colonel F., who, instantly taking the alarm, set off from B. intending to trace their route. He did trace them easily to Clapham, but no further; for on entering that place, they removed into a hackney coach, and dismissed the chaise that brought them from Epsom. All that is known after this is, that they were seen to continue the London road. I know not what to think. After making every possible inquiry on that side London, Colonel F. came on into Hertfordshire, anxiously renewing them at all the turnpikes,
and at the inns in Barnet and Hatfield, but without any success—no such people had been seen to pass through. With the kindest concern he came on to Longbourn, and broke his apprehensions to us in a manner most creditable to his heart. I am sincerely grieved for him and Mrs. F., but no one can throw any blame on them. Our distress, my dear Lizzy, is very great. My father and mother believe the worst, but I cannot think so ill of him. Many circumstances might make it more eligible for them to be married privately in town than to pursue their first plan; and even if he could form such a design against a young woman of Lydia's connections, which is not likely, can I suppose her so lost to everything? Impossible! I grieve to find, however, that Colonel F. is not disposed to depend upon their marriage; he shook his head when I expressed my hopes, and said he feared W. was not a man to be trusted. My poor mother is really ill, and keeps her room. Could she exert herself, it would be better; but this is not to be expected. And as to my father, I never in my life saw him so affected. Poor Kitty has anger for having concealed their attachment; but as it was a matter of confidence, one cannot wonder. I am truly glad, dearest Lizzy, that you have been spared something of these distressing scenes; but now, as the first shock is over, shall I own that I long for your return? I am not so selfish, however, as to press for it, if inconvenient. Adieu! I take up my pen again to do what I have just told you I would not; but circumstances are such that I cannot help earnestly begging you all to come here as soon as possible. I know my dear uncle and aunt so well, that I am not afraid of requesting it, though I have still something more to ask of the former. My father is going to London with Colonel Forster instantly, to try to discover her. What he means to do I am sure I know not; but his excessive distress will not allow him to pursue any measure in the best and safest way, and Colonel Forster is obliged to be at Brighton again to-morrow evening. In such an exigence, my uncle's advice and assistance would be everything in the world; he will immediately comprehend what I must feel, and I rely upon his goodness."

“Oh! where, where is my uncle?” cried Elizabeth, darting from her seat as she finished the letter, in eagerness to follow him, without losing a moment of the time so precious; but as she reached the door it was opened by a servant, and Mr. Darcy appeared. Her pale face and impetuous manner made him start, and before he could recover himself to speak, she, in whose mind every idea was superseded by Lydia's situation, hastily exclaimed, "I beg your pardon, but I must leave you. I must find Mr. Gardiner this moment, on business that cannot be delayed; I have not an instant to lose."

"Good God! what is the matter?” cried he, with more feeling than politeness; then recollecting himself, "I will not detain you a minute; but let me, or let the servant go after Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. You are not well enough; you cannot go yourself.”

Elizabeth hesitated, but her knees trembled under her and she felt how little would be gained by her attempting to pursue them. Calling back the servant, therefore, she commissioned him, though in so breathless an accent as made her almost unintelligible, to fetch his master and mistress home instantly.

On his quitting the room she sat down, unable to support herself, and looking so miserably ill, that it was impossible for Darcy to leave her, or to refrain from saying, in a tone of gentleness and commiseration, "Let me call your maid. Is there nothing you could take to give you present relief? A glass of wine; shall I get you one? You are very ill."

“No, I thank you,” she replied, endeavouring to recover herself. “There is nothing the matter with me. I am quite well; I am only distressed by some dreadful news which I have just received from Longbourn.”
She burst into tears as she alluded to it, and for a few minutes could not speak another word. Darcy, in wretched suspense, could only say something indistinctly of his concern, and observe her in compassionate silence. At length she spoke again. “I have just had a letter from Jane, with such dreadful news. It cannot be concealed from anyone. My younger sister has left all her friends—has eloped; has thrown herself into the power of—of Mr. Wickham. They are gone off together from Brighton. You know him too well to doubt the rest. She has no money, no connections, nothing that can tempt him to—she is lost for ever.”

Darcy was fixed in astonishment. “When I consider,” she added in a yet more agitated voice, “that I might have prevented it! I, who knew what he was. Had I but explained some part of it only—some part of what I learnt, to my own family! Had his character been known, this could not have happened. But it is all—all too late now.”

“I am grieved indeed,” cried Darcy; “grieved—shocked. But is it certain—absolutely certain?”

“Oh, yes! They left Brighton together on Sunday night, and were traced almost to London, but not beyond; they are certainly not gone to Scotland.”

“And what has been done, what has been attempted, to recover her?”

“My father is gone to London, and Jane has written to beg my uncle's immediate assistance; and we shall be off, I hope, in half-an-hour. But nothing can be done—I know very well that nothing can be done. How is such a man to be worked on? How are they even to be discovered? I have not the smallest hope. It is every way horrible!”

Darcy shook his head in silent acquiescence.

“When my eyes were opened to his real character—Oh! had I known what I ought, what I dared to do! But I knew not—I was afraid of doing too much. Wretched, wretched mistake!”

Darcy made no answer. He seemed scarcely to hear her, and was walking up and down the room in earnest meditation, his brow contracted, his air gloomy. Elizabeth soon observed, and instantly understood it. Her power was sinking; everything must sink under such a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of the deepest disgrace. She could neither wonder nor condemn, but the belief of his self-conquest brought nothing consolatory to her bosom, afforded no palliation of her distress. It was, on the contrary, exactly calculated to make her understand her own wishes; and never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be vain.

But self, though it would intrude, could not engross her. Lydia—the humiliation, the misery she was bringing on them all, soon swallowed up every private care; and covering her face with her handkerchief, Elizabeth was soon lost to everything else; and, after a pause of several minutes, was only recalled to a sense of her situation by the voice of her companion, who, in a manner which, though it spoke compassion, spoke likewise restraint, said, “I am afraid you have been long desiring my absence, nor have I anything to plead in excuse of my stay, but real, though unavailing concern. Would to Heaven that anything could be either said or done on my part that might offer consolation to such distress! But I will not torment you with vain wishes, which may seem purposely to ask for your thanks. This unfortunate affair will, I fear, prevent my sister's having the pleasure of seeing you at Pemberley to-day.”
“Oh, yes. Be so kind as to apologise for us to Miss Darcy. Say that urgent business calls us home immediately. Conceal the unhappy truth as long as it is possible, I know it cannot be long.”

He readily assured her of his secrecy; again expressed his sorrow for her distress, wished it a happier conclusion than there was at present reason to hope, and leaving his compliments for her relations, with only one serious, parting look, went away.

As he quitted the room, Elizabeth felt how improbable it was that they should ever see each other again on such terms of cordiality as had marked their several meetings in Derbyshire; and as she threw a retrospective glance over the whole of their acquaintance, so full of contradictions and varieties, sighed at the perverseness of those feelings which would now have promoted its continuance, and would formerly have rejoiced in its termination.

If gratitude and esteem are good foundations of affection, Elizabeth's change of sentiment will be neither improbable nor faulty. But if otherwise—if regard springing from such sources is unreasonable or unnatural, in comparison of what is so often described as arising on a first interview with its object, and even before two words have been exchanged, nothing can be said in her defence, except that she had given somewhat of a trial to the latter method in her partiality for Wickham, and that its ill success might, perhaps, authorise her to seek the other less interesting mode of attachment. Be that as it may, she saw him go with regret; and in this early example of what Lydia's infamy must produce, found additional anguish as she reflected on that wretched business. Never, since reading Jane's second letter, had she entertained a hope of Wickham's meaning to marry her. No one but Jane, she thought, could flatter herself with such an expectation. Surprise was the least of her feelings on this development. While the contents of the first letter remained in her mind, she was all surprise—all astonishment that Wickham should marry a girl whom it was impossible he could marry for money; and how Lydia could ever have attached him had appeared incomprehensible. But now it was all too natural. For such an attachment as this she might have sufficient charms; and though she did not suppose Lydia to be deliberately engaging in an elopement without the intention of marriage, she had no difficulty in believing that neither her virtue nor her understanding would preserve her from falling an easy prey.

She had never perceived, while the regiment was in Hertfordshire, that Lydia had any partiality for him; but she was convinced that Lydia wanted only encouragement to attach herself to anybody. Sometimes one officer, sometimes another, had been her favourite, as their attentions raised them in her opinion. Her affections had continually been fluctuating but never without an object. The mischief of neglect and mistaken indulgence towards such a girl—oh! how acutely did she now feel it!

She was wild to be at home—to hear, to see, to be upon the spot to share with Jane in the cares that must now fall wholly upon her, in a family so deranged, a father absent, a mother incapable of exertion, and requiring constant attendance; and though almost persuaded that nothing could be done for Lydia, her uncle's interference seemed of the utmost importance, and till he entered the room her impatience was severe. Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner had hurried back in alarm, supposing by the servant's account that their niece was taken suddenly ill; but satisfying them instantly on that head, she eagerly communicated the cause of their summons, reading the two letters aloud, and dwelling on the postscript of the last with trembling energy.—Though Lydia had never been a favourite with them, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner could not but be deeply afflicted. Not Lydia only, but all were concerned in it; and after the first exclamations of surprise and horror, Mr. Gardiner promised every assistance in his power. Elizabeth, though expecting no less, thanked him with tears of
gratitude; and all three being actuated by one spirit, everything relating to their journey was speedily settled. They were to be off as soon as possible. “But what is to be done about Pemberley?” cried Mrs. Gardiner. “John told us Mr. Darcy was here when you sent for us; was it so?”

“Yes; and I told him we should not be able to keep our engagement. That is all settled.”

“What is all settled?” repeated the other, as she ran into her room to prepare. “And are they upon such terms as for her to disclose the real truth? Oh, that I knew how it was!”

But wishes were vain, or at least could only serve to amuse her in the hurry and confusion of the following hour. Had Elizabeth been at leisure to be idle, she would have remained certain that all employment was impossible to one so wretched as herself; but she had her share of business as well as her aunt, and amongst the rest there were notes to be written to all their friends at Lambton, with false excuses for their sudden departure. An hour, however, saw the whole completed; and Mr. Gardiner meanwhile having settled his account at the inn, nothing remained to be done but to go; and Elizabeth, after all the misery of the morning, found herself, in a shorter space of time than she could have supposed, seated in the carriage, and on the road to Longbourn.

Chapter 52

Elizabeth had the satisfaction of receiving an answer to her letter as soon as she possibly could. She was no sooner in possession of it than, hurrying into the little copse, where she was least likely to be interrupted, she sat down on one of the benches and prepared to be happy; for the length of the letter convinced her that it did not contain a denial.

“Gracechurch street, Sept. 6.

“MY DEAR NIECE,

“I have just received your letter, and shall devote this whole morning to answering it, as I foresee that a little writing will not comprise what I have to tell you. I must confess myself surprised by your application; I did not expect it from you. Don’t think me angry, however, for I only mean to let you know that I had not imagined such inquiries to be necessary on your side. If you do not choose to understand me, forgive my impertinence. Your uncle is as much surprised as I am—and nothing but the belief of your being a party concerned would have allowed him to act as he has done. But if you are really innocent and ignorant, I must be more explicit.

“On the very day of my coming home from Longbourn, your uncle had a most unexpected visitor. Mr. Darcy called, and was shut up with him several hours. It was all over before I arrived; so my curiosity was not so dreadfully racked as yours seems to have been. He came to tell Mr. Gardiner that he had found out where your sister and Mr. Wickham were, and that he had seen and talked with them both; Wickham repeatedly, Lydia once. From what I can collect, he left Derbyshire only one day after ourselves, and came to town with the resolution of hunting for them. The motive professed was his conviction of its being owing to himself that Wickham’s worthlessness had not been so well known as to make it impossible for any young woman of character to love or confide in him. He generously imputed the whole to his mistaken pride, and confessed that he had before thought it beneath him to lay his private actions open to the world. His character was to speak for itself. He called it, therefore, his duty to step forward, and endeavour to remedy an evil which had been brought on by himself. If he had another motive, I am sure it would never disgrace him. He had
been some days in town, before he was able to discover them; but he had something to direct his search, which was more than we had; and the consciousness of this was another reason for his resolving to follow us.

“There is a lady, it seems, a Mrs. Younge, who was some time ago governess to Miss Darcy, and was dismissed from her charge on some cause of disapprobation, though he did not say what. She then took a large house in Edward-street, and has since maintained herself by letting lodgings. This Mrs. Younge was, he knew, intimately acquainted with Wickham; and he went to her for intelligence of him as soon as he got to town. But it was two or three days before he could get from her what he wanted. She would not betray her trust, I suppose, without bribery and corruption, for she really did know where her friend was to be found. Wickham indeed had gone to her on their first arrival in London, and had she been able to receive them into her house, they would have taken up their abode with her. At length, however, our kind friend procured the wished-for direction. They were in —— street. He saw Wickham, and afterwards insisted on seeing Lydia. His first object with her, he acknowledged, had been to persuade her to quit her present disgraceful situation, and return to her friends as soon as they could be prevailed on to receive her, offering his assistance, as far as it would go. But he found Lydia absolutely resolved on remaining where she was. She cared for none of her friends; she wanted no help of his; she would not hear of leaving Wickham. She was sure they should be married some time or other, and it did not much signify when. Since such were her feelings, it only remained, he thought, to secure and expedite a marriage, which, in his very first conversation with Wickham, he easily learnt had never been his design. He confessed himself obliged to leave the regiment, on account of some debts of honour, which were very pressing; and scrupled not to lay all the ill-consequences of Lydia’s flight on her own folly alone. He meant to resign his commission immediately; and as to his future situation, he could conjecture very little about it. He must go somewhere, but he did not know where, and he knew he should have nothing to live on.

“Mr. Darcy asked him why he had not married your sister at once. Though Mr. Bennet was not imagined to be very rich, he would have been able to do something for him, and his situation must have been benefited by marriage. But he found, in reply to this question, that Wickham still cherished the hope of more effectually making his fortune by marriage in some other country. Under such circumstances, however, he was not likely to be proof against the temptation of immediate relief.

“They met several times, for there was much to be discussed. Wickham of course wanted more than he could get; but at length was reduced to be reasonable.

“Every thing being settled between them, Mr. Darcy’s next step was to make your uncle acquainted with it, and he first called in Gracechurch street the evening before I came home. But Mr. Gardiner could not be seen, and Mr. Darcy found, on further inquiry, that your father was still with him, but would quit town the next morning. He did not judge your father to be a person whom he could so properly consult as your uncle, and therefore readily postponed seeing him till after the departure of the former. He did not leave his name, and till the next day it was only known that a gentleman had called on business.

“On Saturday he came again. Your father was gone, your uncle at home, and, as I said before, they had a great deal of talk together.
"They met again on Sunday, and then I saw him too. It was not all settled before Monday: as soon as it was, the express was sent off to Longbourn. But our visitor was very obstinate. I fancy, Lizzy, that obstinacy is the real defect of his character, after all. He has been accused of many faults at different times, but this is the true one. Nothing was to be done that he did not do himself; though I am sure (and I do not speak it to be thanked, therefore say nothing about it), your uncle would most readily have settled the whole.

"They battled it together for a long time, which was more than either the gentleman or lady concerned in it deserved. But at last your uncle was forced to yield, and instead of being allowed to be of use to his niece, was forced to put up with only having the probable credit of it, which went sorely against the grain; and I really believe your letter this morning gave him great pleasure, because it required an explanation that would rob him of his borrowed feathers, and give the praise where it was due. But, Lizzy, this must go no farther than yourself, or Jane at most.

"You know pretty well, I suppose, what has been done for the young people. His debts are to be paid, amounting, I believe, to considerably more than a thousand pounds, another thousand in addition to her own settled upon her, and his commission purchased. The reason why all this was to be done by him alone, was such as I have given above. It was owing to him, to his reserve and want of proper consideration, that Wickham’s character had been so misunderstood, and consequently that he had been received and noticed as he was. Perhaps there was some truth in this; though I doubt whether his reserve, or anybody’s reserve, can be answerable for the event. But in spite of all this fine talking, my dear Lizzy, you may rest perfectly assured that your uncle would never have yielded, if we had not given him credit for another interest in the affair.

"When all this was resolved on, he returned again to his friends, who were still staying at Pemberley; but it was agreed that he should be in London once more when the wedding took place, and all money matters were then to receive the last finish.

"I believe I have now told you every thing. It is a relation which you tell me is to give you great surprise; I hope at least it will not afford you any displeasure. Lydia came to us; and Wickham had constant admission to the house. He was exactly what he had been, when I knew him in Hertfordshire; but I would not tell you how little I was satisfied with her behaviour while she staid with us, if I had not perceived, by Jane’s letter last Wednesday, that her conduct on coming home was exactly of a piece with it, and therefore what I now tell you can give you no fresh pain. I talked to her repeatedly in the most serious manner, representing to her all the wickedness of what she had done, and all the unhappiness she had brought on her family. If she heard me, it was by good luck, for I am sure she did not listen. I was sometimes quite provoked, but then I recollected my dear Elizabeth and Jane, and for their sakes had patience with her.

"Mr. Darcy was punctual in his return, and as Lydia informed you, attended the wedding. He dined with us the next day, and was to leave town again on Wednesday or Thursday. Will you be very angry with me, my dear Lizzy, if I take this opportunity of saying (what I was never bold enough to say before) how much I like him. His behaviour to us has, in every respect, been as pleasing as when we were in Derbyshire. His understanding and opinions all please me; he wants nothing but a little more liveliness, and that, if he marry prudently, his wife may teach him. I thought him very sly;—he hardly ever mentioned your name. But slyness seems the fashion.
“Pray forgive me if I have been very presuming, or at least do not punish me so far as to exclude me from P. I shall never be quite happy till I have been all round the park. A low phaeton, with a nice little pair of ponies, would be the very thing.

“But I must write no more. The children have been wanting me this half hour.

“Yours, very sincerely,

“M. GARDINER.”

The contents of this letter threw Elizabeth into a flutter of spirits, in which it was difficult to determine whether pleasure or pain bore the greatest share. The vague and unsettled suspicions which uncertainty had produced of what Mr. Darcy might have been doing to forward her sister’s match, which she had feared to encourage as an exertion of goodness too great to be probable, and at the same time dreaded to be just, from the pain of obligation, were proved beyond their greatest extent to be true! He had followed them purposely to town, he had taken on himself all the trouble and mortification attendant on such a research; in which supplication had been necessary to a woman whom he must abominate and despise, and where he was reduced to meet, frequently meet, reason with, persuade, and finally bribe, the man whom he always most wished to avoid, and whose very name it was punishment to him to pronounce. He had done all this for a girl whom he could neither regard nor esteem. Her heart did whisper that he had done it for her. But it was a hope shortly checked by other considerations, and she soon felt that even her vanity was insufficient, when required to depend on his affection for her—for a woman who had already refused him—as able to overcome a sentiment so natural as abhorrence against relationship with Wickham. Brother-in-law of Wickham! Every kind of pride must revolt from the connection. He had, to be sure, done much. She was ashamed to think how much. But he had given a reason for his interference, which asked no extraordinary stretch of belief. It was reasonable that he should feel he had been wrong; he had liberality, and he had the means of exercising it; and though she would not place herself as his principal inducement, she could, perhaps, believe that remaining partiality for her might assist his endeavours in a cause where her peace of mind must be materially concerned. It was painful, exceedingly painful, to know that they were under obligations to a person who could never receive a return. They owed the restoration of Lydia, her character, every thing, to him. Oh! how heartily did she grieve over every ungracious sensation she had ever encouraged, every saucy speech she had ever directed towards him. For herself she was humbled; but she was proud of him. Proud that in a cause of compassion and honour, he had been able to get the better of himself. She read over her aunt’s commendation of him again and again. It was hardly enough; but it pleased her. She was even sensible of some pleasure, though mixed with regret, on finding how steadfastly both she and her uncle had been persuaded that affection and confidence subsisted between Mr. Darcy and herself.

She was roused from her seat, and her reflections, by some one’s approach; and before she could strike into another path, she was overtaken by Wickham.

“I am afraid I interrupt your solitary ramble, my dear sister?” said he, as he joined her.

“You certainly do,” she replied with a smile; “but it does not follow that the interruption must be unwelcome.”

“I should be sorry indeed, if it were. We were always good friends; and now we are better.”
“True. Are the others coming out?”

“I do not know. Mrs. Bennet and Lydia are going in the carriage to Meryton. And so, my dear sister, I find, from our uncle and aunt, that you have actually seen Pemberley.”

She replied in the affirmative.

“I almost envy you the pleasure, and yet I believe it would be too much for me, or else I could take it in my way to Newcastle. And you saw the old housekeeper, I suppose? Poor Reynolds, she was always very fond of me. But of course she did not mention my name to you.”

“Yes, she did.”

“And what did she say?”

“That you were gone into the army, and she was afraid had—not turned out well. At such a distance as that, you know, things are strangely misrepresented.”

“Certainly,” he replied, biting his lips. Elizabeth hoped she had silenced him; but he soon afterwards said:

“I was surprised to see Darcy in town last month. We passed each other several times. I wonder what he can be doing there.”

“Perhaps preparing for his marriage with Miss de Bourgh,” said Elizabeth. “It must be something particular, to take him there at this time of year.”

“Undoubtedly. Did you see him while you were at Lambton? I thought I understood from the Gardiners that you had.”

“Yes; he introduced us to his sister.”

“And do you like her?”

“Very much.”

“I have heard, indeed, that she is uncommonly improved within this year or two. When I last saw her, she was not very promising. I am very glad you liked her. I hope she will turn out well.”

“I dare say she will; she has got over the most trying age.”

“Did you go by the village of Kympton?”

“I do not recollect that we did.”

“I mention it, because it is the living which I ought to have had. A most delightful place!—Excellent Parsonage House! It would have suited me in every respect.”
“How should you have liked making sermons?”

“Exceedingly well. I should have considered it as part of my duty, and the exertion would soon have been nothing. One ought not to repine;—but, to be sure, it would have been such a thing for me! The quiet, the retirement of such a life would have answered all my ideas of happiness! But it was not to be. Did you ever hear Darcy mention the circumstance, when you were in Kent?”

“I have heard from authority, which I thought as good, that it was left you conditionally only, and at the will of the present patron.”

“You have. Yes, there was something in that; I told you so from the first, you may remember.”

“I did hear, too, that there was a time, when sermon-making was not so palatable to you as it seems to be at present; that you actually declared your resolution of never taking orders, and that the business had been compromised accordingly.”

“You did! and it was not wholly without foundation. You may remember what I told you on that point, when first we talked of it.”

They were now almost at the door of the house, for she had walked fast to get rid of him; and unwilling, for her sister’s sake, to provoke him, she only said in reply, with a good-humoured smile:

“Come, Mr. Wickham, we are brother and sister, you know. Do not let us quarrel about the past. In future, I hope we shall be always of one mind.”

She held out her hand; he kissed it with affectionate gallantry, though he hardly knew how to look, and they entered the house.

Mary Shelley / Frankenstein

Letter 1

To Mrs. Saville, England.

St. Petersburgh, Dec. 11th, 17__—.

You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings. I arrived here yesterday, and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking.

I am already far north of London, and as I walk in the streets of Petersburgh, I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks, which braces my nerves and fills me with delight. Do you understand this feeling? This breeze, which has travelled from the regions towards which I am advancing, gives me a foretaste of those icy climes. Inspired by this wind of promise, my daydreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight. There, Margaret, the sun is for ever visible, its broad disk just skirting the horizon and diffusing a perpetual splendour. There—for with your leave, my sister, I will put some trust in preceding navigators—there snow and frost are banished; and, sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in
beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe. Its productions and features may be without example, as the phenomena of the heavenly bodies undoubtedly are in those undiscovered solitudes. What may not be expected in a country of eternal light? I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle and may regulate a thousand celestial observations that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent for ever. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man. These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death and to induce me to commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native river. But supposing all these conjectures to be false, you cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind, to the last generation, by discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite; or by ascertaining the secret of the magnet, which, if at all possible, can only be effected by an undertaking such as mine.

These reflections have dispelled the agitation with which I began my letter, and I feel my heart glow with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven, for nothing contributes so much to tranquillise the mind as a steady purpose—a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye. This expedition has been the favourite dream of my early years. I have read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages which have been made in the prospect of arriving at the North Pacific Ocean through the seas which surround the pole. You may remember that a history of all the voyages made for purposes of discovery composed the whole of our good Uncle Thomas’ library. My education was neglected, yet I was passionately fond of reading. These volumes were my study day and night, and my familiarity with them increased that regret which I had felt, as a child, on learning that my father’s dying injunction had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a seafaring life.

These visions faded when I perused, for the first time, those poets whose effusions entranced my soul and lifted it to heaven. I also became a poet and for one year lived in a paradise of my own creation; I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated. You are well acquainted with my failure and how heavily I bore the disappointment. But just at that time I inherited the fortune of my cousin, and my thoughts were turned into the channel of their earlier bent.

Six years have passed since I resolved on my present undertaking. I can, even now, remember the hour from which I dedicated myself to this great enterprise. I commenced by inuring my body to hardship. I accompanied the whale-fishers on several expeditions to the North Sea; I voluntarily endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep; I often worked harder than the common sailors during the day and devoted my nights to the study of mathematics, the theory of medicine, and those branches of physical science from which a naval adventurer might derive the greatest practical advantage. Twice I actually hired myself as an under-mate in a Greenland whaler, and acquitted myself to admiration. I must own I felt a little proud when my captain offered me the second dignity in the vessel and entreated me to remain with the greatest earnestness, so valuable did he consider my services.

And now, dear Margaret, do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose? My life might have been passed in ease and luxury, but I preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path. Oh, that some encouraging voice would answer in the affirmative! My courage and my resolution is firm; but my hopes fluctuate, and my spirits are often depressed. I am about to proceed on a long and difficult voyage, the emergencies of which will demand all my fortitude: I am required not only to raise the spirits of others, but sometimes to sustain my own, when theirs are failing.

This is the most favourable period for travelling in Russia. They fly quickly over the snow in their sledges; the motion is pleasant, and, in my opinion, far more agreeable than that of an English stagecoach. The cold is not excessive, if you are wrapped in fur—a dress which I have already adopted, for there is a great difference between walking the deck and remaining seated motionless...
for hours, when no exercise prevents the blood from actually freezing in your veins. I have no ambition to lose my life on the post-road between St. Petersburgh and Archangel.

I shall depart for the latter town in a fortnight or three weeks; and my intention is to hire a ship there, which can easily be done by paying the insurance for the owner, and to engage as many sailors as I think necessary among those who are accustomed to the whale-fishing. I do not intend to sail until the month of June; and when shall I return? Ah, dear sister, how can I answer this question? If I succeed, many, many months, perhaps years, will pass before you and I may meet. If I fail, you will see me again soon, or never.

Farewell, my dear, excellent Margaret. Heaven shower down blessings on you, and save me, that I may again and again testify my gratitude for all your love and kindness.

Your affectionate brother,

R. Walton

Letter 2

To Mrs. Saville, England.

Archangel, 28th March, 17—.

How slowly the time passes here, encompassed as I am by frost and snow! Yet a second step is taken towards my enterprise. I have hired a vessel and am occupied in collecting my sailors; those whom I have already engaged appear to be men on whom I can depend and are certainly possessed of dauntless courage.

But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy, and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil, I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection. I shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true; but that is a poor medium for the communication of feeling. I desire the company of a man who could sympathise with me, whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as well as of a capacious mind, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans. How would such a friend repair the faults of your poor brother! I am too ardent in execution and too impatient of difficulties. But it is a still greater evil to me that I am self-educated: for the first fourteen years of my life I ran wild on a common and read nothing but our Uncle Thomas' books of voyages. At that age I became acquainted with the celebrated poets of our own country; but it was only when it had ceased to be in my power to derive its most important benefits from such a conviction that I perceived the necessity of becoming acquainted with more languages than that of my native country. Now I am twenty-eight and am in reality more illiterate than many schoolboys of fifteen. It is true that I have thought more and that my daydreams are more extended and magnificent, but they want (as the painters call it) keeping; and I greatly need a friend who would have sense enough not to despise me as romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavour to regulate my mind.

Well, these are useless complaints; I shall certainly find no friend on the wide ocean, nor even here in Archangel, among merchants and seamen. Yet some feelings, unallied to the dross of human nature, beat even in these rugged bosoms. My lieutenant, for instance, is a man of wonderful courage
and enterprise; he is madly desirous of glory, or rather, to word my phrase more characteristically, of advancement in his profession. He is an Englishman, and in the midst of national and professional prejudices, unsoftened by cultivation, retains some of the noblest endowments of humanity. I first became acquainted with him on board a whale vessel; finding that he was unemployed in this city, I easily engaged him to assist in my enterprise.

The master is a person of an excellent disposition and is remarkable in the ship for his gentleness and the mildness of his discipline. This circumstance, added to his well-known integrity and dauntless courage, made me very desirous to engage him. A youth passed in solitude, my best years spent under your gentle and feminine fosterage, has so refined the groundwork of my character that I cannot overcome an intense distaste to the usual brutality exercised on board ship: I have never believed it to be necessary, and when I heard of a mariner equally noted for his kindliness of heart and the respect and obedience paid to him by his crew, I felt myself peculiarly fortunate in being able to secure his services. I heard of him first in rather a romantic manner, from a lady who owes to him the happiness of her life. Some years ago he loved a young Russian lady of moderate fortune, and having amassed a considerable sum in prize-money, the father of the girl consented to the match. He saw his mistress once before the destined ceremony; but she was bathed in tears, and throwing herself at his feet, entreated him to spare her, confessing at the same time that she loved another, but that he was poor, and that her father would never consent to the union. My generous friend reassured the suppliant, and on being informed of the name of her lover, instantly abandoned his pursuit. He had already bought a farm with his money, on which he had designed to pass the remainder of his life; but he bestowed the whole on his rival, together with the remains of his prize-money to purchase stock, and then himself solicited the young woman's father to consent to her marriage with her lover. But the old man decidedly refused, thinking himself bound in honour to my friend, who, when he found the father inexorable, quitted his country, nor returned until he heard that his former mistress was married according to her inclinations. “What a noble fellow!” you will exclaim. He is so; but then he is wholly uneducated: he is as silent as a Turk, and a kind of ignorant carelessness attends him, which, while it renders his conduct the more astonishing, detracts from the interest and sympathy which otherwise he would command.

Yet do not suppose, because I complain a little or because I can conceive a consolation for my toils which I may never know, that I am wavering in my resolutions. Those are as fixed as fate, and my voyage is only now delayed until the weather shall permit my embarkation. The winter has been dreadfully severe, but the spring promises well, and it is considered as a remarkably early season, so that perhaps I may sail sooner than I expected. I shall do nothing rashly: you know me sufficiently to confide in my prudence and considerateness whenever the safety of others is committed to my care.

I cannot describe to you my sensations on the near prospect of my undertaking. It is impossible to communicate to you a conception of the trembling sensation, half pleasurable and half fearful, with which I am preparing to depart. I am going to unexplored regions, to “the land of mist and snow,” but I shall kill no albatross; therefore do not be alarmed for my safety or if I should come back to you as worn and woeful as the “Ancient Mariner.” You will smile at my allusion, but I will disclose a secret. I have often attributed my attachment to, my passionate enthusiasm for, the dangerous mysteries of ocean to that production of the most imaginative of modern poets. There is something at work in my soul which I do not understand. I am practically industrious—painstaking, a workman to execute with perseverance and labour—but besides this there is a love for the marvellous, a belief in the marvellous, intertwined in all my projects, which hurries me out of the common pathways of men, even to the wild sea and unvisited regions I am about to explore.

But to return to dearer considerations. Shall I meet you again, after having traversed immense seas, and returned by the most southern cape of Africa or America? I dare not expect such success, yet I cannot bear to look on the reverse of the picture. Continue for the present to write to me by every opportunity: I may receive your letters on some occasions when I need them most to support
my spirits. I love you very tenderly. Remember me with affection, should you never hear from me again.

Your affectionate brother,
Robert Walton

Letter 3

To Mrs. Saville, England.

July 7th, 17—.

My dear Sister,

I write a few lines in haste to say that I am safe—and well advanced on my voyage. This letter will reach England by a merchantman now on its homeward voyage from Archangel; more fortunate than I, who may not see my native land, perhaps, for many years. I am, however, in good spirits: my men are bold and apparently firm of purpose, nor do the floating sheets of ice that continually pass us, indicating the dangers of the region towards which we are advancing, appear to dismay them. We have already reached a very high latitude; but it is the height of summer, and although not so warm as in England, the southern gales, which blow us speedily towards those shores which I so ardently desire to attain, breathe a degree of renovating warmth which I had not expected.

No incidents have hitherto befallen us that would make a figure in a letter. One or two stiff gales and the springing of a leak are accidents which experienced navigators scarcely remember to record, and I shall be well content if nothing worse happen to us during our voyage.

Adieu, my dear Margaret. Be assured that for my own sake, as well as yours, I will not rashly encounter danger. I will be cool, persevering, and prudent.

But success shall crown my endeavours. Wherefore not? Thus far I have gone, tracing a secure way over the pathless seas, the very stars themselves being witnesses and testimonies of my triumph. Why not still proceed over the untamed yet obedient element? What can stop the determined heart and resolved will of man?

My swelling heart involuntarily pours itself out thus. But I must finish. Heaven bless my beloved sister!

R.W.

Letter 4

To Mrs. Saville, England.

August 5th, 17—.
So strange an accident has happened to us that I cannot forbear recording it, although it is very probable that you will see me before these papers can come into your possession.

Last Monday (July 31st) we were nearly surrounded by ice, which closed in the ship on all sides, scarcely leaving her the sea-room in which she floated. Our situation was somewhat dangerous, especially as we were compassed round by a very thick fog. We accordingly lay to, hoping that some change would take place in the atmosphere and weather.

About two o’clock the mist cleared away, and we beheld, stretched out in every direction, vast and irregular plains of ice, which seemed to have no end. Some of my comrades groaned, and my own mind began to grow watchful with anxious thoughts, when a strange sight suddenly attracted our attention and diverted our solicitude from our own situation. We perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on towards the north, at the distance of half a mile; a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge and guided the dogs. We watched the rapid progress of the traveller with our telescopes until he was lost among the distant inequalities of the ice.

This appearance excited our unqualified wonder. We were, as we believed, many hundred miles from any land; but this apparition seemed to denote that it was not, in reality, so distant as we had supposed. Shut in, however, by ice, it was impossible to follow his track, which we had observed with the greatest attention.

About two hours after this occurrence we heard the ground sea, and before night the ice broke and freed our ship. We, however, lay to until the morning, fearing to encounter in the dark those large loose masses which float about after the breaking up of the ice. I profited of this time to rest for a few hours.

In the morning, however, as soon as it was light, I went upon deck and found all the sailors busy on one side of the vessel, apparently talking to someone in the sea. It was, in fact, a sledge, like that we had seen before, which had drifted towards us in the night on a large fragment of ice. Only one dog remained alive; but there was a human being within it whom the sailors were persuading to enter the vessel. He was not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but a European. When I appeared on deck the master said, "Here is our captain, and he will not allow you to perish on the open sea."

On perceiving me, the stranger addressed me in English, although with a foreign accent. "Before I come on board your vessel," said he, "will you have the kindness to inform me whither you are bound?"

You may conceive my astonishment on hearing such a question addressed to me from a man on the brink of destruction and to whom I should have supposed that my vessel would have been a resource which he would not have exchanged for the most precious wealth the earth can afford. I replied, however, that we were on a voyage of discovery towards the northern pole.

Upon hearing this he appeared satisfied and consented to come on board. Good God! Margaret, if you had seen the man who thus capitulated for his safety, your surprise would have been boundless. His limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering. I never saw a man in so wretched a condition. We attempted to carry him into the cabin, but as soon as he had quitted the fresh air he fainted. We accordingly brought him back to the deck and restored him to animation by rubbing him with brandy and forcing him to swallow a small quantity. As soon as he showed signs of life we wrapped him up in blankets and placed him near the chimney of the kitchen stove. By slow degrees he recovered and ate a little soup, which restored him wonderfully.

Two days passed in this manner before he was able to speak, and I often feared that his sufferings had deprived him of understanding. When he had in some measure recovered, I removed him to my own cabin and attended on him as much as my duty would permit. I never saw a more interesting creature: his eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness, but there are
moments when, if anyone performs an act of kindness towards him or does him any the most trifling service, his whole countenance is lighted up, as it were, with a beam of benevolence and sweetness that I never saw equalled. But he is generally melancholy and despairing, and sometimes he gnashes his teeth, as if impatient of the weight of woes that oppresses him.

When my guest was a little recovered I had great trouble to keep off the men, who wished to ask him a thousand questions; but I would not allow him to be tormented by their idle curiosity, in a state of body and mind whose restoration evidently depended upon entire repose. Once, however, the lieutenant asked why he had come so far upon the ice in so strange a vehicle.

His countenance instantly assumed an aspect of the deepest gloom, and he replied, "To seek one who fled from me."

"And did the man whom you pursued travel in the same fashion?"

"Yes."

"Then I fancy we have seen him, for the day before we picked you up we saw some dogs drawing a sledge, with a man in it, across the ice."

This aroused the stranger’s attention, and he asked a multitude of questions concerning the route which the daemon, as he called him, had pursued. Soon after, when he was alone with me, he said, "I have, doubtless, excited your curiosity, as well as that of these good people; but you are too considerate to make inquiries."

"Certainly; it would indeed be very impertinent and inhuman in me to trouble you with any inquisitiveness of mine."

"And yet you rescued me from a strange and perilous situation; you have benevolently restored me to life."

Soon after this he inquired if I thought that the breaking up of the ice had destroyed the other sledge. I replied that I could not answer with any degree of certainty, for the ice had not broken until near midnight, and the traveller might have arrived at a place of safety before that time; but of this I could not judge.

From this time a new spirit of life animated the decaying frame of the stranger. He manifested the greatest eagerness to be upon deck to watch for the sledge which had before appeared; but I have persuaded him to remain in the cabin, for he is far too weak to sustain the rawness of the atmosphere. I have promised that someone should watch for him and give him instant notice if any new object should appear in sight.

Such is my journal of what relates to this strange occurrence up to the present day. The stranger has gradually improved in health but is very silent and appears uneasy when anyone except myself enters his cabin. Yet his manners are so conciliating and gentle that the sailors are all interested in him, although they have had very little communication with him. For my own part, I begin to love him as a brother, and his constant and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion. He must have been a noble creature in his better days, being even now in wreck so attractive and amiable.

I said in one of my letters, my dear Margaret, that I should find no friend on the wide ocean; yet I have found a man who, before his spirit had been broken by misery, I should have been happy to have possessed as the brother of my heart.

I shall continue my journal concerning the stranger at intervals, should I have any fresh incidents to record.

August 13th, 17—.
My affection for my guest increases every day. He excites at once my admiration and my pity to an astonishing degree. How can I see so noble a creature destroyed by misery without feeling the most poignant grief? He is so gentle, yet so wise; his mind is so cultivated, and when he speaks, although his words are culled with the choicest art, yet they flow with rapidity and unparalleled eloquence.

He is now much recovered from his illness and is continually on the deck, apparently watching for the sledge that preceded his own. Yet, although unhappy, he is not so utterly occupied by his own misery but that he interests himself deeply in the projects of others. He has frequently conversed with me on mine, which I have communicated to him without disguise. He entered attentively into all my arguments in favour of my eventual success and into every minute detail of the measures I had taken to secure it. I was easily led by the sympathy which he evinced to use the language of my heart, to give utterance to the burning ardour of my soul and to say, with all the fervour that warmed me, how gladly I would sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of my enterprise. One man’s life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I sought, for the dominion I should acquire and transmit over the elemental foes of our race. As I spoke, a dark gloom spread over my listener’s countenance. At first I perceived that he tried to suppress his emotion; he placed his hands before his eyes, and my voice quivered and failed me as I beheld tears trickle fast from between his fingers; a groan burst from his heaving breast. I paused; at length he spoke, in broken accents: "Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me; let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!"

Such words, you may imagine, strongly excited my curiosity; but the paroxysm of grief that had seized the stranger overcame his weakened powers, and many hours of repose and tranquil conversation were necessary to restore his composure.

Having conquered the violence of his feelings, he appeared to despise himself for being the slave of passion; and quelling the dark tyranny of despair, he led me again to converse concerning myself personally. He asked me the history of my earlier years. The tale was quickly told, but it awakened various trains of reflection. I spoke of my desire of finding a friend, of my thirst for a more intimate sympathy with a fellow mind than had ever fallen to my lot, and expressed my conviction that a man could boast of little happiness who did not enjoy this blessing.

"I agree with you," replied the stranger; "we are unfashioned creatures, but half made up, if one wiser, better, dearer than ourselves—such a friend ought to be—do not lend his aid to perfectate our weak and faulty natures. I once had a friend, the most noble of human creatures, and am entitled, therefore, to judge respecting friendship. You have hope, and the world before you, and have no cause for despair. But I—I have lost everything and cannot begin life anew."

As he said this his countenance became expressive of a calm, settled grief that touched me to the heart. But he was silent and presently retired to his cabin.

Even broken in spirit as he is, no one can feel more deeply than he does the beauties of nature. The starry sky, the sea, and every sight afforded by these wonderful regions seem still to have the power of elevating his soul from earth. Such a man has a double existence: he may suffer misery and be overwhelmed by disappointments, yet when he has retired into himself, he will be like a celestial spirit that has a halo around him, within whose circle no grief or folly ventures.

Will you smile at the enthusiasm I express concerning this divine wanderer? You would not if you saw him. You have been tutored and refined by books and retirement from the world, and you are therefore somewhat fastidious; but this only renders you the more fit to appreciate the extraordinary merits of this wonderful man. Sometimes I have endeavoured to discover what quality it is which he possesses that elevates him so immeasurably above any other person I ever knew. I believe it to be an intuitive discernment, a quick but never-failing power of judgment, a penetration into the causes
of things, unequalled for clearness and precision; add to this a facility of expression and a voice whose varied intonations are soul-subduing music.

August 19th, 17—.

Yesterday the stranger said to me, "You may easily perceive, Captain Walton, that I have suffered great and unparalleled misfortunes. I had determined at one time that the memory of these evils should die with me, but you have won me to alter my determination. You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been. I do not know that the relation of my disasters will be useful to you; yet, when I reflect that you are pursuing the same course, exposing yourself to the same dangers which have rendered me what I am, I imagine that you may deduce an apt moral from my tale, one that may direct you if you succeed in your undertaking and console you in case of failure. Prepare to hear of occurrences which are usually deemed marvellous. Were we among the tamer scenes of nature I might fear to encounter your unbelief, perhaps your ridicule; but many things will appear possible in these wild and mysterious regions which would provoke the laughter of those unacquainted with the ever-varied powers of nature; nor can I doubt but that my tale conveys in its series internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed."

You may easily imagine that I was much gratified by the offered communication, yet I could not endure that he should renew his grief by a recital of his misfortunes. I felt the greatest eagerness to hear the promised narrative, partly from curiosity and partly from a strong desire to ameliorate his fate if it were in my power. I expressed these feelings in my answer.

"I thank you," he replied, "for your sympathy, but it is useless; my fate is nearly fulfilled. I wait but for one event, and then I shall repose in peace. I understand your feeling," continued he, perceiving that I wished to interrupt him; "but you are mistaken, my friend, if thus you will allow me to name you; nothing can alter my destiny; listen to my history, and you will perceive how irrevocably it is determined."

He then told me that he would commence his narrative the next day when I should be at leisure. This promise drew from me the warmest thanks. I have resolved every night, when I am not imperatively occupied by my duties, to record, as nearly as possible in his own words, what he has related during the day. If I should be engaged, I will at least make notes. This manuscript will doubtless afford you the greatest pleasure; but to me, who know him, and who hear it from his own lips—with what interest and sympathy shall I read it in some future day! Even now, as I commence my task, his full-toned voice swells in my ears; his lustrous eyes dwell on me with all their melancholy sweetness; I see his thin hand raised in animation, while the lineaments of his face are irradiated by the soul within. Strange and harrowing must be his story, frightful the storm which embraced the gallant vessel on its course and wrecked it—thus!

Chapter 1

I am by birth a Genevese, and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic. My ancestors had been for many years counsellors and syndics, and my father had filled several public situations with honour and reputation. He was respected by all who knew him for his integrity and indefatigable attention to public business. He passed his younger days perpetually occupied by the affairs of his country; a variety of circumstances had prevented his marrying early, nor was it until the decline of life that he became a husband and the father of a family.
As the circumstances of his marriage illustrate his character, I cannot refrain from relating them. One of his most intimate friends was a merchant who, from a flourishing state, fell, through numerous mischances, into poverty. This man, whose name was Beaufort, was of a proud and unbending disposition and could not bear to live in poverty and oblivion in the same country where he had formerly been distinguished for his rank and magnificence. Having paid his debts, therefore, in the most honourable manner, he retreated with his daughter to the town of Lucerne, where he lived unknown and in wretchedness. My father loved Beaufort with the truest friendship and was deeply grieved by his retreat in these unfortunate circumstances. He bitterly deplored the false pride which led his friend to a conduct so little worthy of the affection that united them. He lost no time in endeavouring to seek him out, with the hope of persuading him to begin the world again through his credit and assistance.

Beaufort had taken effectual measures to conceal himself, and it was ten months before my father discovered his abode. Overjoyed at this discovery, he hastened to the house, which was situated in a mean street near the Reuss. But when he entered, misery and despair alone welcomed him. Beaufort had saved but a very small sum of money from the wreck of his fortunes, but it was sufficient to provide him with sustenance for some months, and in the meantime he hoped to procure some respectable employment in a merchant’s house. The interval was, consequently, spent in inaction; his grief only became more deep and rankling when he had leisure for reflection, and at length it took so fast hold of his mind that at the end of three months he lay on a bed of sickness, incapable of any exertion.

His daughter attended him with the greatest tenderness, but she saw with despair that their little fund was rapidly decreasing and that there was no other prospect of support. But Caroline Beaufort possessed a mind of an uncommon mould, and her courage rose to support her in her adversity. She procured plain work; she plaited straw and by various means contrived to earn a pittance scarcely sufficient to support life.

Several months passed in this manner. Her father grew worse; her time was more entirely occupied in attending him; her means of subsistence decreased; and in the tenth month her father died in her arms, leaving her an orphan and a beggar. This last blow overcame her, and she knelt by Beaufort’s coffin weeping bitterly, when my father entered the chamber. He came like a protecting spirit to the poor girl, who committed herself to his care; and after the interment of his friend he conducted her to Geneva and placed her under the protection of a relation. Two years after this event Caroline became his wife.

There was a considerable difference between the ages of my parents, but this circumstance seemed to unite them only closer in bonds of devoted affection. There was a sense of justice in my father’s upright mind which rendered it necessary that he should approve highly to love strongly. Perhaps during former years he had suffered from the late-discovered unworthiness of one beloved and so was disposed to set a greater value on tried worth. There was a show of gratitude and worship in his attachment to my mother, differing wholly from the doting fondness of age, for it was inspired by reverence for her virtues and a desire to be the means of, in some degree, recompensing her for the sorrows she had endured, but which gave inexpressible grace to his behaviour to her. Everything was made to yield to her wishes and her convenience. He strove to shelter her, as a fair exotic is sheltered by the gardener, from every rougher wind and to surround her with all that could tend to excite pleasurable emotion in her soft and benevolent mind. Her health, and even the tranquillity of her hitherto constant spirit, had been shaken by what she had gone through. During the two years that had elapsed previous to their marriage my father had gradually relinquished all his public functions; and immediately after their union they sought the pleasant climate of Italy, and the change of scene and interest attendant on a tour through that land of wonders, as a restorative for her weakened frame.
From Italy they visited Germany and France. I, their eldest child, was born at Naples, and as an infant accompanied them in their rambles. I remained for several years their only child. Much as they were attached to each other, they seemed to draw inexhaustible stores of affection from a very mine of love to bestow them upon me. My mother’s tender caresses and my father’s smile of benevolent pleasure while regarding me are my first recollections. I was their plaything and their idol, and something better—their child, the innocent and helpless creature bestowed on them by Heaven, whom to bring up to good, and whose future lot it was in their hands to direct to happiness or misery, according as they fulfilled their duties towards me. With this deep consciousness of what they owed towards the being to which they had given life, added to the active spirit of tenderness that animated both, it may be imagined that while during every hour of my infant life I received a lesson of patience, of charity, and of self-control, I was so guided by a silken cord that all seemed but one train of enjoyment to me.

For a long time I was their only care. My mother had much desired to have a daughter, but I continued their single offspring. When I was about five years old, while making an excursion beyond the frontiers of Italy, they passed a week on the shores of the Lake of Como. Their benevolent disposition often made them enter the cottages of the poor. This, to my mother, was more than a duty; it was a necessity, a passion—remembering what she had suffered, and how she had been relieved—for her to act in her turn the guardian angel to the afflicted. During one of their walks a poor cot in the foldings of a vale attracted their notice as being singularly disconsolate, while the number of half-clothed children gathered about it spoke of penury in its worst shape. One day, when my father had gone by himself to Milan, my mother, accompanied by me, visited this abode. She found a peasant and his wife, hard working, bent down by care and labour, distributing a scanty meal to five hungry babes. Among these there was one which attracted my mother far above all the rest. She appeared of a different stock. The four others were dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants; this child was thin and very fair. Her hair was the brightest living gold, and despite the poverty of her clothing, seemed to set a crown of distinction on her head. Her brow was clear and ample, her blue eyes cloudless, and her lips and the moulding of her face so expressive of sensibility and sweetness that none could behold her without looking on her as of a distinct species, a being heaven-sent, and bearing a celestial stamp in all her features.

The peasant woman, perceiving that my mother fixed eyes of wonder and admiration on this lovely girl, eagerly communicated her history. She was not her child, but the daughter of a Milanese nobleman. Her mother was a German and had died on giving her birth. The infant had been placed with these good people to nurse: they were better off then. They had not been long married, and their eldest child was but just born. The father of their charge was one of those Italians nursed in the memory of the antique glory of Italy—one among the schiavi ognor frementi, who exerted himself to obtain the liberty of his country. He became the victim of its weakness. Whether he had died or still lingered in the dungeons of Austria was not known. His property was confiscated; his child became an orphan and a beggar. She continued with her foster parents and bloomed in their rude abode, fairer than a garden rose among dark-leaved brambles.

When my father returned from Milan, he found playing with me in the hall of our villa a child fairer than pictured cherub—a creature who seemed to shed radiance from her looks and whose form and motions were lighter than the chamois of the hills. The apparition was soon explained. With his permission my mother prevailed on her rustic guardians to yield their charge to her. They were fond of the sweet orphan. Her presence had seemed a blessing to them, but it would be unfair to her to keep her in poverty and want when Providence afforded her such powerful protection. They consulted their village priest, and the result was that Elizabeth Lavenza became the inmate of my parents’ house—my more than sister—the beautiful and adored companion of all my occupations and my pleasures.
Everyone loved Elizabeth. The passionate and almost reverential attachment with which all regarded her became, while I shared it, my pride and my delight. On the evening previous to her being brought to my home, my mother had said playfully, “I have a pretty present for my Victor—tomorrow he shall have it.” And when, on the morrow, she presented Elizabeth to me as her promised gift, I, with childish seriousness, interpreted her words literally and looked upon Elizabeth as mine—mine to protect, love, and cherish. All praises bestowed on her I received as made to a possession of my own. We called each other familiarly by the name of cousin. No word, no expression could body forth the kind of relation in which she stood to me—my more than sister, since till death she was to be mine only.

Chapter 2

We were brought up together; there was not quite a year difference in our ages. I need not say that we were strangers to any species of disunion or dispute. Harmony was the soul of our companionship, and the diversity and contrast that subsisted in our characters drew us nearer together. Elizabeth was of a calmer and more concentrated disposition; but, with all my ardour, I was capable of a more intense application and was more deeply smitten with the thirst for knowledge. She busied herself with following the aerial creations of the poets; and in the majestic and wondrous scenes which surrounded our Swiss home—the sublime shapes of the mountains, the changes of the seasons, tempest and calm, the silence of winter, and the life and turbulence of our Alpine summers—she found ample scope for admiration and delight. While my companion contemplated with a serious and satisfied spirit the magnificent appearances of things, I delighted in investigating their causes. The world was to me a secret which I desired to divine. Curiosity, earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, gladness akin to rapture, as they were unfolded to me, are among the earliest sensations I can remember.

On the birth of a second son, my junior by seven years, my parents gave up entirely their wandering life and fixed themselves in their native country. We possessed a house in Geneva, and a campagne Belrive, the eastern shore of the lake, at the distance of rather more than a league from the city. We resided principally in the latter, and the lives of my parents were passed in considerable seclusion. It was my temper to avoid a crowd and to attach myself fervently to a few. I was indifferent, therefore, to my school-fellows in general; but I united myself in the bonds of the closest friendship to one among them. Henry Clerval was the son of a merchant of Geneva. He was a boy of singular talent and fancy. He loved enterprise, hardship, and even danger for its own sake. He was deeply read in books of chivalry and romance. He composed heroic songs and began to write many a tale of enchantment and knightly adventure. He tried to make us act plays and to enter into masquerades, in which the characters were drawn from the heroes of Roncesvalles, of the Round Table of King Arthur, and the chivalrous train who shed their blood to redeem the holy sepulchre from the hands of the infidels.

No human being could have passed a happier childhood than myself. My parents were possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence. We felt that they were not the tyrants to rule our lot according to their caprice, but the agents and creators of all the many delights which we enjoyed. When I mingled with other families I distinctly discerned how peculiarly fortunate my lot was, and gratitude assisted the development of filial love.

My temper was sometimes violent, and my passions vehement; but by some law in my temperature they were turned not towards childish pursuits but to an eager desire to learn, and not to learn all things indiscriminately. I confess that neither the structure of languages, nor the code of governments, nor the politics of various states possessed attractions for me. It was the secrets of
heaven and earth that I desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my inquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world.

Meanwhile Clerval occupied himself, so to speak, with the moral relations of things. The busy stage of life, the virtues of heroes, and the actions of men were his theme; and his hope and his dream was to become one among those whose names are recorded in story as the gallant and adventurous benefactors of our species. The saintly soul of Elizabeth shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp in our peaceful home. Her sympathy was ours; her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us. She was the living spirit of love to soften and attract; I might have become sullen in my study, rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness. And Clerval—could aught ill entrench on the noble spirit of Clerval? Yet he might not have been so perfectly humane, so thoughtful in his generosity, so full of kindness and tenderness amidst his passion for adventurous exploit, had she not unfolded to him the real loveliness of beneficence and made the doing good the end and aim of his soaring ambition.

I feel exquisite pleasure in dwelling on the recollections of childhood, before misfortune had tainted my mind and changed its bright visions of extensive usefulness into gloomy and narrow reflections upon self. Besides, in drawing the picture of my early days, I also record those events which led, by insensible steps, to my after tale of misery, for when I would account to myself for the birth of that passion which afterwards ruled my destiny I find it arise, like a mountain river, from ignoble and almost forgotten sources; but, swelling as it proceeded, it became the torrent which, in its course, has swept away all my hopes and joys.

Natural philosophy is the genius that has regulated my fate; I desire, therefore, in this narration, to state those facts which led to my predilection for that science. When I was thirteen years of age we all went on a party of pleasure to the baths near Thonon; the inclemency of the weather obliged us to remain a day confined to the inn. In this house I chanced to find a volume of the works of Cornelius Agrippa. I opened it with apathy; the theory which he attempts to demonstrate and the wonderful facts which he relates soon changed this feeling into enthusiasm. A new light seemed to dawn upon my mind, and bounding with joy, I communicated my discovery to my father. My father looked carelessly at the title page of my book and said, "Ah! Cornelius Agrippa! My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this; it is sad trash."

If, instead of this remark, my father had taken the pains to explain to me that the principles of Agrippa had been entirely exploded and that a modern system of science had been introduced which possessed much greater powers than the ancient, because the powers of the latter were chimerical, while those of the former were real and practical, under such circumstances I should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside and have contented my imagination, warmed as it was, by returning with greater ardour to my former studies. It is even possible that the train of my ideas would never have received the fatal impulse that led to my ruin. But the cursory glance my father had taken of my volume by no means assured me that he was acquainted with its contents, and I continued to read with the greatest avidity.

When I returned home my first care was to procure the whole works of this author, and afterwards of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus. I read and studied the wild fancies of these writers with delight; they appeared to me treasures known to few besides myself. I have described myself as always having been imbued with a fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature. In spite of the intense labour and wonderful discoveries of modern philosophers, I always came from my studies discontented and unsatisfied. Sir Isaac Newton is said to have avowed that he felt like a child picking up shells beside the great and unexplored ocean of truth. Those of his successors in each branch of natural philosophy with whom I was acquainted appeared even to my boy's apprehensions as tyros engaged in the same pursuit.
The untaught peasant beheld the elements around him and was acquainted with their practical uses. The most learned philosopher knew little more. He had partially unveiled the face of Nature, but her immortal lineaments were still a wonder and a mystery. He might dissect, anatomise, and give names; but, not to speak of a final cause, causes in their secondary and tertiary grades were utterly unknown to him. I had gazed upon the fortifications and impediments that seemed to keep human beings from entering the citadel of nature, and rashly and ignorantly I had repined.

But here were books, and here were men who had penetrated deeper and knew more. I took their word for all that they averred, and I became their disciple. It may appear strange that such should arise in the eighteenth century; but while I followed the routine of education in the schools of Geneva, I was, to a great degree, self-taught with regard to my favourite studies. My father was not scientific, and I was left to struggle with a child’s blindness, added to a student’s thirst for knowledge. Under the guidance of my new preceptors I entered with the greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher’s stone and the elixir of life; but the latter soon obtained my undivided attention. Wealth was an inferior object, but what glory would attend the discovery if I could banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!

Nor were these my only visions. The raising of ghosts or devils was a promise liberally accorded by my favourite authors, the fulfilment of which I most eagerly sought; and if my incantations were always unsuccessful, I attributed the failure rather to my own inexperience and mistake than to a want of skill or fidelity in my instructors. And thus for a time I was occupied by exploded systems, mingling, like an unadept, a thousand contradictory theories and floundering desperately in a very slough of multifarious knowledge, guided by an ardent imagination and childish reasoning, till an accident again changed the current of my ideas.

When I was about fifteen years old we had retired to our house near Belrive, when we witnessed a most violent and terrible thunderstorm. It advanced from behind the mountains of Jura, and the thunder burst at once with frightful loudness from various quarters of the heavens. I remained, while the storm lasted, watching its progress with curiosity and delight. As I stood at the door, on a sudden I beheld a stream of fire issue from an old and beautiful oak which stood about twenty yards from our house; and so soon as the dazzling light vanished, the oak had disappeared, and nothing remained but a blasted stump. When we visited it the next morning, we found the tree shattered in a singular manner. It was not splintered by the shock, but entirely reduced to thin ribbons of wood. I never beheld anything so utterly destroyed.

Before this I was not unacquainted with the more obvious laws of electricity. On this occasion a man of great research in natural philosophy was with us, and excited by this catastrophe, he entered on the explanation of a theory which he had formed on the subject of electricity and galvanism, which was at once new and astonishing to me. All that he said threw greatly into the shade Cornelius Agrippa, Albertus Magnus, and Paracelsus, the lords of my imagination; but by some fatality the overthrow of these men disinclined me to pursue my accustomed studies. It seemed to me as if nothing would or could ever be known. All that had so long engaged my attention suddenly grew despicable. By one of those caprices of the mind which we are perhaps most subject to in early youth, I at once gave up my former occupations, set down natural history and all its progeny as a deformed and abortive creation, and entertained the greatest disdain for a would-be science which could never even step within the threshold of real knowledge. In this mood of mind I betook myself to the mathematics and the branches of study appertaining to that science as being built upon secure foundations, and so worthy of my consideration.

Thus strangely are our souls constructed, and by such slight ligaments are we bound to prosperity or ruin. When I look back, it seems to me as if this almost miraculous change of inclination and will was the immediate suggestion of the guardian angel of my life—the last effort made by the spirit of preservation to avert the storm that was even then hanging in the stars and ready to envelop me. Her victory was announced by an unusual tranquillity and gladness of soul which followed the
relinquishing of my ancient and latterly tormenting studies. It was thus that I was to be taught to associate evil with their prosecution, happiness with their disregard.

It was a strong effort of the spirit of good, but it was ineffectual. Destiny was too potent, and her immutable laws had decreed my utter and terrible destruction.

Chapter 3

When I had attained the age of seventeen my parents resolved that I should become a student at the university of Ingolstadt. I had hitherto attended the schools of Geneva, but my father thought it necessary for the completion of my education that I should be made acquainted with other customs than those of my native country. My departure was therefore fixed at an early date, but before the day resolved upon could arrive, the first misfortune of my life occurred—an omen, as it were, of my future misery.

Elizabeth had caught the scarlet fever; her illness was severe, and she was in the greatest danger. During her illness many arguments had been urged to persuade my mother to refrain from attending upon her. She had at first yielded to our entreaties, but when she heard that the life of her favourite was menaced, she could no longer control her anxiety. She attended her sickbed; her watchful attentions triumphed over the malignity of the distemper—Elizabeth was saved, but the consequences of this imprudence were fatal to her preserver. On the third day my mother sickened; her fever was accompanied by the most alarming symptoms, and the looks of her medical attendants prognosticated the worst event. On her deathbed the fortitude and benignity of this best of women did not desert her. She joined the hands of Elizabeth and myself. “My children,” she said, “my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of your union. This expectation will now be the consolation of your father. Elizabeth, my love, you must supply my place to my younger children. Alas! I regret that I am taken from you; and, happy and beloved as I have been, is it not hard to quit you all? But these are not thoughts befitting me; I will endeavour to resign myself cheerfully to death and will indulge a hope of meeting you in another world.”

She died calmly, and her countenance expressed affection even in death. I need not describe the feelings of those whose dearest ties are rent by that most irreparable evil, the void that presents itself to the soul, and the despair that is exhibited on the countenance. It is so long before the mind can persuade itself that she whom we saw every day and whose very existence appeared a part of our own can have departed for ever—that the brightness of a beloved eye can have been extinguished and the sound of a voice so familiar and dear to the ear can be hushed, never more to be heard. These are the reflections of the first days; but when the lapse of time proves the reality of the evil, then the actual bitterness of grief commences. Yet from whom has not that rude hand rent away some dear connection? And why should I describe a sorrow which all have felt, and must feel? The time at length arrives when grief is rather an indulgence than a necessity; and the smile that plays upon the lips, although it may be deemed a sacrilege, is not banished. My mother was dead, but we had still duties which we ought to perform; we must continue our course with the rest and learn to think ourselves fortunate whilst one remains whom the spoiler has not seized.

My departure for Ingolstadt, which had been deferred by these events, was now again determined upon. I obtained from my father a respite of some weeks. It appeared to me sacrilege so soon to leave the repose, akin to death, of the house of mourning and to rush into the thick of life. I was new to sorrow, but it did not the less alarm me. I was unwilling to quit the sight of those that remained to me, and above all, I desired to see my sweet Elizabeth in some degree consoled.

She indeed veiled her grief and strove to act the comforter to us all. She looked steadily on life and assumed its duties with courage and zeal. She devoted herself to those whom she had been taught
to call her uncle and cousins. Never was she so enchanting as at this time, when she recalled the sunshine of her smiles and spent them upon us. She forgot even her own regret in her endeavours to make us forget.

The day of my departure at length arrived. Clerval spent the last evening with us. He had endeavoured to persuade his father to permit him to accompany me and to become my fellow student, but in vain. His father was a narrow-minded trader and saw idleness and ruin in the aspirations and ambition of his son. Henry deeply felt the misfortune of being debarred from a liberal education. He said little, but when he spoke I read in his kindling eye and in his animated glance a restrained but firm resolve not to be chained to the miserable details of commerce.

We sat late. We could not tear ourselves away from each other nor persuade ourselves to say the word “Farewell!” It was said, and we retired under the pretence of seeking repose, each fancying that the other was deceived; but when at morning’s dawn I descended to the carriage which was to convey me away, they were all there—my father again to bless me, Clerval to press my hand once more, my Elizabeth to renew her entreaties that I would write often and to bestow the last feminine attentions on her playmate and friend.

I threw myself into the chaise that was to convey me away and indulged in the most melancholy reflections. I, who had ever been surrounded by amiable companions, continually engaged in endeavouring to bestow mutual pleasure—I was now alone. In the university whither I was going I must form my own friends and be my own protector. My life had hitherto been remarkably secluded and domestic, and this had given me invincible repugnance to new countenances. I loved my brothers, Elizabeth, and Clerval; these were “old familiar faces,” but I believed myself totally unfitted for the company of strangers. Such were my reflections as I commenced my journey; but as I proceeded, my spirits and hopes rose. I ardently desired the acquisition of knowledge. I had often, when at home, thought it hard to remain during my youth cooped up in one place and had longed to enter the world and take my station among other human beings. Now my desires were complied with, and it would, indeed, have been folly to repent.

The next morning I delivered my letters of introduction and paid a visit to some of the principal professors. Chance—or rather the evil influence, the Angel of Destruction, which asserted omnipotent sway over me from the moment I turned my reluctant steps from my father’s door—led me first to M. Krempe, professor of natural philosophy. He was an uncouth man, but deeply imbued in the secrets of his science. He asked me several questions concerning my progress in the different branches of science appertaining to natural philosophy. I replied carelessly, and partly in contempt, mentioned the names of my alchemists as the principal authors I had studied. The professor stared.

“Have you,” he said, “really spent your time in studying such nonsense?”

I replied in the affirmative. “Every minute,” continued M. Krempe with warmth, “every instant that you have wasted on those books is utterly and entirely lost. You have burdened your memory with exploded systems and useless names. Good God! In what desert land have you lived, where no one was kind enough to inform you that these fancies which you have so greedily imbibed are a thousand years old and as musty as they are ancient? I little expected, in this enlightened and scientific age, to find a disciple of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. My dear sir, you must begin your studies entirely anew.”

So saying, he stepped aside and wrote down a list of several books treating of natural philosophy which he desired me to procure, and dismissed me after mentioning that in the beginning of the following week he intended to commence a course of lectures upon natural philosophy in its general
relations, and that M. Waldman, a fellow professor, would lecture upon chemistry the alternate days that he omitted.

I returned home not disappointed, for I have said that I had long considered those authors useless whom the professor reprobated; but I returned not at all the more inclined to recur to these studies in any shape. M. Krempe was a little squat man with a gruff voice and a repulsive countenance; the teacher, therefore, did not prepossess me in favour of his pursuits. In rather a too philosophical and connected a strain, perhaps, I have given an account of the conclusions I had come to concerning them in my early years. As a child I had not been content with the results promised by the modern professors of natural science. With a confusion of ideas only to be accounted for by my extreme youth and my want of a guide on such matters, I had retrod the steps of knowledge along the paths of time and exchanged the discoveries of recent inquirers for the dreams of forgotten alchemists. Besides, I had a contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy. It was very different when the masters of the science sought immortality and power; such views, although futile, were grand; but now the scene was changed. The ambition of the inquirer seemed to limit itself to the annihilation of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded. I was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth.

Such were my reflections during the first two or three days of my residence at Ingolstadt, which were chiefly spent in becoming acquainted with the localities and the principal residents in my new abode. But as the ensuing week commenced, I thought of the information which M. Krempe had given me concerning the lectures. And although I could not consent to go and hear that little conceited fellow deliver sentences out of a pulpit, I recollected what he had said of M. Waldman, whom I had never seen, as he had hitherto been out of town.

Partly from curiosity and partly from idleness, I went into the lecturing room, which M. Waldman entered shortly after. This professor was very unlike his colleague. He appeared about fifty years of age, but with an aspect expressive of the greatest benevolence; a few grey hairs covered his temples, but those at the back of his head were nearly black. His person was short but remarkably erect and his voice the sweetest I had ever heard. He began his lecture by a recapitulation of the history of chemistry and the various improvements made by different men of learning, pronouncing with fervour the names of the most distinguished discoverers. He then took a cursory view of the present state of the science and explained many of its elementary terms. After having made a few preparatory experiments, he concluded with a panegyric upon modern chemistry, the terms of which I shall never forget:

"The ancient teachers of this science," said he, "promised impossibilities and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted and that the elixir of life is a chimera but these philosophers, whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pore over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature and show how she works in her hiding-places. They ascend into the heavens; they have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows."

Such were the professor's words—rather let me say the words of the fate—enounced to destroy me. As he went on I felt as if my soul were grappling with a palpable enemy; one by one the various keys were touched which formed the mechanism of my being; chord after chord was sounded, and soon my mind was filled with one thought, one conception, one purpose. So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein—more, far more, will I achieve; treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.
I closed not my eyes that night. My internal being was in a state of insurrection and turmoil; I felt that order would thence arise, but I had no power to produce it. By degrees, after the morning’s dawn, sleep came. I awoke, and my yesternight’s thoughts were as a dream. There only remained a resolution to return to my ancient studies and to devote myself to a science for which I believed myself to possess a natural talent. On the same day I paid M. Waldman a visit. His manners in private were even more mild and attractive than in public, for there was a certain dignity in his mien during his lecture which in his own house was replaced by the greatest affability and kindness. I gave him pretty nearly the same account of my former pursuits as I had given to his fellow professor. He heard with attention the little narration concerning my studies and smiled at the names of Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus, but without the contempt that M. Krempe had exhibited. He said that “These were men to whose indefatigable zeal modern philosophers were indebted for most of the foundations of their knowledge. They had left to us, as an easier task, to give new names and arrange in connected classifications the facts which they in a great degree had been the instruments of bringing to light. The labours of men of genius, however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind.” I listened to his statement, which was delivered without any presumption or affectation, and then added that his lecture had removed my prejudices against modern chemists; I expressed myself in measured terms, with the modesty and deference due from a youth to his instructor, without letting escape (inexperience in life would have made me ashamed) any of the enthusiasm which stimulated my intended labours. I requested his advice concerning the books I ought to procure.

“I am happy,” said M. Waldman, “to have gained a disciple; and if your application equals your ability, I have no doubt of your success. Chemistry is that branch of natural philosophy in which the greatest improvements have been and may be made; it is on that account that I have made it my peculiar study; but at the same time, I have not neglected the other branches of science. A man would make but a very sorry chemist if he attended to that department of human knowledge alone. If your wish is to become really a man of science and not merely a petty experimentalist, I should advise you to apply to every branch of natural philosophy, including mathematics.”

He then took me into his laboratory and explained to me the uses of his various machines, instructing me as to what I ought to procure and promising me the use of his own when I should have advanced far enough in the science not to derange their mechanism. He also gave me the list of books which I had requested, and I took my leave.

Thus ended a day memorable to me; it decided my future destiny.

Chapter 4

From this day natural philosophy, and particularly chemistry, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, became nearly my sole occupation. I read with ardour those works, so full of genius and discrimination, which modern inquirers have written on these subjects. I attended the lectures and cultivated the acquaintance of the men of science of the university, and I found even in M. Krempe a great deal of sound sense and real information, combined, it is true, with a repulsive physiognomy and manners, but not on that account the less valuable. In M. Waldman I found a true friend. His gentleness was never tinged by dogmatism, and his instructions were given with an air of frankness and good nature that banished every idea of pedantry. In a thousand ways he smoothed for me the path of knowledge and made the most abstruse inquiries clear and facile to my apprehension. My application was at first fluctuating and uncertain; it gained strength as I proceeded and soon became so ardent and eager that the stars often disappeared in the light of morning whilst I was yet engaged in my laboratory.
As I applied so closely, it may be easily conceived that my progress was rapid. My ardour was indeed the astonishment of the students, and my proficiency that of the masters. Professor Krempe often asked me, with a sly smile, how Cornelius Agrippa went on, whilst M. Waldman expressed the most heartfelt exultation in my progress. Two years passed in this manner, during which I paid no visit to Geneva, but was engaged, heart and soul, in the pursuit of some discoveries which I hoped to make. None but those who have experienced them can conceive of the enticements of science. In other studies you go as far as others have gone before you, and there is nothing more to know; but in a scientific pursuit there is continual food for discovery and wonder. A mind of moderate capacity which closely pursues one study must infallibly arrive at great proficiency in that study; and I, who continually sought the attainment of one object of pursuit and was solely wrapped up in this, improved so rapidly that at the end of two years I made some discoveries in the improvement of some chemical instruments, which procured me great esteem and admiration at the university. When I had arrived at this point and had become as well acquainted with the theory and practice of natural philosophy as depended on the lessons of any of the professors at Ingolstadt, my residence there being no longer conducive to my improvements, I thought of returning to my friends and my native town, when an incident happened that protracted my stay.

One of the phenomena which had peculiarly attracted my attention was the structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endued with life. Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed? It was a bold question, and one which has ever been considered as a mystery; yet with how many things are we upon the brink of becoming acquainted, if cowardice or carelessness did not restrain our inquiries. I revolved these circumstances in my mind and determined thenceforth to apply myself more particularly to those branches of natural philosophy which relate to physiology. Unless I had been animated by an almost supernatural enthusiasm, my application to this study would have been irksome and almost intolerable. To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death. I became acquainted with the science of anatomy, but this was not sufficient; I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body. In my education my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy, and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel-houses. My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analysing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life, until from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me—a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect which it illustrated, I was surprised that among so many men of genius who had directed their inquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret.

Remember, I am not recording the vision of a madman. The sun does not more certainly shine in the heavens than that which I now affirm is true. Some miracle might have produced it, yet the stages of the discovery were distinct and probable. After days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter.

The astonishment which I had at first experienced on this discovery soon gave place to delight and rapture. After so much time spent in painful labour, to arrive at once at the summit of my desires was the most gratifying consummation of my toils. But this discovery was so great and overwhelming that all the steps by which I had been progressively led to it were obliterated, and I beheld only the
result. What had been the study and desire of the wisest men since the creation of the world was now within my grasp. Not that, like a magic scene, it all opened upon me at once: the information I had obtained was of a nature rather to direct my endeavours so soon as I should point them towards the object of my search than to exhibit that object already accomplished. I was like the Arabian who had been buried with the dead and found a passage to life, aided only by one glimmering and seemingly ineffectual light.

I see by your eagerness and the wonder and hope which your eyes express, my friend, that you expect to be informed of the secret with which I am acquainted; that cannot be; listen patiently until the end of my story, and you will easily perceive why I am reserved upon that subject. I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery. Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.

When I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands, I hesitated a long time concerning the manner in which I should employ it. Although I possessed the capacity of bestowing animation, yet to prepare a frame for the reception of it, with all its intricacies of fibres, muscles, and veins, still remained a work of inconceivable difficulty and labour. I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a being like myself, or one of simpler organization; but my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man. The materials at present within my command hardly appeared adequate to so arduous an undertaking, but I doubted not that I should ultimately succeed. I prepared myself for a multitude of reverses; my operations might be incessantly baffled, and at last my work be imperfect, yet when I considered the improvement which every day takes place in science and mechanics, I was encouraged to hope my present attempts would at least lay the foundations of future success. Nor could I consider the magnitude and complexity of my plan as any argument of its impracticability. It was with these feelings that I began the creation of a human being. As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature, that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionally large. After having formed this determination and having spent some months in successfully collecting and arranging my materials, I began.

No one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success. Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. Pursuing these reflections, I thought that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time (although I now found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption.

These thoughts supported my spirits, while I pursued my undertaking with unremitting ardour. My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement. Sometimes, on the very brink of certainty, I failed; yet still I clung to the hope which the next day or the next hour might realise. One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I had dedicated myself; and the moon gazed on my midnight labours, while, with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding-places. Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless and almost frantic impulse urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit. It was indeed but a passing trance, that only made me feel with renewed acuteness so soon as, the unnatural stimulus ceasing to operate, I had returned to my old habits. I collected bones from charnel-houses and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In
a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments 
by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation; my eyeballs were starting from their 
sockets in attending to the details of my employment. The dissecting room and the slaughter-house 
furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my 
occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work 
near to a conclusion.

The summer months passed while I was thus engaged, heart and soul, in one pursuit. It was a 
most beautiful season; never did the fields bestow a more plentiful harvest or the vines yield a more 
luxuriant vintage, but my eyes were insensible to the charms of nature. And the same feelings which 
made me neglect the scenes around me caused me also to forget those friends who were so many 
miles absent, and whom I had not seen for so long a time. I knew my silence disquieted them, and I 
well remembered the words of my father: “I know that while you are pleased with yourself you will 
think of us with affection, and we shall hear regularly from you. You must pardon me if I regard any 
interruption in your correspondence as a proof that your other duties are equally neglected.”

I knew well therefore what would be my father’s feelings, but I could not tear my thoughts from 
my employment, loathsome in itself, but which had taken an irresistible hold of my imagination. I 
wished, as it were, to procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection until the great object, 
which swallowed up every habit of my nature, should be completed.

I then thought that my father would be unjust if he ascribed my neglect to vice or faultiness on 
my part, but I am now convinced that he was justified in conceiving that I should not be altogether 
free from blame. A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind and 
never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquillity. I do not think that the pursuit 
of knowledge is an exception to this rule. If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to 
weaken your affections and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can 
possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind. If this 
rule were always observed; if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the 
tranquillity of his domestic affections, Greece had not been enslaved, Caesar would have spared his 
country, America would have been discovered more gradually, and the empires of Mexico and Peru 
had not been destroyed.

But I forget that I am moralizing in the most interesting part of my tale, and your looks remind 
me to proceed.

My father made no reproach in his letters and only took notice of my silence by inquiring into my 
occupations more particularly than before. Winter, spring, and summer passed away during my 
labours; but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves—sights which before always yielded 
me supreme delight—so deeply was I engrossed in my occupation. The leaves of that year had 
withered before my work drew near to a close, and now every day showed me more plainly how well 
I had succeeded. But my enthusiasm was checked by my anxiety, and I appeared rather like one 
doomed by slavery to toil in the mines, or any other unwholesome trade than an artist occupied by 
his favourite employment. Every night I was oppressed by a slow fever, and I became nervous to a 
most painful degree; the fall of a leaf startled me, and I shunned my fellow creatures as if I had been 
guilty of a crime. Sometimes I grew alarmed at the wreck I perceived that I had become; the energy 
of my purpose alone sustained me: my labours would soon end, and I believed that exercise and 
amusement would then drive away incipient disease; and I promised myself both of these when my 
creation should be complete.
Chapter 5

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured, and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain; I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited, where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.

I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness. Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment; dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space were now become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!

Morning, dismal and wet, at length dawned and discovered to my sleepless and aching eyes the church of Ingolstadt, its white steeple and clock, which indicated the sixth hour. The porter opened the gates of the court, which had that night been my asylum, and I issued into the streets, pacing them
with quick steps, as if I sought to avoid the wretch whom I feared every turning of the street would present to my view. I did not dare return to the apartment which I inhabited, but felt impelled to hurry on, although drenched by the rain which poured from a black and comfortless sky.

I continued walking in this manner for some time, endeavouring by bodily exercise to ease the load that weighed upon my mind. I traversed the streets without any clear conception of where I was or what I was doing. My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear, and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me:

Like one who, on a lonely road,
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And, having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

[Coleridge’s “Ancient Mariner.”]

Continuing thus, I came at length opposite to the inn at which the various diligences and carriages usually stopped. Here I paused, I knew not why; but I remained some minutes with my eyes fixed on a coach that was coming towards me from the other end of the street. As it drew nearer I observed that it was the Swiss diligence; it stopped just where I was standing, and on the door being opened, I perceived Henry Clerval, who, on seeing me, instantly sprung out. “My dear Frankenstein,” exclaimed he, “how glad I am to see you! How fortunate that you should be here at the very moment of my alighting!”

Nothing could equal my delight on seeing Clerval; his presence brought back to my thoughts my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home so dear to my recollection. I grasped his hand, and in a moment forgot my horror and misfortune; I felt suddenly, and for the first time during many months, calm and serene joy. I welcomed my friend, therefore, in the most cordial manner, and we walked towards my college. Clerval continued talking for some time about our mutual friends and his own good fortune in being permitted to come to Ingolstadt. “You may easily believe,” said he, “how great was the difficulty to persuade my father that all necessary knowledge was not comprised in the noble art of book-keeping; and, indeed, I believe I left him incredulous to the last, for his constant answer to my unwearied entreaties was the same as that of the Dutch schoolmaster in The Vicar of Wakefield: ‘I have ten thousand florins a year without Greek, I eat heartily without Greek.’ But his affection for me at length overcame his dislike of learning, and he has permitted me to undertake a voyage of discovery to the land of knowledge.”

“It gives me the greatest delight to see you; but tell me how you left my father, brothers, and Elizabeth.”

“Very well, and very happy, only a little uneasy that they hear from you so seldom. By the by, I mean to lecture you a little upon their account myself. But, my dear Frankenstein,” continued he, stopping short and gazing full in my face, “I did not before remark how very ill you appear; so thin and pale; you look as if you had been watching for several nights.”

“You have guessed right; I have lately been so deeply engaged in one occupation that I have not allowed myself sufficient rest, as you see; but I hope, I sincerely hope, that all these employments are now at an end and that I am at length free.”

I trembled excessively; I could not endure to think of, and far less to allude to, the occurrences of the preceding night. I walked with a quick pace, and we soon arrived at my college. I then reflected, and the thought made me shiver, that the creature whom I had left in my apartment might still be
there, alive and walking about. I dreaded to behold this monster, but I feared still more that Henry should see him. Entreatin him, therefore, to remain a few minutes at the bottom of the stairs, I darted up towards my own room. My hand was already on the lock of the door before I recollected myself. I then paused, and a cold shivering came over me. I threw the door forcibly open, as children are accustomed to do when they expect a spectre to stand in waiting for them on the other side; but nothing appeared. I stepped fearfully in: the apartment was empty, and my bedroom was also freed from its hideous guest. I could hardly believe that so great a good fortune could have befallen me, but when I became assured that my enemy had indeed fled, I clapped my hands for joy and ran down to Clerval.

We ascended into my room, and the servant presently brought breakfast; but I was unable to contain myself. It was not joy only that possessed me; I felt my flesh tingle with excess of sensitiveness, and my pulse beat rapidly. I was unable to remain for a single instant in the same place; I jumped over the chairs, clapped my hands, and laughed aloud. Clerval at first attributed my unusual spirits to joy on his arrival, but when he observed me more attentively, he saw a wildness in my eyes for which he could not account, and my loud, unrestrained, heartless laughter frightened and astonished him.

“My dear Victor,” cried he, “what, for God’s sake, is the matter? Do not laugh in that manner. How ill you are! What is the cause of all this?”

“Do not ask me,” cried I, putting my hands before my eyes, for I thought I saw the dreaded spectre glide into the room; “he can tell. Oh, save me! Save me!” I imagined that the monster seized me; I struggled furiously and fell down in a fit.

Poor Clerval! What must have been his feelings? A meeting, which he anticipated with such joy, so strangely turned to bitterness. But I was not the witness of his grief, for I was lifeless and did not recover my senses for a long, long time.

This was the commencement of a nervous fever which confined me for several months. During all that time Henry was my only nurse. I afterwards learned that, knowing my father’s advanced age and unfitness for so long a journey, and how wretched my sickness would make Elizabeth, he spared them this grief by concealing the extent of my disorder. He knew that I could not have a more kind and attentive nurse than himself; and, firm in the hope he felt of my recovery, he did not doubt that, instead of doing harm, he performed the kindest action that he could towards them.

But I was in reality very ill, and surely nothing but the unbounded and unremitting attentions of my friend could have restored me to life. The form of the monster on whom I had bestowed existence was for ever before my eyes, and I raved incessantly concerning him. Doubtless my words surprised Henry; he at first believed them to be the wanderings of my disturbed imagination, but the pertinacity with which I continually recurred to the same subject persuaded him that my disorder indeed owed its origin to some uncommon and terrible event.

By very slow degrees, and with frequent relapses that alarmed and grieved my friend, I recovered. I remember the first time I became capable of observing outward objects with any kind of pleasure, I perceived that the fallen leaves had disappeared and that the young buds were shooting forth from the trees that shaded my window. It was a divine spring, and the season contributed greatly to my convalescence. I felt also sentiments of joy and affection revive in my bosom; my gloom disappeared, and in a short time I became as cheerful as before I was attacked by the fatal passion.

“Dearest Clerval,” exclaimed I, “how kind, how very good you are to me. This whole winter, instead of being spent in study, as you promised yourself, has been consumed in my sick room. How shall I ever repay you? I feel the greatest remorse for the disappointment of which I have been the occasion, but you will forgive me.”

“You will repay me entirely if you do not discompose yourself, but get well as fast as you can; and since you appear in such good spirits, I may speak to you on one subject, may I not?”
I trembled. One subject! What could it be? Could he allude to an object on whom I dared not even think?

“Compose yourself,” said Clerval, who observed my change of colour, “I will not mention it if it agitates you; but your father and cousin would be very happy if they received a letter from you in your own handwriting. They hardly know how ill you have been and are uneasy at your long silence.”

“Is that all, my dear Henry? How could you suppose that my first thought would not fly towards those dear, dear friends whom I love and who are so deserving of my love?”

“If this is your present temper, my friend, you will perhaps be glad to see a letter that has been lying here some days for you; it is from your cousin, I believe.”

Chapter 6

Clerval then put the following letter into my hands. It was from my own Elizabeth:

“My dearest Cousin,

“You have been ill, very ill, and even the constant letters of dear kind Henry are not sufficient to reassure me on your account. You are forbidden to write—to hold a pen; yet one word from you, dear Victor, is necessary to calm our apprehensions. For a long time I have thought that each post would bring this line, and my persuasions have restrained my uncle from undertaking a journey to Ingolstadt. I have prevented his encountering the inconveniences and perhaps dangers of so long a journey, yet how often have I regretted not being able to perform it myself! I figure to myself that the task of attending on your sickbed has devolved on some mercenary old nurse, who could never guess your wishes nor minister to them with the care and affection of your poor cousin. Yet that is over now: Clerval writes that indeed you are getting better. I eagerly hope that you will confirm this intelligence soon in your own handwriting.

“Get well—and return to us. You will find a happy, cheerful home and friends who love you dearly. Your father’s health is vigorous, and he asks but to see you, but to be assured that you are well; and not a care will ever cloud his benevolent countenance. How pleased you would be to remark the improvement of our Ernest! He is now sixteen and full of activity and spirit. He is desirous to be a true Swiss and to enter into foreign service, but we cannot part with him, at least until his elder brother returns to us. My uncle is not pleased with the idea of a military career in a distant country, but Ernest never had your powers of application. He looks upon study as an odious fetter; his time is spent in the open air, climbing the hills or rowing on the lake. I fear that he will become an idler unless we yield the point and permit him to enter on the profession which he has selected.

“Little alteration, except the growth of our dear children, has taken place since you left us. The blue lake and snow-clad mountains—they never change; and I think our placid home and our contented hearts are regulated by the same immutable laws. My trifling occupations take up my time and amuse me, and I am rewarded for any exertions by seeing none but happy, kind faces around me. Since you left us, but one change has taken place in our little household. Do you remember on what occasion Justine Moritz entered our family? Probably you do not; I will relate her history, therefore in a few words. Madame Moritz, her mother, was a widow with four children, of whom Justine was the third. This girl had always been the favourite of her father, but through a strange perversity, her mother could not endure her, and after the death of M. Moritz, treated her very ill. My aunt observed this, and when Justine was twelve years of age, prevailed on her mother to allow her to live at our house. The republican institutions of our country have produced simpler and happier manners than those which prevail in the great monarchies that surround it. Hence there is less distinction between
the several classes of its inhabitants; and the lower orders, being neither so poor nor so despised, their manners are more refined and moral. A servant in Geneva does not mean the same thing as a servant in France and England. Justine, thus received in our family, learned the duties of a servant, a condition which, in our fortunate country, does not include the idea of ignorance and a sacrifice of the dignity of a human being.

"Justine, you may remember, was a great favourite of yours; and I recollect you once remarked that if you were in an ill humour, one glance from Justine could dissipate it, for the same reason that Ariosto gives concerning the beauty of Angelica—she looked so frank-hearted and happy. My aunt conceived a great attachment for her, by which she was induced to give her an education superior to that which she had at first intended. This benefit was fully repaid; Justine was the most grateful little creature in the world: I do not mean that she made any professions I never heard one pass her lips, but you could see by her eyes that she almost adored her protectress. Although her disposition was gay and in many respects inconsiderate, yet she paid the greatest attention to every gesture of my aunt. She thought her the model of all excellence and endeavoured to imitate her phraseology and manners, so that even now she often reminds me of her.

"When my dearest aunt died every one was too much occupied in their own grief to notice poor Justine, who had attended her during her illness with the most anxious affection. Poor Justine was very ill; but other trials were reserved for her.

"One by one, her brothers and sister died; and her mother, with the exception of her neglected daughter, was left childless. The conscience of the woman was troubled; she began to think that the deaths of her favourites was a judgement from heaven to chastise her partiality. She was a Roman Catholic; and I believe her confessor confirmed the idea which she had conceived. Accordingly, a few months after your departure for Ingolstadt, Justine was called home by her repentant mother. Poor girl! She wept when she quitted our house; she was much altered since the death of my aunt; grief had given softness and a winning mildness to her manners, which had before been remarkable for vivacity. Nor was her residence at her mother's house of a nature to restore her gaiety. The poor woman was very vacillating in her repentance. She sometimes begged Justine to forgive her unkindness, but much oftener accused her of having caused the deaths of her brothers and sister. Perpetual fretting at length threw Madame Moritz into a decline, which at first increased her irritability, but she is now at peace for ever. She died on the first approach of cold weather, at the beginning of this last winter. Justine has just returned to us; and I assure you I love her tenderly. She is very clever and gentle, and extremely pretty; as I mentioned before, her mien and her expression continually remind me of my dear aunt.

"I must say also a few words to you, my dear cousin, of little darling William. I wish you could see him; he is very tall of his age, with sweet laughing blue eyes, dark eyelashes, and curling hair. When he smiles, two little dimples appear on each cheek, which are rosy with health. He has already had one or two little wives, but Louisa Biron is his favourite, a pretty little girl of five years of age.

"Now, dear Victor, I dare say you wish to be indulged in a little gossip concerning the good people of Geneva. The pretty Miss Mansfield has already received the congratulatory visits on her approaching marriage with a young Englishman, John Melbourne, Esq. Her ugly sister, Manon, married M. Duvillard, the rich banker, last autumn. Your favourite schoolfellow, Louis Manoir, has suffered several misfortunes since the departure of Clerval from Geneva. But he has already recovered his spirits, and is reported to be on the point of marrying a lively pretty Frenchwoman, Madame Tavernier. She is a widow, and much older than Manoir; but she is very much admired, and a favourite with everybody.

"I have written myself into better spirits, dear cousin; but my anxiety returns upon me as I conclude. Write, dearest Victor,—one line—one word will be a blessing to us. Ten thousand thanks
to Henry for his kindness, his affection, and his many letters; we are sincerely grateful. Adieu! my cousin; take care of yourself; and, I entreat you, write!

“Elizabeth Lavenza.

“Geneva, March 18th, 17—.”

“Dear, dear Elizabeth!” I exclaimed, when I had read her letter: “I will write instantly and relieve them from the anxiety they must feel.” I wrote, and this exertion greatly fatigued me; but my convalescence had commenced, and proceeded regularly. In another fortnight I was able to leave my chamber.

One of my first duties on my recovery was to introduce Clerval to the several professors of the university. In doing this, I underwent a kind of rough usage, ill befitting the wounds that my mind had sustained. Ever since the fatal night, the end of my labours, and the beginning of my misfortunes, I had conceived a violent antipathy even to the name of natural philosophy. When I was otherwise quite restored to health, the sight of a chemical instrument would renew all the agony of my nervous symptoms. Henry saw this, and had removed all my apparatus from my view. He had also changed my apartment; for he perceived that I had acquired a dislike for the room which had previously been my laboratory. But these cares of Clerval were made of no avail when I visited the professors. M. Waldman inflicted torture when he praised, with kindness and warmth, the astonishing progress I had made in the sciences. He soon perceived that I disliked the subject; but not guessing the real cause, he attributed my feelings to modesty, and changed the subject from my improvement, to the science itself, with a desire, as I evidently saw, of drawing me out. What could I do? He meant to please, and he tormented me. I felt as if he had placed carefully, one by one, in my view those instruments which were to be afterwards used in putting me to a slow and cruel death. I writhed under his words, yet dared not exhibit the pain I felt. Clerval, whose eyes and feelings were always quick in discerning the sensations of others, declined the subject, alleging, in excuse, his total ignorance; and the conversation took a more general turn. I thanked my friend from my heart, but I did not speak. I saw plainly that he was surprised, but he never attempted to draw my secret from me; and although I loved him with a mixture of affection and reverence that knew no bounds, yet I could never persuade myself to confide in him that event which was so often present to my recollection, but which I feared the detail to another would only impress more deeply.

M. Krempe was not equally docile; and in my condition at that time, of almost insupportable sensitiveness, his harsh blunt encomiums gave me even more pain than the benevolent approbation of M. Waldman. “D—n the fellow!” cried he; “why, M. Clerval, I assure you he has outstript us all. Ay, stare if you please; but it is nevertheless true. A youngster who, but a few years ago, believed in Cornelius Agrippa as firmly as in the gospel, has now set himself at the head of the university; and if he is not soon pulled down, we shall all be out of countenance.—Ay, ay,” continued he, observing my face expressive of suffering, “M. Frankenstein is modest; an excellent quality in a young man. Young men should be diffident of themselves, you know, M. Clerval: I was myself when young; but that wears out in a very short time.”

M. Krempe had now commenced an eulogy on himself, which happily turned the conversation from a subject that was so annoying to me.

Clerval had never sympathised in my tastes for natural science; and his literary pursuits differed wholly from those which had occupied me. He came to the university with the design of making himself complete master of the oriental languages, and thus he should open a field for the plan of life he had marked out for himself. Resolved to pursue no inglorious career, he turned his eyes toward the East, as affording scope for his spirit of enterprise. The Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit languages engaged his attention, and I was easily induced to enter on the same studies. Idleness had ever been
irksome to me, and now that I wished to fly from reflection, and hated my former studies, I felt great relief in being the fellow-pupil with my friend, and found not only instruction but consolation in the works of the orientalists. I did not, like him, attempt a critical knowledge of their dialects, for I did not contemplate making any other use of them than temporary amusement. I read merely to understand their meaning, and they well repaid my labours. Their melancholy is soothing, and their joy elevating, to a degree I never experienced in studying the authors of any other country. When you read their writings, life appears to consist in a warm sun and a garden of roses,—in the smiles and frowns of a fair enemy, and the fire that consumes your own heart. How different from the manly and heroic poetry of Greece and Rome!

Summer passed away in these occupations, and my return to Geneva was fixed for the latter end of autumn; but being delayed by several accidents, winter and snow arrived, the roads were deemed impassable, and my journey was retarded until the ensuing spring. I felt this delay very bitterly; for I longed to see my native town and my beloved friends. My return had only been delayed so long, from an unwillingness to leave Clerval in a strange place, before he had become acquainted with any of its inhabitants. The winter, however, was spent cheerfully; and although the spring was uncommonly late, when it came its beauty compensated for its dilatoriness.

The month of May had already commenced, and I expected the letter daily which was to fix the date of my departure, when Henry proposed a pedestrian tour in the environs of Ingolstadt, that I might bid a personal farewell to the country I had so long inhabited. I acceded with pleasure to this proposition: I was fond of exercise, and Clerval had always been my favourite companion in the ramble of this nature that I had taken among the scenes of my native country.

We passed a fortnight in these perambulations: my health and spirits had long been restored, and they gained additional strength from the salubrious air I breathed, the natural incidents of our progress, and the conversation of my friend. Study had before secluded me from the intercourse of my fellow-creatures, and rendered me unsocial; but Clerval called forth the better feelings of my heart; he again taught me to love the aspect of nature, and the cheerful faces of children. Excellent friend! how sincerely you did love me, and endeavour to elevate my mind until it was on a level with your own. A selfish pursuit had cramped and narrowed me, until your gentleness and affection warmed and opened my senses; I became the same happy creature who, a few years ago, loved and beloved by all, had no sorrow or care. When happy, inanimate nature had the power of bestowing on me the most delightful sensations. A serene sky and verdant fields filled me with ecstasy. The present season was indeed divine; the flowers of spring bloomed in the hedges, while those of summer were already in bud. I was undisturbed by thoughts which during the preceding year had pressed upon me, notwithstanding my endeavours to throw them off, with an invincible burden.

Henry rejoiced in my gaiety, and sincerely sympathised in my feelings: he exerted himself to amuse me, while he expressed the sensations that filled his soul. The resources of his mind on this occasion were truly astonishing: his conversation was full of imagination; and very often, in imitation of the Persian and Arabic writers, he invented tales of wonderful fancy and passion. At other times he repeated my favourite poems, or drew me out into arguments, which he supported with great ingenuity.

We returned to our college on a Sunday afternoon: the peasants were dancing, and every one we met appeared gay and happy. My own spirits were high, and I bounded along with feelings of unbridled joy and hilarity.
“My dear Victor,

“You have probably waited impatiently for a letter to fix the date of your return to us; and I was at first tempted to write only a few lines, merely mentioning the day on which I should expect you. But that would be a cruel kindness, and I dare not do it. What would be your surprise, my son, when you expected a happy and glad welcome, to behold, on the contrary, tears and wretchedness? And how, Victor, can I relate our misfortune? Absence cannot have rendered you callous to our joys and griefs; and how shall I inflict pain on my long absent son? I wish to prepare you for the woeful news, but I know it is impossible; even now your eye skims over the page to seek the words which are to convey to you the horrible tidings.

“William is dead!—that sweet child, whose smiles delighted and warmed my heart, who was so gentle, yet so gay! Victor, he is murdered!

“I will not attempt to console you; but will simply relate the circumstances of the transaction.

“Last Thursday (May 7th), I, my niece, and your two brothers, went to walk in Plainpalais. The evening was warm and serene, and we prolonged our walk farther than usual. It was already dusk before we thought of returning; and then we discovered that William and Ernest, who had gone on before, were not to be found. We accordingly rested on a seat until they should return. Presently Ernest came, and enquired if we had seen his brother; he said, that he had been playing with him, that William had run away to hide himself, and that he vainly sought for him, and afterwards waited for a long time, but that he did not return.

“This account rather alarmed us, and we continued to search for him until night fell, when Elizabeth conjectured that he might have returned to the house. He was not there. We returned again, with torches; for I could not rest, when I thought that my sweet boy had lost himself, and was exposed to all the damps and dews of night; Elizabeth also suffered extreme anguish. About five in the morning I discovered my lovely boy, whom the night before I had seen blooming and active in health, stretched on the grass livid and motionless; the print of the murder's finger was on his neck.

“He was conveyed home, and the anguish that was visible in my countenance betrayed the secret to Elizabeth. She was very earnest to see the corpse. At first I attempted to prevent her but she persisted, and entering the room where it lay, hastily examined the neck of the victim, and clasping her hands exclaimed, 'O God! I have murdered my darling child!'

“She fainted, and was restored with extreme difficulty. When she again lived, it was only to weep and sigh. She told me, that that same evening William had teased her to let him wear a very valuable miniature that she possessed of your mother. This picture is gone, and was doubtless the temptation which urged the murderer to the deed. We have no trace of him at present, although our exertions to discover him are unremitting; but they will not restore my beloved William!

“Come, dearest Victor; you alone can console Elizabeth. She weeps continually, and accuses herself unjustly as the cause of his death; her words pierce my heart. We are all unhappy; but will not that be an additional motive for you, my son, to return and be our comforter? Your dear mother! Alas, Victor! I now say, Thank God she did not live to witness the cruel, miserable death of her youngest darling!

“Come, Victor; not brooding thoughts of vengeance against the assassin, but with feelings of peace and gentleness, that will heal, instead of festering, the wounds of our minds. Enter the house of mourning, my friend, but with kindness and affection for those who love you, and not with hatred for your enemies.

“Your affectionate and afflicted father,

“Alphonse Frankenstein.

“Geneva, May 12th, 17—.”
Clerval, who had watched my countenance as I read this letter, was surprised to observe the despair that succeeded the joy I at first expressed on receiving news from my friends. I threw the letter on the table, and covered my face with my hands.

"My dear Frankenstein," exclaimed Henry, when he perceived me weep with bitterness, "are you always to be unhappy? My dear friend, what has happened?"

I motioned him to take up the letter, while I walked up and down the room in the extremest agitation. Tears also gushed from the eyes of Clerval, as he read the account of my misfortune.

"I can offer you no consolation, my friend," said he; "your disaster is irreparable. What do you intend to do?"

"To go instantly to Geneva: come with me, Henry, to order the horses."

During our walk, Clerval endeavoured to say a few words of consolation; he could only express his heartfelt sympathy. "Poor William!" said he, "dear lovely child, he now sleeps with his angel mother! Who that had seen him bright and joyous in his young beauty, but must weep over his untimely loss! To die so miserably; to feel the murderer's grasp! How much more a murdered that could destroy radiant innocence! Poor little fellow! one only consolation have we; his friends mourn and weep, but he is at rest. The pang is over, his sufferings are at an end for ever. A sod covers his gentle form, and he knows no pain. He can no longer be a subject for pity; we must reserve that for his miserable survivors."

Clerval spoke thus as we hurried through the streets; the words impressed themselves on my mind and I remembered them afterwards in solitude. But now, as soon as the horses arrived, I hurried into a cabriolet, and bade farewell to my friend.

My journey was very melancholy. At first I wished to hurry on, for I longed to console and sympathise with my loved and sorrowing friends; but when I drew near my native town, I slackened my progress. I could hardly sustain the multitude of feelings that crowded into my mind. I passed through scenes familiar to my youth, but which I had not seen for nearly six years. How altered every thing might be during that time! One sudden and desolating change had taken place; but a thousand little circumstances might have by degrees worked other alterations, which, although they were done more tranquilly, might not be the less decisive. Fear overcame me; I dared no advance, dreading a thousand nameless evils that made me tremble, although I was unable to define them.

I remained two days at Lausanne, in this painful state of mind. I contemplated the lake: the waters were placid; all around was calm; and the snowy mountains, "the palaces of nature," were not changed. By degrees the calm and heavenly scene restored me, and I continued my journey towards Geneva.

The road ran by the side of the lake, which became narrower as I approached my native town. I discovered more distinctly the black sides of Jura, and the bright summit of Mont Blanc. I wept like a child. "Dear mountains! my own beautiful lake! how do you welcome your wanderer? Your summits are clear; the sky and lake are blue and placid. Is this to prognosticate peace, or to mock at my unhappiness?"

I fear, my friend, that I shall render myself tedious by dwelling on these preliminary circumstances; but they were days of comparative happiness, and I think of them with pleasure. My country, my beloved country! who but a native can tell the delight I took in again beholding thy streams, thy mountains, and, more than all, thy lovely lake!

Yet, as I drew nearer home, grief and fear again overcame me. Night also closed around; and when I could hardly see the dark mountains, I felt still more gloomily. The picture appeared a vast and dim scene of evil, and I foresaw obscurely that I was destined to become the most wretched of human beings. Alas! I prophesied truly, and failed only in one single circumstance, that in all the misery I imagined and dreaded, I did not conceive the hundredth part of the anguish I was destined to endure.
It was completely dark when I arrived in the environs of Geneva; the gates of the town were already shut; and I was obliged to pass the night at Secheron, a village at the distance of half a league from the city. The sky was serene; and, as I was unable to rest, I resolved to visit the spot where my poor William had been murdered. As I could not pass through the town, I was obliged to cross the lake in a boat to arrive at Plainpalais. During this short voyage I saw the lightning playing on the summit of Mont Blanc in the most beautiful figures. The storm appeared to approach rapidly, and, on landing, I ascended a low hill, that I might observe its progress. It advanced; the heavens were clouded, and I soon felt the rain coming slowly in large drops, but its violence quickly increased.

I quitted my seat, and walked on, although the darkness and storm increased every minute, and the thunder burst with a terrific crash over my head. It was echoed from Salève, the Juras, and the Alps of Savoy; vivid flashes of lightning dazzled my eyes, illuminating the lake, making it appear like a vast sheet of fire; then for an instant every thing seemed of a pitchy darkness, until the eye recovered itself from the preceding flash. The storm, as is often the case in Switzerland, appeared at once in various parts of the heavens. The most violent storm hung exactly north of the town, over the part of the lake which lies between the promontory of Belrive and the village of Copét. Another storm enlightened Jura with faint flashes; and another darkened and sometimes disclosed the Môle, a peaked mountain to the east of the lake.

While I watched the tempest, so beautiful yet terrific, I wandered on with a hasty step. This noble war in the sky elevated my spirits; I clasped my hands, and exclaimed aloud, “William, dear angel! this is thy funeral, this thy dirge!” As I said these words, I perceived in the gloom a figure which stole from behind a clump of trees near me; I stood fixed, gazing intently: I could not be mistaken. A flash of lightning illuminated the object, and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy daemon, to whom I had given life. What did he there? Could he be (I shuddered at the conception) the murderer of my brother? No sooner did that idea cross my imagination, than I became convinced of its truth; my teeth chattered, and I was forced to lean against a tree for support. The figure passed me quickly, and I lost it in the gloom. Nothing in human shape could have destroyed the fair child. He was the murderer! I could not doubt it. The mere presence of the idea was an irresistible proof of the fact. I thought of pursuing the devil; but it would have been in vain, for another flash discovered him to me hanging among the rocks of the nearly perpendicular ascent of Mont Salève, a hill that bounds Plainpalais on the south. He soon reached the summit, and disappeared.

I remained motionless. The thunder ceased; but the rain still continued, and the scene was enveloped in an impenetrable darkness. I revolved in my mind the events which I had until now sought to forget: the whole train of my progress toward the creation; the appearance of the works of my own hands at my bedside; its departure. Two years had now nearly elapsed since the night on which he first received life; and was this his first crime? Alas! I had turned loose into the world a depraved wretch, whose delight was in carnage and misery; had he not murdered my brother?

No one can conceive the anguish I suffered during the remainder of the night, which I spent, cold and wet, in the open air. But I did not feel the inconvenience of the weather; my imagination was busy in scenes of evil and despair. I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me.

Day dawned; and I directed my steps towards the town. The gates were open, and I hastened to my father’s house. My first thought was to discover what I knew of the murderer, and cause instant pursuit to be made. But I paused when I reflected on the story that I had to tell. A being whom I myself had formed, and endued with life, had met me at midnight among the precipices of an inaccessible mountain. I remembered also the nervous fever with which I had been seized just at the time that I dated my creation, and which would give an air of delirium to a tale otherwise so utterly improbable.
I well knew that if any other had communicated such a relation to me, I should have looked upon it as the ravings of insanity. Besides, the strange nature of the animal would elude all pursuit, even if I were so far credited as to persuade my relatives to commence it. And then of what use would be pursuit? Who could arrest a creature capable of scaling the overhanging sides of Mont Salève? These reflections determined me, and I resolved to remain silent.

It was about five in the morning when I entered my father’s house. I told the servants not to disturb the family, and went into the library to attend their usual hour of rising.

Six years had elapsed, passed in a dream but for one indelible trace, and I stood in the same place where I had last embraced my father before my departure for Ingolstadt. Beloved and venerable parent! He still remained to me. I gazed on the picture of my mother, which stood over the mantelpiece. It was an historical subject, painted at my father’s desire, and represented Caroline Beaufort in an agony of despair, kneeling by the coffin of her dead father. Her garb was rustic, and her cheek pale; but there was an air of dignity and beauty, that hardly permitted the sentiment of pity. Below this picture was a miniature of William; and my tears flowed when I looked upon it. While I was thus engaged, Ernest entered: he had heard me arrive, and hastened to welcome me: “Welcome, my dearest Victor,” said he. “Ah! I wish you had come three months ago, and then you would have found us all joyous and delighted. You come to us now to share a misery which nothing can alleviate; yet your presence will, I hope, revive our father, who seems sinking under his misfortune; and your persuasions will induce poor Elizabeth to cease her vain and tormenting self-accusations.—Poor William! he was our darling and our pride!”

Tears, unrestrained, fell from my brother’s eyes; a sense of mortal agony crept over my frame. Before, I had only imagined the wretchedness of my desolated home; the reality came on me as a new, and a not less terrible, disaster. I tried to calm Ernest; I enquired more minutely concerning my father, and here I named my cousin.

“She most of all,” said Ernest, “requires consolation; she accused herself of having caused the death of my brother, and that made her very wretched. But since the murderer has been discovered—”

“The murderer discovered! Good God! how can that be? who could attempt to pursue him? It is impossible; one might as well try to overtake the winds, or confine a mountain-stream with a straw. I saw him too; he was free last night!”

“I do not know what you mean,” replied my brother, in accents of wonder, “but to us the discovery we have made completes our misery. No one would believe it at first; and even now Elizabeth will not be convinced, notwithstanding all the evidence. Indeed, who would credit that Justine Moritz, who was so amiable, and fond of all the family, could suddenly become so capable of so frightful, so appalling a crime?”

“Justine Moritz! Poor, poor girl, is she the accused? But it is wrongfully; every one knows that; no one believes it, surely, Ernest?”

“No one did at first; but several circumstances came out, that have almost forced conviction upon us; and her own behaviour has been so confused, as to add to the evidence of facts a weight that, I fear, leaves no hope for doubt. But she will be tried today, and you will then hear all.”

He then related that, the morning on which the murder of poor William had been discovered, Justine had been taken ill, and confined to her bed for several days. During this interval, one of the servants, happening to examine the apparel she had worn on the night of the murder, had discovered in her pocket the picture of my mother, which had been judged to be the temptation of the murderer. The servant instantly showed it to one of the others, who, without saying a word to any of the family, went to a magistrate; and, upon their deposition, Justine was apprehended. On being charged with the fact, the poor girl confirmed the suspicion in a great measure by her extreme confusion of manner.
This was a strange tale, but it did not shake my faith; and I replied earnestly, "You are all mistaken; I know the murderer. Justine, poor, good Justine, is innocent."

At that instant my father entered. I saw unhappiness deeply impressed on his countenance, but he endeavoured to welcome me cheerfully; and, after we had exchanged our mournful greeting, would have introduced some other topic than that of our disaster, had not Ernest exclaimed, "Good God, papa! Victor says that he knows who was the murderer of poor William."

"We do also, unfortunately," replied my father, "for indeed I had rather have been for ever ignorant than have discovered so much depravity and ungratitude in one I valued so highly."

"My dear father, you are mistaken; Justine is innocent."

"If she is, God forbid that she should suffer as guilty. She is to be tried today, and I hope, I sincerely hope, that she will be acquitted."

This speech calmed me. I was firmly convinced in my own mind that Justine, and indeed every human being, was guiltless of this murder. I had no fear, therefore, that any circumstantial evidence could be brought forward strong enough to convict her. My tale was not one to announce publicly; its astounding horror would be looked upon as madness by the vulgar. Did any one indeed exist, except I, the creator, who would believe, unless his senses convinced him, in the existence of the living monument of presumption and rash ignorance which I had let loose upon the world?

We were soon joined by Elizabeth. Time had altered her since I last beheld her; it had endowed her with loveliness surpassing the beauty of her childish years. There was the same candour, the same vivacity, but it was allied to an expression more full of sensibility and intellect. She welcomed me with the greatest affection. "Your arrival, my dear cousin," said she, "fills me with hope. You perhaps will find some means to justify my poor guiltless Justine. Alas! who is safe, if she be convicted of crime? I rely on her innocence as certainly as I do upon my own. Our misfortune is doubly hard to us; we have not only lost that lovely darling boy, but this poor girl, whom I sincerely love, is to be torn away by even a worse fate. If she is condemned, I never shall know joy more. But she will not, I am sure she will not; and then I shall be happy again, even after the sad death of my little William."

"She is innocent, my Elizabeth," said I, "and that shall be proved; fear nothing, but let your spirits be cheered by the assurance of her acquittal."

"How kind and generous you are! every one else believes in her guilt, and that made me wretched, for I knew that it was impossible: and to see every one else prejudiced in so deadly a manner rendered me hopeless and despairing." She wept.

"Dearest niece," said my father, "dry your tears. If she is, as you believe, innocent, rely on the justice of our laws, and the activity with which I shall prevent the slightest shadow of partiality."

Chapter 8

We passed a few sad hours until eleven o’clock, when the trial was to commence. My father and the rest of the family being obliged to attend as witnesses, I accompanied them to the court. During the whole of this wretched mockery of justice I suffered living torture. It was to be decided whether the result of my curiosity and lawless devices would cause the death of two of my fellow beings: one a smiling babe full of innocence and joy, the other far more dreadfully murdered, with every aggravation of infamy that could make the murder memorable in horror. Justine also was a girl of merit and possessed qualities which promised to render her life happy; now all was to be obliterated in an ignominious grave, and I the cause! A thousand times rather would I have confessed myself guilty of the crime ascribed to Justine, but I was absent when it was committed, and such a declaration
would have been considered as the ravings of a madman and would not have exculpated her who suffered through me.

The appearance of Justine was calm. She was dressed in mourning, and her countenance, always engaging, was rendered, by the solemnity of her feelings, exquisitely beautiful. Yet she appeared confident in innocence and did not tremble, although gazed on and execrated by thousands, for all the kindness which her beauty might otherwise have excited was obliterated in the minds of the spectators by the imagination of the enormity she was supposed to have committed. She was tranquil, yet her tranquillity was evidently constrained; and as her confusion had before been adduced as a proof of her guilt, she worked up her mind to an appearance of courage. When she entered the court she threw her eyes round it and quickly discovered where we were seated. A tear seemed to dim her eye when she saw us, but she quickly recovered herself, and a look of sorrowful affection seemed to attest her utter guiltlessness.

The trial began, and after the advocate against her had stated the charge, several witnesses were called. Several strange facts combined against her, which might have staggered anyone who had not such proof of her innocence as I had. She had been out the whole of the night on which the murder had been committed and towards morning had been perceived by a market-woman not far from the spot where the body of the murdered child had been afterwards found. The woman asked her what she did there, but she looked very strangely and only returned a confused and unintelligible answer. She returned to the house about eight o' clock, and when one inquired where she had passed the night, she replied that she had been looking for the child and demanded earnestly if anything had been heard concerning him. When shown the body, she fell into violent hysterics and kept her bed for several days. The picture was then produced which the servant had found in her pocket; and when Elizabeth, in a faltering voice, proved that it was the same which, an hour before the child had been missed, she had placed round his neck, a murmur of horror and indignation filled the court.

Justine was called on for her defence. As the trial had proceeded, her countenance had altered. Surprise, horror, and misery were strongly expressed. Sometimes she struggled with her tears, but when she was desired to plead, she collected her powers and spoke in an audible although variable voice.

“God knows,” she said, “how entirely I am innocent. But I do not pretend that my protestations should acquit me; I rest my innocence on a plain and simple explanation of the facts which have been adduced against me, and I hope the character I have always borne will incline my judges to a favourable interpretation where any circumstance appears doubtful or suspicious.”

She then related that, by the permission of Elizabeth, she had passed the evening of the night on which the murder had been committed at the house of an aunt at Chêne, a village situated at about a league from Geneva. On her return, at about nine o’clock, she met a man who asked her if she had seen anything of the child who was lost. She was alarmed by this account and passed several hours in looking for him, when the gates of Geneva were shut, and she was forced to remain several hours of the night in a barn belonging to a cottage, being unwilling to call up the inhabitants, to whom she was well known. Most of the night she spent here watching; towards morning she believed that she slept for a few minutes; some steps disturbed her, and she awoke. It was dawn, and she quitted her asylum, that she might again endeavour to find my brother. If she had gone near the spot where his body lay, it was without her knowledge. That she had been bewildered when questioned by the market-woman was not surprising, since she had passed a sleepless night and the fate of poor William was yet uncertain. Concerning the picture she could give no account.

“I know,” continued the unhappy victim, “how heavily and fatally this one circumstance weighs against me, but I have no power of explaining it; and when I have expressed my utter ignorance, I am only left to conjecture concerning the probabilities by which it might have been placed in my pocket. But here also I am checked. I believe that I have no enemy on earth, and none surely would have been
so wicked as to destroy me wantonly. Did the murderer place it there? I know of no opportunity afforded him for so doing; or, if I had, why should he have stolen the jewel, to part with it again so soon?

“I commit my cause to the justice of my judges, yet I see no room for hope. I beg permission to have a few witnesses examined concerning my character, and if their testimony shall not overweigh my supposed guilt, I must be condemned, although I would pledge my salvation on my innocence.”

Several witnesses were called who had known her for many years, and they spoke well of her; but fear and hatred of the crime of which they supposed her guilty rendered them timorous and unwilling to come forward. Elizabeth saw even this last resource, her excellent dispositions and irreproachable conduct, about to fail the accused, when, although violently agitated, she desired permission to address the court.

““I am,” said she, “the cousin of the unhappy child who was murdered, or rather his sister, for I was educated by and have lived with his parents ever since and even long before his birth. It may therefore be judged indecent in me to come forward on this occasion, but when I see a fellow creature about to perish through the cowardice of her pretended friends, I wish to be allowed to speak, that I may say what I know of her character. I am well acquainted with the accused. I have lived in the same house with her, at one time for five and at another for nearly two years. During all that period she appeared to me the most amiable and benevolent of human creatures. She nursed Madame Frankenstein, my aunt, in her last illness, with the greatest affection and care and afterwards attended her own mother during a tedious illness, in a manner that excited the admiration of all who knew her, after which she again lived in my uncle’s house, where she was beloved by all the family. She was warmly attached to the child who is now dead and acted towards him like a most affectionate mother. For my own part, I do not hesitate to say that, notwithstanding all the evidence produced against her, I believe in her innocence. She had no temptation for such an action; as to the bauble on which the chief proof rests, if she had earnestly desired it, I should have willingly given it to her, so much do I esteem and value her.”

A murmur of approbation followed Elizabeth’s simple and powerful appeal, but it was excited by her generous interference, and not in favour of poor Justine, on whom the public indignation was turned with renewed violence, charging her with the blackest ingratitude. She herself wept as Elizabeth spoke, but she did not answer. My own agitation and anguish was extreme during the whole trial. I believed in her innocence; I knew it. Could the demon who had (I did not for a minute doubt) murdered my brother also in his hellish sport have betrayed the innocent to death and ignominy? I could not sustain the horror of my situation, and when I perceived that the popular voice and the countenances of the judges had already condemned my unhappy victim, I rushed out of the court in agony. The tortures of the accused did not equal mine; she was sustained by innocence, but the fangs of remorse tore my bosom and would not forgo their hold.

I passed a night of unmingled wretchedness. In the morning I went to the court; my lips and throat were parched. I dared not ask the fatal question, but I was known, and the officer guessed the cause of my visit. The ballots had been thrown; they were all black, and Justine was condemned.

I cannot pretend to describe what I then felt. I had before experienced sensations of horror, and I have endeavoured to bestow upon them adequate expressions, but words cannot convey an idea of the heart-sickening despair that I then endured. The person to whom I addressed myself added that Justine had already confessed her guilt. “That evidence,” he observed, “was hardly required in so glaring a case, but I am glad of it, and, indeed, none of our judges like to condemn a criminal upon circumstantial evidence, be it ever so decisive.”

This was strange and unexpected intelligence; what could it mean? Had my eyes deceived me? And was I really as mad as the whole world would believe me to be if I disclosed the object of my suspicions? I hastened to return home, and Elizabeth eagerly demanded the result.
“My cousin,” replied I, “it is decided as you may have expected; all judges had rather that ten innocent should suffer than that one guilty should escape. But she has confessed.”

This was a dire blow to poor Elizabeth, who had relied with firmness upon Justine’s innocence. “Alas!” said she. “How shall I ever again believe in human goodness? Justine, whom I loved and esteemed as my sister, how could she put on those smiles of innocence only to betray? Her mild eyes seemed incapable of any severity or guile, and yet she has committed a murder.”

Soon after we heard that the poor victim had expressed a desire to see my cousin. My father wished her not to go but said that he left it to her own judgment and feelings to decide. “Yes,” said Elizabeth, “I will go, although she is guilty; and you, Victor, shall accompany me; I cannot go alone.” The idea of this visit was torture to me, yet I could not refuse.

We entered the gloomy prison chamber and beheld Justine sitting on some straw at the farther end; her hands were manacled, and her head rested on her knees. She rose on seeing us enter, and when we were left alone with her, she threw herself at the feet of Elizabeth, weeping bitterly. My cousin wept also.

“Oh, Justine!” said she. “Why did you rob me of my last consolation? I relied on your innocence, and although I was then very wretched, I was not so miserable as I am now.”

“And do you also believe that I am so very, very wicked? Do you also join with my enemies to crush me, to condemn me as a murderer?” Her voice was suffocated with sobs.

“Rise, my poor girl,” said Elizabeth; “why do you kneel, if you are innocent? I am not one of your enemies, I believed you guiltless, notwithstanding every evidence, until I heard that you had yourself declared your guilt. That report, you say, is false; and be assured, dear Justine, that nothing can shake my confidence in you for a moment, but your own confession.”

“I did confess, but I confessed a lie. I confessed, that I might obtain absolution; but now that falsehood lies heavier at my heart than all my other sins. The God of heaven forgive me! Ever since I was condemned, my confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster that he said I was. He threatened excommunication and hell fire in my last moments if I continued obdurate. Dear lady, I had none to support me; all looked on me as a wretch doomed to ignominy and perdition. What could I do? In an evil hour I subscribed to a lie; and now only am I truly miserable.”

She paused, weeping, and then continued, “I thought with horror, my sweet lady, that you should believe your Justine, whom your blessed aunt had so highly honoured, and whom you loved, was a creature capable of a crime which none but the devil himself could have perpetrated. Dear William! dearest blessed child! I soon shall see you again in heaven, where we shall all be happy; and that consoles me, going as I am to suffer ignominy and death.”

“Oh, Justine! Forgive me for having for one moment distrusted you. Why did you confess? But do not mourn, dear girl. Do not fear. I will proclaim, I will prove your innocence. I will melt the stony hearts of your enemies by my tears and prayers. You shall not die! You, my playfellow, my companion, my sister, perish on the scaffold! No! No! I never could survive so horrible a misfortune.”

Justine shook her head mournfully. “I do not fear to die,” she said; “that pang is past. God raises my weakness and gives me courage to endure the worst. I leave a sad and bitter world; and if you remember me and think of me as of one unjustly condemned, I am resigned to the fate awaiting me. Learn from me, dear lady, to submit in patience to the will of heaven!”

During this conversation I had retired to a corner of the prison room, where I could conceal the horrid anguish that possessed me. Despair! Who dared talk of that? The poor victim, who on the morrow was to pass the awful boundary between life and death, felt not, as I did, such deep and bitter agony. I gnashed my teeth and ground them together, uttering a groan that came from my inmost
soul. Justine started. When she saw who it was, she approached me and said, “Dear sir, you are very kind to visit me; you, I hope, do not believe that I am guilty?”

I could not answer. “No, Justine,” said Elizabeth; “he is more convinced of your innocence than I was, for even when he heard that you had confessed, he did not credit it.”

“I truly thank him. In these last moments I feel the sincerest gratitude towards those who think of me with kindness. How sweet is the affection of others to such a wretch as I am! It removes more than half my misfortune, and I feel as if I could die in peace now that my innocence is acknowledged by you, dear lady, and your cousin.”

Thus the poor sufferer tried to comfort others and herself. She indeed gained the resignation she desired. But I, the true murderer, felt the never-dying worm alive in my bosom, which allowed of no hope or consolation. Elizabeth also wept and was unhappy, but hers also was the misery of innocence, which, like a cloud that passes over the fair moon, for a while hides but cannot tarnish its brightness. Anguish and despair had penetrated into the core of my heart; I bore a hell within me which nothing could extinguish. We stayed several hours with Justine, and it was with great difficulty that Elizabeth could tear herself away. “I wish,” cried she, “that I were to die with you; I cannot live in this world of misery.”

Justine assumed an air of cheerfulness, while she with difficulty repressed her bitter tears. She embraced Elizabeth and said in a voice of half-suppressed emotion, “Farewell, sweet lady, dearest Elizabeth, my beloved and only friend; may heaven, in its bounty, bless and preserve you; may this be the last misfortune that you will ever suffer! Live, and be happy, and make others so.”

And on the morrow Justine died. Elizabeth’s heart-rending eloquence failed to move the judges from their settled conviction in the criminality of the saintly sufferer. My passionate and indignant appeals were lost upon them. And when I received their cold answers and heard the harsh, unfeeling reasoning of these men, my purposed avowal died away on my lips. Thus I might proclaim myself a madman, but not revoke the sentence passed upon my wretched victim. She perished on the scaffold as a murderess!

From the tortures of my own heart, I turned to contemplate the deep and voiceless grief of my Elizabeth. This also was my doing! And my father’s woe, and the desolation of that late so smiling home all was the work of my thrice-accursed hands! Ye weep, unhappy ones, but these are not your last tears! Again shall you raise the funeral wail, and the sound of your lamentations shall again and again be heard! Frankenstein, your son, your kinsman, your early, much-loved friend; he who would spend each vital drop of blood for your sakes, who has no thought nor sense of joy except as it is mirrored also in your dear countenances, who would fill the air with blessings and spend his life in serving you—he bids you weep, to shed countless tears; happy beyond his hopes, if thus inexorable fate be satisfied, and if the destruction pause before the peace of the grave have succeeded to your sad torments!

Thus spoke my prophetic soul, as, torn by remorse, horror, and despair, I beheld those I loved spend vain sorrow upon the graves of William and Justine, the first hapless victims to my unhallowed arts.

Chapter 10

I spent the following day roaming through the valley. I stood beside the sources of the Arveiron, which take their rise in a glacier, that with slow pace is advancing down from the summit of the hills to barricade the valley. The abrupt sides of vast mountains were before me; the icy wall of the glacier overhung me; a few shattered pines were scattered around; and the solemn silence of this glorious
presence-chamber of imperial Nature was broken only by the brawling waves or the fall of some vast fragment, the thunder sound of the avalanche or the cracking, reverberated along the mountains, of the accumulated ice, which, through the silent working of immutable laws, was ever and anon rent and torn, as if it had been but a plaything in their hands. These sublime and magnificent scenes afforded me the greatest consolation that I was capable of receiving. They elevated me from all littleness of feeling, and although they did not remove my grief, they subdued and tranquillised it. In some degree, also, they diverted my mind from the thoughts over which it had brooded for the last month. I retired to rest at night; my slumbers, as it were, waited on and ministered to by the assemblage of grand shapes which I had contemplated during the day. They congregated round me; the unstained snowy mountain-top, the glittering pinnacle, the pine woods, and ragged bare ravine, the eagle, soaring amidst the clouds—they all gathered round me and bade me be at peace.

Where had they fled when the next morning I awoke? All of soul-inspiriting fled with sleep, and dark melancholy clouded every thought. The rain was pouring in torrents, and thick mists hid the summits of the mountains, so that I even saw not the faces of those mighty friends. Still I would penetrate their misty veil and seek them in their cloudy retreats. What were rain and storm to me? My mule was brought to the door, and I resolved to ascend to the summit of Montanvert. I remembered the effect that the view of the tremendous and ever-moving glacier had produced upon my mind when I first saw it. It had then filled me with a sublime ecstasy that gave wings to the soul and allowed it to soar from the obscure world to light and joy. The sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnising my mind and causing me to forget the passing cares of life. I determined to go without a guide, for I was well acquainted with the path, and the presence of another would destroy the solitary grandeur of the scene.

The ascent is precipitous, but the path is cut into continual and short windings, which enable you to surmount the perpendicularity of the mountain. It is a scene terrifically desolate. In a thousand spots the traces of the winter avalanche may be perceived, where trees lie broken and strewed on the ground, some entirely destroyed, others bent, leaning upon the jutting rocks of the mountain or transversely upon other trees. The path, as you ascend higher, is intersected by ravines of snow, down which stones continually roll from above; one of them is particularly dangerous, as the slightest sound, such as even speaking in a loud voice, produces a concussion of air sufficient to draw destruction upon the head of the speaker. The pines are not tall or luxuriant, but they are sombre and add an air of severity to the scene. I looked on the valley beneath; vast mists were rising from the rivers which ran through it and curling in thick wreaths around the opposite mountains, whose summits were hid in the uniform clouds, while rain poured from the dark sky and added to the melancholy impression I received from the objects around me. Alas! Why does man boast of sensibilities superior to those apparent in the brute; it only renders them more necessary beings. If our impulses were confined to hunger, thirst, and desire, we might be nearly free; but now we are moved by every wind that blows and a chance word or scene that that word may convey to us.

We rest; a dream has power to poison sleep.
We rise; one wand’ring thought pollutes the day.
We feel, conceive, or reason; laugh or weep,
Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away;
It is the same: for, be it joy or sorrow,
The path of its departure still is free.
Man’s yesterday may ne’er be like his morrow;
Nought may endure but mutability!

It was nearly noon when I arrived at the top of the ascent. For some time I sat upon the rock that overlooks the sea of ice. A mist covered both that and the surrounding mountains. Presently a breeze
dissipated the cloud, and I descended upon the glacier. The surface is very uneven, rising like the waves of a troubled sea, descending low, and interspersed by rifts that sink deep. The field of ice is almost a league in width, but I spent nearly two hours in crossing it. The opposite mountain is a bare perpendicular rock. From the side where I now stood Montanvert was exactly opposite, at the distance of a league; and above it rose Mont Blanc, in awful majesty. I remained in a recess of the rock, gazing on this wonderful and stupendous scene. The sea, or rather the vast river of ice, wound among its dependent mountains, whose aerial summits hung over its recesses. Their icy and glittering peaks shone in the sunlight over the clouds. My heart, which was before sorrowful, now swelled with something like joy; I exclaimed, “Wandering spirits, if indeed ye wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow me this faint happiness, or take me, as your companion, away from the joys of life.”

As I said this I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice, among which I had walked with caution; his stature, also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of man. I was troubled; a mist came over my eyes, and I felt a faintness seize me, but I was quickly restored by the cold gale of the mountains. I perceived, as the shape came nearer (sight tremendous and abhorred!) that it was the wretch whom I had created. I trembled with rage and horror, resolving to wait his approach and then close with him in mortal combat. He approached; his countenance bespoke bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity, while its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes. But I scarcely observed this; rage and hatred had at first deprived me of utterance, and I recovered only to overwhelm him with words expressive of furious detestation and contempt.

“Devil,” I exclaimed, “do you dare approach me? And do not you fear the fierce vengeance of my arm wreaked on your miserable head? Begone, vile insect! Or rather, stay, that I may trample you to dust! And, oh! That I could, with the extinction of your miserable existence, restore those victims whom you have so diabolically murdered!”

“I expected this reception,” said the dæmon. “All men hate the wretched; how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave them and you at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends.”

“Abhorred monster! Fiend that thou art! The tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance for thy crimes. Wretched devil! You reproach me with your creation, come on, then, that I may extinguish the spark which I so negligently bestowed.”

My rage was without bounds; I sprang on him, impelled by all the feelings which can arm one being against the existence of another.

He easily eluded me and said,

“Be calm! I entreat you to hear me before you give vent to your hatred on my devoted head. Have I not suffered enough, that you seek to increase my misery? Life, although it may only be an accumulation of anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it. Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine, my joints more supple. But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee. I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone
am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.”

“Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies. Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight, in which one must fall.”

“How can I move thee? Will no entreaties cause thee to turn a favourable eye upon thy creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion? Believe me, Frankenstein, I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity; but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow creatures, who owe me nothing? They spurn and hate me. The desert mountains and dreary glaciers are my refuge. I have wandered here many days; the caves of ice, which I only do not fear, are a dwelling to me, and the only one which man does not grudge. These bleak skies I hail, for they are kinder to me than your fellow beings. If the multitude of mankind knew of my existence, they would do as you do, and arm themselves for my destruction. Shall I not then hate them who abhor me? I will keep no terms with my enemies. I am miserable, and they shall share my wretchedness. Yet it is in your power to recompense me, and deliver them from an evil which it only remains for you to make so great, that not only you and your family, but thousands of others, shall be swallowed up in the whirlwinds of its rage. Let your compassion be moved, and do not disdain me. Listen to my tale; when you have heard that, abandon or commiserate me, as you shall judge that I deserve. But hear me. The guilty are allowed, by human laws, bloody as they are, to speak in their own defence before they are condemned. Listen to me, Frankenstein. You accuse me of murder, and yet you would, with a satisfied conscience, destroy your own creature. Oh, praise the eternal justice of man! Yet I ask you not to spare me; listen to me, and then, if you can, and if you will, destroy the work of your hands.”

“Why do you call to my remembrance,” I rejoined, “circumstances of which I shudder to reflect, that I have been the miserable origin and author? Cursed be the day, abhorred devil, in which you first saw light! Cursed (although I curse myself) be the hands that formed you! You have made me wretched beyond expression. You have left me no power to consider whether I am just to you or not. Begone! Relieve me from the sight of your detested form.”

“Thus I relieve thee, my creator,” he said, and placed his hated hands before my eyes, which I flung from me with violence; “thus I take from thee a sight which you abhor. Still thou canst listen to me and grant me thy compassion. By the virtues that I once possessed, I demand this from you. Hear my tale; it is long and strange, and the temperature of this place is not fitting to your fine sensations; come to the hut upon the mountain. The sun is yet high in the heavens; before it descends to hide itself behind your snowy precipices and illuminate another world, you will have heard my story and can decide. On you it rests, whether I quit for ever the neighbourhood of man and lead a harmless life, or become the scourge of your fellow creatures and the author of your own speedy ruin.”

As he said this he led the way across the ice; I followed. My heart was full, and I did not answer him, but as I proceeded, I weighed the various arguments that he had used and determined at least to listen to his tale. I was partly urged by curiosity, and compassion confirmed my resolution. I had hitherto supposed him to be the murderer of my brother, and I eagerly sought a confirmation or denial of this opinion. For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness. These motives urged me to comply with his demand. We crossed the ice, therefore, and ascended the opposite rock. The air was cold, and the rain again began to descend; we entered the hut, the fiend with an air of exultation, I with a heavy heart and depressed spirits. But I consented to listen, and seating myself by the fire which my odious companion had lighted, he thus began his tale.
Chapter 11

“It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being; all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses. By degrees, I remember, a stronger light pressed upon my nerves, so that I was obliged to shut my eyes. Darkness then came over me and troubled me, but hardly had I felt this when, by opening my eyes, as I now suppose, the light poured in upon me again. I walked and, I believe, descended, but I presently found a great alteration in my sensations. Before, dark and opaque bodies had surrounded me, impervious to my touch or sight; but I now found that I could wander on at liberty, with no obstacles which I could not either surmount or avoid. The light became more and more oppressive to me, and the heat wearying me as I walked, I sought a place where I could receive shade. This was the forest near Ingolstadt; and here I lay by the side of a brook resting from my fatigue, until I felt tormented by hunger and thirst. This roused me from my nearly dormant state, and I ate some berries which I found hanging on the trees or lying on the ground. I slaked my thirst at the brook, and then lying down, was overcome by sleep.

“It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half frightened, as it were, instinctively, finding myself so desolate. Before I had quitted your apartment, on a sensation of cold, I had covered myself with some clothes, but these were insufficient to secure me from the dews of night. I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept.

“Soon a gentle light stole over the heavens and gave me a sensation of pleasure. I started up and beheld a radiant form rise from among the trees. [The moon] I gazed with a kind of wonder. It moved slowly, but it enlightened my path, and I again went out in search of berries. I was still cold when under one of the trees I found a huge cloak, with which I covered myself, and sat down upon the ground. No distinct ideas occupied my mind; all was confused. I felt light, and hunger, and thirst, and darkness; innumerable sounds rang in my ears, and on all sides various scents saluted me; the only object that I could distinguish was the bright moon, and I fixed my eyes on that with pleasure.

“Several changes of day and night passed, and the orb of night had greatly lessened, when I began to distinguish my sensations from each other. I gradually saw plainly the clear stream that supplied me with drink and the trees that shaded me with their foliage. I was delighted when I first discovered that a pleasant sound, which often saluted my ears, proceeded from the throats of the little winged animals who had often intercepted the light from my eyes. I began also to observe, with greater accuracy, the forms that surrounded me and to perceive the boundaries of the radiant roof of light which canopied me. Sometimes I tried to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds but was unable. Sometimes I wished to express my sensations in my own mode, but the uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence again.

“The moon had disappeared from the night, and again, with a lessened form, showed itself, while I still remained in the forest. My sensations had by this time become distinct, and my mind received every day additional ideas. My eyes became accustomed to the light and to perceive objects in their right forms; I distinguished the insect from the herb, and by degrees, one herb from another. I found that the sparrow uttered none but harsh notes, whilst those of the blackbird and thrush were sweet and enticing.

“One day, when I was oppressed by cold, I found a fire which had been left by some wandering beggars, and was overcome with delight at the warmth I experienced from it. In my joy I thrust my hand into the live embers, but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain. How strange, I thought, that the same cause should produce such opposite effects! I examined the materials of the fire, and to my joy found it to be composed of wood. I quickly collected some branches, but they were wet and would not burn. I was pained at this and sat still watching the operation of the fire. The wet wood
which I had placed near the heat dried and itself became inflamed. I reflected on this, and by touching the various branches, I discovered the cause and busied myself in collecting a great quantity of wood, that I might dry it and have a plentiful supply of fire. When night came on and brought sleep with it, I was in the greatest fear lest my fire should be extinguished. I covered it carefully with dry wood and leaves and placed wet branches upon it; and then, spreading my cloak, I lay on the ground and sank into sleep.

“It was morning when I awoke, and my first care was to visit the fire. I uncovered it, and a gentle breeze quickly fanned it into a flame. I observed this also and contrived a fan of branches, which roused the embers when they were nearly extinguished. When night came again I found, with pleasure, that the fire gave light as well as heat and that the discovery of this element was useful to me in my food, for I found some of the offals that the travellers had left had been roasted, and tasted much more savoury than the berries I gathered from the trees. I tried, therefore, to dress my food in the same manner, placing it on the live embers. I found that the berries were spoiled by this operation, and the nuts and roots much improved.

“Food, however, became scarce, and I often spent the whole day searching in vain for a few acorns to assuage the pangs of hunger. When I found this, I resolved to quit the place that I had hitherto inhabited, to seek for one where the few wants I experienced would be more easily satisfied. In this emigration I exceedingly lamented the loss of the fire which I had obtained through accident and knew not how to reproduce it. I gave several hours to the serious consideration of this difficulty, but I was obliged to relinquish all attempt to supply it, and wrapping myself up in my cloak, I struck across the wood towards the setting sun. I passed three days in these rambles and at length discovered the open country. A great fall of snow had taken place the night before, and the fields were of one uniform white; the appearance was disconsolate, and I found my feet chilled by the cold damp substance that covered the ground.

“It was about seven in the morning, and I longed to obtain food and shelter; at length I perceived a small hut, on a rising ground, which had doubtless been built for the convenience of some shepherd. This was a new sight to me, and I examined the structure with great curiosity. Finding the door open, I entered. An old man sat in it, near a fire, over which he was preparing his breakfast. He turned on hearing a noise, and perceiving me, shrieked loudly, and quitting the hut, ran across the fields with a speed of which his debilitated form hardly appeared capable. His appearance, different from any I had ever before seen, and his flight somewhat surprised me. But I was enchanted by the appearance of the hut; here the snow and rain could not penetrate; the ground was dry; and it presented to me then as exquisite and divine a retreat as Pandæmonium appeared to the daemons of hell after their sufferings in the lake of fire. I greedily devoured the remnants of the shepherd’s breakfast, which consisted of bread, cheese, milk, and wine; the latter, however, I did not like. Then, overcome by fatigue, I lay down among some straw and fell asleep.

“It was noon when I awoke, and allured by the warmth of the sun, which shone brightly on the white ground, I determined to recommence my travels; and, depositing the remains of the peasant’s breakfast in a wallet I found, I proceeded across the fields for several hours, until at sunset I arrived at a village. How miraculous did this appear! The huts, the neater cottages, and stately houses engaged my admiration by turns. The vegetables in the gardens, the milk and cheese that I saw placed at the windows of some of the cottages, allured my appetite. One of the best of these I entered, but I had hardly placed my foot within the door before the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted. The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me, until, grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons, I escaped to the open country and fearfully took refuge in a low hovel, quite bare, and making a wretched appearance after the palaces I had beheld in the village. This hovel however, joined a cottage of a neat and pleasant appearance, but after my late dearly bought experience, I dared not enter it. My place of refuge was constructed of wood, but so low that I could with difficulty sit upright in it. No wood, however, was placed on the earth, which
formed the floor, but it was dry; and although the wind entered it by innumerable chinks, I found it an agreeable asylum from the snow and rain.

"Here, then, I retreated and lay down happy to have found a shelter, however miserable, from the inclemency of the season, and still more from the barbarity of man. As soon as morning dawned I crept from my kennel, that I might view the adjacent cottage and discover if I could remain in the habitation I had found. It was situated against the back of the cottage and surrounded on the sides which were exposed by a pig sty and a clear pool of water. One part was open, and by that I had crept in; but now I covered every crevice by which I might be perceived with stones and wood, yet in such a manner that I might move them on occasion to pass out; all the light I enjoyed came through the sty, and that was sufficient for me.

"Having thus arranged my dwelling and carpeted it with clean straw, I retired, for I saw the figure of a man at a distance, and I remembered too well my treatment the night before to trust myself in his power. I had first, however, provided for my sustenance for that day by a loaf of coarse bread, which I purloined, and a cup with which I could drink more conveniently than from my hand of the pure water which flowed by my retreat. The floor was a little raised, so that it was kept perfectly dry, and by its vicinity to the chimney of the cottage it was tolerably warm.

"Being thus provided, I resolved to reside in this hovel until something should occur which might alter my determination. It was indeed a paradise compared to the bleak forest, my former residence, the rain-dropping branches, and dank earth. I ate my breakfast with pleasure and was about to remove a plank to procure myself a little water when I heard a step, and looking through a small chink, I beheld a young creature, with a pail on her head, passing before my hovel. The girl was young and of gentle demeanour, unlike what I have since found cottagers and farmhouse servants to be. Yet she was meanly dressed, a coarse blue petticoat and a linen jacket being her only garb; her fair hair was plaited but not adorned: she looked patient yet sad. I lost sight of her, and in about a quarter of an hour she returned bearing the pail, which was now partly filled with milk. As she walked along, seemingly incommoded by the burden, a young man met her, whose countenance expressed a deeper despondence. Uttering a few sounds with an air of melancholy, he took the pail from her head and bore it to the cottage himself. She followed, and they disappeared. Presently I saw the young man again, with some tools in his hand, cross the field behind the cottage; and the girl was also busied, sometimes in the house and sometimes in the yard.

"On examining my dwelling, I found that one of the windows of the cottage had formerly occupied a part of it, but the panes had been filled up with wood. In one of these was a small and almost imperceptible chink through which the eye could just penetrate. Through this crevice a small room was visible, whitewashed and clean but very bare of furniture. In one corner, near a small fire, sat an old man, leaning his head on his hands in a disconsolate attitude. The young girl was occupied in arranging the cottage; but presently she took something out of a drawer, which employed her hands, and she sat down beside the old man, who, taking up an instrument, began to play and to produce sounds sweeter than the voice of the thrush or the nightingale. It was a lovely sight, even to me, poor wretch who had never beheld aught beautiful before. The silver hair and benevolent countenance of the aged cottager won my reverence, while the gentle manners of the girl enticed my love. He played a sweet mournful air which I perceived drew tears from the eyes of his amiable companion, of which the old man took no notice, until she sobbed audibly; he then pronounced a few sounds, and the fair creature, leaving her work, knelt at his feet. He raised her and smiled with such kindness and affection that I felt sensations of a peculiar and overpowering nature; they were a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as I had never before experienced, either from hunger or cold, warmth or food; and I withdrew from the window, unable to bear these emotions.

"Soon after this the young man returned, bearing on his shoulders a load of wood. The girl met him at the door, helped to relieve him of his burden, and taking some of the fuel into the cottage, placed it on the fire; then she and the youth went apart into a nook of the cottage, and he showed her
a large loaf and a piece of cheese. She seemed pleased and went into the garden for some roots and plants, which she placed in water, and then upon the fire. She afterwards continued her work, whilst the young man went into the garden and appeared busily employed in digging and pulling up roots. After he had been employed thus about an hour, the young woman joined him and they entered the cottage together.

“The old man had, in the meantime, been pensive, but on the appearance of his companions he assumed a more cheerful air, and they sat down to eat. The meal was quickly dispatched. The young woman was again occupied in arranging the cottage, the old man walked before the cottage in the sun for a few minutes, leaning on the arm of the youth. Nothing could exceed in beauty the contrast between these two excellent creatures. One was old, with silver hairs and a countenance beaming with benevolence and love; the younger was slight and graceful in his figure, and his features were moulded with the finest symmetry, yet his eyes and attitude expressed the utmost sadness and despondency. The old man returned to the cottage, and the youth, with tools different from those he had used in the morning, directed his steps across the fields.

“Night quickly shut in, but to my extreme wonder, I found that the cottagers had a means of prolonging light by the use of tapers, and was delighted to find that the setting of the sun did not put an end to the pleasure I experienced in watching my human neighbours. In the evening the young girl and her companion were employed in various occupations which I did not understand; and the old man again took up the instrument which produced the divine sounds that had enchanted me in the morning. So soon as he had finished, the youth began, not to play, but to utter sounds that were monotonous, and neither resembling the harmony of the old man’s instrument nor the songs of the birds; I since found that he read aloud, but at that time I knew nothing of the science of words or letters.

“The family, after having been thus occupied for a short time, extinguished their lights and retired, as I conjectured, to rest.”

Chapter 12

“I lay on my straw, but I could not sleep. I thought of the occurrences of the day. What chiefly struck me was the gentle manners of these people, and I longed to join them, but dared not. I remembered too well the treatment I had suffered the night before from the barbarous villagers, and resolved, whatever course of conduct I might hereafter think it right to pursue, that for the present I would remain quietly in my hovel, watching and endeavouring to discover the motives which influenced their actions.

“The cottagers arose the next morning before the sun. The young woman arranged the cottage and prepared the food, and the youth departed after the first meal.

“This day was passed in the same routine as that which preceded it. The young man was constantly employed out of doors, and the girl in various laborious occupations within. The old man, whom I soon perceived to be blind, employed his leisure hours on his instrument or in contemplation. Nothing could exceed the love and respect which the younger cottagers exhibited towards their venerable companion. They performed towards him every little office of affection and duty with gentleness, and he rewarded them by his benevolent smiles.

“They were not entirely happy. The young man and his companion often went apart and appeared to weep. I saw no cause for their unhappiness, but I was deeply affected by it. If such lovely creatures were miserable, it was less strange that I, an imperfect and solitary being, should be wretched. Yet why were these gentle beings unhappy? They possessed a delightful house (for such it was in my eyes) and every luxury; they had a fire to warm them when chill and delicious viands when hungry;
they were dressed in excellent clothes; and, still more, they enjoyed one another’s company and speech, interchanging each day looks of affection and kindness. What did their tears imply? Did they really express pain? I was at first unable to solve these questions, but perpetual attention and time explained to me many appearances which were at first enigmatic.

“A considerable period elapsed before I discovered one of the causes of the uneasiness of this amiable family: it was poverty, and they suffered that evil in a very distressing degree. Their nourishment consisted entirely of the vegetables of their garden and the milk of one cow, which gave very little during the winter, when its masters could scarcely procure food to support it. They often, I believe, suffered the pangs of hunger very poignantly, especially the two younger cottagers, for several times they placed food before the old man when they reserved none for themselves.

“This trait of kindness moved me sensibly. I had been accustomed, during the night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption, but when I found that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained and satisfied myself with berries, nuts, and roots which I gathered from a neighbouring wood.

“I discovered also another means through which I was enabled to assist their labours. I found that the youth spent a great part of each day in collecting wood for the family fire, and during the night I often took his tools, the use of which I quickly discovered, and brought home firing sufficient for the consumption of several days.

“I remember, the first time that I did this, the young woman, when she opened the door in the morning, appeared greatly astonished on seeing a great pile of wood on the outside. She uttered some words in a loud voice, and the youth joined her, who also expressed surprise. I observed, with pleasure, that he did not go to the forest that day, but spent it in repairing the cottage and cultivating the garden.

“By degrees I made a discovery of still greater moment. I found that these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds. I perceived that the words they spoke sometimes produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers. This was indeed a godlike science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it. But I was baffled in every attempt I made for this purpose. Their pronunciation was quick, and the words they uttered, not having any apparent connection with visible objects, I was unable to discover any clue by which I could unravel the mystery of their reference. By great application, however, and after having remained during the space of several revolutions of the moon in my hovel, I discovered the names that were given to some of the most familiar objects of discourse; I learned and applied the words, fire, milk, bread, and wood. I learned also the names of the cottagers themselves. The youth and his companion had each of them several names, but the old man had only one, which was father. The girl was called sister or Agatha, and the youth Felix, brother, or son. I cannot describe the delight I felt when I learned the ideas appropriated to each of these sounds and was able to pronounce them. I distinguished several other words without being able as yet to understand or apply them, such as good, dearest, unhappy.

“I spent the winter in this manner. The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me; when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathised in their joys. I saw few human beings besides them, and if any other happened to enter the cottage, their harsh manners and rude gait only enhanced to me the superior accomplishments of my friends. The old man, I could perceive, often endeavoured to encourage his children, as sometimes I found that he called them, to cast off their melancholy. He would talk in a cheerful accent, with an expression of goodness that bestowed pleasure even upon me. Agatha listened with respect, her eyes sometimes filled with tears, which she endeavoured to wipe away unperceived; but I generally found that her countenance and tone were more cheerful after having listened to the exhortations of her father. It was not thus with Felix. He was always the saddest of the group, and even to my unpractised senses,
he appeared to have suffered more deeply than his friends. But if his countenance was more sorrowful, his voice was more cheerful than that of his sister, especially when he addressed the old man.

"I could mention innumerable instances which, although slight, marked the dispositions of these amiable cottagers. In the midst of poverty and want, Felix carried with pleasure to his sister the first little white flower that peeped out from beneath the snowy ground. Early in the morning, before she had risen, he cleared away the snow that obstructed her path to the milk-house, drew water from the well, and brought the wood from the outhouse, where, to his perpetual astonishment, he found his store always replenished by an invisible hand. In the day, I believe, he worked sometimes for a neighbouring farmer, because he often went forth and did not return until dinner, yet brought no wood with him. At other times he worked in the garden, but as there was little to do in the frosty season, he read to the old man and Agatha.

"This reading had puzzled me extremely at first, but by degrees I discovered that he uttered many of the same sounds when he read as when he talked. I conjectured, therefore, that he found on the paper signs for speech which he understood, and I ardently longed to comprehend these also; but how was that possible when I did not even understand the sounds for which they stood as signs? I improved, however, sensibly in this science, but not sufficiently to follow up any kind of conversation, although I applied my whole mind to the endeavour, for I easily perceived that, although I eagerly longed to discover myself to the cottagers, I ought not to make the attempt until I had first become master of their language, which knowledge might enable me to make them overlook the deformity of my figure, for with this also the contrast perpetually presented to my eyes had made me acquainted.

"I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions; but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity.

"As the sun became warmer and the light of day longer, the snow vanished, and I beheld the bare trees and the black earth. From this time Felix was more employed, and the heart-moving indications of impending famine disappeared. Their food, as I afterwards found, was coarse, but it was wholesome; and they procured a sufficiency of it. Several new kinds of plants sprang up in the garden, which they dressed; and these signs of comfort increased daily as the season advanced.

"The old man, leaning on his son, walked each day at noon, when it did not rain, as I found it was called when the heavens poured forth its waters. This frequently took place, but a high wind quickly dried the earth, and the season became far more pleasant than it had been.

"My mode of life in my hovel was uniform. During the morning I attended the motions of the cottagers, and when they were dispersed in various occupations, I slept; the remainder of the day was spent in observing my friends. When they had retired to rest, if there was any moon or the night was star-light, I went into the woods and collected my own food and fuel for the cottage. When I returned, as often as it was necessary, I cleared their path from the snow and performed those offices that I had seen done by Felix. I afterwards found that these labours, performed by an invisible hand, greatly astonished them; and once or twice I heard them, on these occasions, utter the words good spirit, wonderful; but I did not then understand the signification of these terms.

"My thoughts now became more active, and I longed to discover the motives and feelings of these lovely creatures; I was inquisitive to know why Felix appeared so miserable and Agatha so sad. I thought (foolish wretch!) that it might be in my power to restore happiness to these deserving people. When I slept or was absent, the forms of the venerable blind father, the gentle Agatha, and the excellent Felix flitted before me. I looked upon them as superior beings who would be the arbiters of my future destiny. I formed in my imagination a thousand pictures of presenting myself to them, and
their reception of me. I imagined that they would be disgusted, until, by my gentle demeanour and conciliating words, I should first win their favour and afterwards their love.

“These thoughts exhilarated me and led me to apply with fresh ardour to the acquiring the art of language. My organs were indeed harsh, but supple; and although my voice was very unlike the soft music of their tones, yet I pronounced such words as I understood with tolerable ease. It was as the ass and the lap-dog; yet surely the gentle ass whose intentions were affectionate, although his manners were rude, deserved better treatment than blows and execration.

“The pleasant showers and genial warmth of spring greatly altered the aspect of the earth. Men who before this change seemed to have been hid in caves dispersed themselves and were employed in various arts of cultivation. The birds sang in more cheerful notes, and the leaves began to bud forth on the trees. Happy, happy earth! Fit habitation for gods, which, so short a time before, was bleak, damp, and unwholesome. My spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature; the past was blotted from my memory, the present was tranquil, and the future gilded by bright rays of hope and anticipations of joy.”

Chapter 13

“I now hasten to the more moving part of my story. I shall relate events that impressed me with feelings which, from what I had been, have made me what I am.

“Spring advanced rapidly; the weather became fine and the skies cloudless. It surprised me that what before was desert and gloomy should now bloom with the most beautiful flowers and verdure. My senses were gratified and refreshed by a thousand scents of delight and a thousand sights of beauty.

“It was on one of these days, when my cottagers periodically rested from labour—the old man played on his guitar, and the children listened to him—that I observed the countenance of Felix was melancholy beyond expression; he sighed frequently, and once his father paused in his music, and I conjectured by his manner that he inquired the cause of his son’s sorrow. Felix replied in a cheerful accent, and the old man was recommencing his music when someone tapped at the door.

“It was a lady on horseback, accompanied by a country-man as a guide. The lady was dressed in a dark suit and covered with a thick black veil. Agatha asked a question, to which the stranger only replied by pronouncing, in a sweet accent, the name of Felix. Her voice was musical but unlike that of either of my friends. On hearing this word, Felix came up hastily to the lady, who, when she saw him, threw up her veil, and I beheld a countenance of angelic beauty and expression. Her hair of a shining raven black, and curiously braided; her eyes were dark, but gentle, although animated; her features of a regular proportion, and her complexion wondrously fair, each cheek tinged with a lovely pink.

“Felix seemed ravished with delight when he saw her, every trait of sorrow vanished from his face, and it instantly expressed a degree of ecstatic joy, of which I could hardly have believed it capable; his eyes sparkled, as his cheek flushed with pleasure; and at that moment I thought him as beautiful as the stranger. She appeared affected by different feelings; wiping a few tears from her lovely eyes, she held out her hand to Felix, who kissed it rapturously and called her, as well as I could distinguish, his sweet Arabian. She did not appear to understand him, but smiled. He assisted her to dismount, and dismissing her guide, conducted her into the cottage. Some conversation took place between him and his father, and the young stranger knelt at the old man’s feet and would have kissed his hand, but he raised her and embraced her affectionately.

“I soon perceived that although the stranger uttered articulate sounds and appeared to have a language of her own, she was neither understood by nor herself understood the cottagers. They made
many signs which I did not comprehend, but I saw that her presence diffused gladness through the

cottage, dispelling their sorrow as the sun dissipates the morning mists. Felix seemed peculiarly

happy and with smiles of delight welcomed his Arabian. Agatha, the ever-gentle Agatha, kissed the

hands of the lovely stranger, and pointing to her brother, made signs which appeared to me to mean

that he had been sorrowful until she came. Some hours passed thus, while they, by their

countenances, expressed joy, the cause of which I did not comprehend. Presently I found, by the

frequent recurrence of some sound which the stranger repeated after them, that she was

endeavouring to learn their language; and the idea instantly occurred to me that I should make use

of the same instructions to the same end. The stranger learned about twenty words at the first lesson;

most of them, indeed, were those which I had before understood, but I profited by the others.

"As night came on, Agatha and the Arabian retired early. When they separated Felix kissed the

hand of the stranger and said, 'Good night sweet Safie.' He sat up much longer, conversing with his

father, and by the frequent repetition of her name I conjectured that their lovely guest was the subject

of their conversation. I ardently desired to understand them, and bent every faculty towards that

purpose, but found it utterly impossible.

"The next morning Felix went out to his work, and after the usual occupations of Agatha were

finished, the Arabian sat at the feet of the old man, and taking his guitar, played some airs so

entrancingly beautiful that they at once drew tears of sorrow and delight from my eyes. She sang, and

her voice flowed in a rich cadence, swelling or dying away like a nightingale of the woods.

"When she had finished, she gave the guitar to Agatha, who at first declined it. She played a simple

air, and her voice accompanied it in sweet accents, but unlike the wondrous strain of the stranger.
The old man appeared enraptured and said some words which Agatha endeavoured to explain to

Safie, and by which he appeared to wish to express that she bestowed on him the greatest delight by

her music.

"The days now passed as peaceably as before, with the sole alteration that joy had taken place of

sadness in the countenances of my friends. Safie was always gay and happy; she and I improved

rapidly in the knowledge of language, so that in two months I began to comprehend most of the words

uttered by my protectors.

"In the meanwhile also the black ground was covered with herbage, and the green banks

interspersed with innumerable flowers, sweet to the scent and the eyes, stars of pale radiance among

the moonlight woods; the sun became warmer, the nights clear and balmy; and my nocturnal rambles

were an extreme pleasure to me, although they were considerably shortened by the late setting and

early rising of the sun, for I never ventured abroad during daylight, fearful of meeting with the same

treatment I had formerly endured in the first village which I entered.

"My days were spent in close attention, that I might more speedily master the language; and I

may boast that I improved more rapidly than the Arabian, who understood very little and converse

in broken accents, whilst I comprehended and could imitate almost every word that was spoken.

"While I improved in speech, I also learned the science of letters as it was taught to the stranger,

and this opened before me a wide field for wonder and delight.

"The book from which Felix instructed Safie was Volney's *Ruins of Empires*. I should not have

understood the purport of this book had not Felix, in reading it, given very minute explanations. He

had chosen this work, he said, because the declamatory style was framed in imitation of the Eastern

authors. Through this work I obtained a cursory knowledge of history and a view of the several

empires at present existing in the world; it gave me an insight into the manners, governments, and

religions of the different nations of the earth. I heard of the slothful Asiatics, of the stupendous genius

and mental activity of the Grecians, of the wars and wonderful virtue of the early Romans—of their

subsequent degenerating—of the decline of that mighty empire, of chivalry, Christianity, and kings. I
heard of the discovery of the American hemisphere and wept with Safie over the hapless fate of its original inhabitants.

“These wonderful narrations inspired me with strange feelings. Was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous and magnificent, yet so vicious and base? He appeared at one time a mere scion of the evil principle and at another as all that can be conceived of noble and godlike. To be a great and virtuous man appeared the highest honour that can befall a sensitive being; to be base and vicious, as many on record have been, appeared the lowest degradation, a condition more abject than that of the blind mole or harmless worm. For a long time I could not conceive how one man could go forth to murder his fellow, or even why there were laws and governments; but when I heard details of vice and bloodshed, my wonder ceased and I turned away with disgust and loathing.

“Every conversation of the cottagers now opened new wonders to me. While I listened to the instructions which Felix bestowed upon the Arabian, the strange system of human society was explained to me. I heard of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty, of rank, descent, and noble blood.

“The words induced me to turn towards myself. I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow creatures were high and unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of these advantages, but without either he was considered, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few! And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?

“I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge. Oh, that I had for ever remained in my native wood, nor known nor felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat!

“Of what a strange nature is knowledge! It clings to the mind when it has once seized on it like a lichen on the rock. I wished sometimes to shake off all thought and feeling, but I learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death—a state which I feared yet did not understand. I admired virtue and good feelings and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers, but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through means which I obtained by stealth, when I was unseen and unknown, and which rather increased than satisfied the desire I had of becoming one among my fellows. The gentle words of Agatha and the animated smiles of the charming Arabian were not for me. The mild exhortations of the old man and the lively conversation of the loved Felix were not for me. Miserable, unhappy wretch!

“Other lessons were impressed upon me even more deeply. I heard of the difference of sexes, and the birth and growth of children, how the father doted on the smiles of the infant, and the lively sallies of the older child, how all the life and cares of the mother were wrapped up in the precious charge, how the mind of youth expanded and gained knowledge, of brother, sister, and all the various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds.

“But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I then was in height and proportion. I had never yet seen a being resembling me or who claimed any intercourse with me. What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered only with groans.

“I will soon explain to what these feelings tended, but allow me now to return to the cottagers, whose story excited in me such various feelings of indignation, delight, and wonder, but which all...
terminated in additional love and reverence for my protectors (for so I loved, in an innocent, half-painful self-deceit, to call them)."

Chapter 14

"Some time elapsed before I learned the history of my friends. It was one which could not fail to impress itself deeply on my mind, unfolding as it did a number of circumstances, each interesting and wonderful to one so utterly inexperienced as I was.

"The name of the old man was De Lacey. He was descended from a good family in France, where he had lived for many years in affluence, respected by his superiors and beloved by his equals. His son was bred in the service of his country, and Agatha had ranked with ladies of the highest distinction. A few months before my arrival they had lived in a large and luxurious city called Paris, surrounded by friends and possessed of every enjoyment which virtue, refinement of intellect, or taste, accompanied by a moderate fortune, could afford.

"The father of Safie had been the cause of their ruin. He was a Turkish merchant and had inhabited Paris for many years, when, for some reason which I could not learn, he became obnoxious to the government. He was seized and cast into prison the very day that Safie arrived from Constantinople to join him. He was tried and condemned to death. The injustice of his sentence was very flagrant; all Paris was indignant; and it was judged that his religion and wealth rather than the crime alleged against him had been the cause of his condemnation.

"Felix had accidentally been present at the trial; his horror and indignation were uncontrollable when he heard the decision of the court. He made, at that moment, a solemn vow to deliver him and then looked around for the means. After many fruitless attempts to gain admittance to the prison, he found a strongly grated window in an unguarded part of the building, which lighted the dungeon of the unfortunate Muhammadan, who, loaded with chains, waited in despair the execution of the barbarous sentence. Felix visited the grate at night and made known to the prisoner his intentions in his favour. The Turk, amazed and delighted, endeavoured to kindle the zeal of his deliverer by promises of reward and wealth. Felix rejected his offers with contempt, yet when he saw the lovely Safie, who was allowed to visit her father and who by her gestures expressed her lively gratitude, the youth could not help owning to his own mind that the captive possessed a treasure which would fully reward his toil and hazard.

"The Turk quickly perceived the impression that his daughter had made on the heart of Felix and endeavoured to secure him more entirely in his interests by the promise of her hand in marriage so soon as he should be conveyed to a place of safety. Felix was too delicate to accept this offer, yet he looked forward to the probability of the event as to the consummation of his happiness.

"During the ensuing days, while the preparations were going forward for the escape of the merchant, the zeal of Felix was warmed by several letters that he received from this lovely girl, who found means to express her thoughts in the language of her lover by the aid of an old man, a servant of her father who understood French. She thanked him in the most ardent terms for his intended services towards her parent, and at the same time she gently deplored her own fate.

"I have copies of these letters, for I found means, during my residence in the hovel, to procure the implements of writing; and the letters were often in the hands of Felix or Agatha. Before I depart I will give them to you; they will prove the truth of my tale; but at present, as the sun is already far declined, I shall only have time to repeat the substance of them to you.

"Safie related that her mother was a Christian Arab, seized and made a slave by the Turks; recommended by her beauty, she had won the heart of the father of Safie, who married her. The young
girl spoke in high and enthusiastic terms of her mother, who, born in freedom, spurned the bondage to which she was now reduced. She instructed her daughter in the tenets of her religion and taught her to aspire to higher powers of intellect and an independence of spirit forbidden to the female followers of Muhammad. This lady died, but her lessons were indelibly impressed on the mind of Safie, who sickened at the prospect of again returning to Asia and being immured within the walls of a harem, allowed only to occupy herself with infantile amusements, ill-suited to the temper of her soul, now accustomed to grand ideas and a noble emulation for virtue. The prospect of marrying a Christian and remaining in a country where women were allowed to take a rank in society was enchanting to her.

"The day for the execution of the Turk was fixed, but on the night previous to it he quitted his prison and before morning was distant many leagues from Paris. Felix had procured passports in the name of his father, sister, and himself. He had previously communicated his plan to the former, who aided the deceit by quitting his house, under the pretence of a journey and concealed himself, with his daughter, in an obscure part of Paris.

"Felix conducted the fugitives through France to Lyons and across Mont Cenis to Leghorn, where the merchant had decided to wait a favourable opportunity of passing into some part of the Turkish dominions.

"Safie resolved to remain with her father until the moment of his departure, before which time the Turk renewed his promise that she should be united to his deliverer; and Felix remained with them in expectation of that event; and in the meantime he enjoyed the society of the Arabian, who exhibited towards him the simplest and tenderest affection. They conversed with one another through the means of an interpreter, and sometimes with the interpretation of looks; and Safie sang to him the divine airs of her native country.

"The Turk allowed this intimacy to take place and encouraged the hopes of the youthful lovers, while in his heart he had formed far other plans. He loathed the idea that his daughter should be united to a Christian, but he feared the resentment of Felix if he should appear lukewarm, for he knew that he was still in the power of his deliverer if he should choose to betray him to the Italian state which they inhabited. He revolved a thousand plans by which he should be enabled to prolong the deceit until it might be no longer necessary, and secretly to take his daughter with him when he departed. His plans were facilitated by the news which arrived from Paris.

"The government of France were greatly enraged at the escape of their victim and spared no pains to detect and punish his deliverer. The plot of Felix was quickly discovered, and De Lacey and Agatha were thrown into prison. The news reached Felix and roused him from his dream of pleasure. His blind and aged father and his gentle sister lay in a noisome dungeon while he enjoyed the free air and the society of her whom he loved. This idea was torture to him. He quickly arranged with the Turk that if the latter should find a favourable opportunity for escape before Felix could return to Italy, Safie should remain as a boarder at a convent at Leghorn; and then, quitting the lovely Arabian, he hastened to Paris and delivered himself up to the vengeance of the law, hoping to free De Lacey and Agatha by this proceeding.

"He did not succeed. They remained confined for five months before the trial took place, the result of which deprived them of their fortune and condemned them to a perpetual exile from their native country.

"They found a miserable asylum in the cottage in Germany, where I discovered them. Felix soon learned that the treacherous Turk, for whom he and his family endured such unheard-of oppression, on discovering that his deliverer was thus reduced to poverty and ruin, became a traitor to good feeling and honour and had quitted Italy with his daughter, insultingly sending Felix a pittance of money to aid him, as he said, in some plan of future maintenance.
“Such were the events that preyed on the heart of Felix and rendered him, when I first saw him, the most miserable of his family. He could have endured poverty, and while this distress had been the meed of his virtue, he gloriéd in it; but the ingratitude of the Turk and the loss of his beloved Safie were misfortunes more bitter and irreparable. The arrival of the Arabian now infused new life into his soul.

“When the news reached Leghorn that Felix was deprived of his wealth and rank, the merchant commanded his daughter to think no more of her lover, but to prepare to return to her native country. The generous nature of Safie was outraged by this command; she attempted to expostulate with her father, but he left her angrily, reiterating his tyrannical mandate.

“A few days after, the Turk entered his daughter’s apartment and told her hastily that he had reason to believe that his residence at Leghorn had been divulged and that he should speedily be delivered up to the French government; he had consequently hired a vessel to convey him to Constantinople, for which city he should sail in a few hours. He intended to leave his daughter under the care of a confidential servant, to follow at her leisure with the greater part of his property, which had not yet arrived at Leghorn.

“When alone, Safie resolved in her own mind the plan of conduct that it would become her to pursue in this emergency. A residence in Turkey was abhorrent to her; her religion and her feelings were alike averse to it. By some papers of her father which fell into her hands she heard of the exile of her lover and learnt the name of the spot where he then resided. She hesitated some time, but at length she formed her determination. Taking with her some jewels that belonged to her and a sum of money, she quitted Italy with an attendant, a native of Leghorn, but who understood the common language of Turkey, and departed for Germany.

“She arrived in safety at a town about twenty leagues from the cottage of De Lacey, when her attendant fell dangerously ill. Safie nursed her with the most devoted affection, but the poor girl died, and the Arabian was left alone, unacquainted with the language of the country and utterly ignorant of the customs of the world. She fell, however, into good hands. The Italian had mentioned the name of the spot for which they were bound, and after her death the woman of the house in which they had lived took care that Safie should arrive in safety at the cottage of her lover.”

Chapter 15

“Such was the history of my beloved cottagers. It impressed me deeply. I learned, from the views of social life which it developed, to admire their virtues and to depurate the vices of mankind.

“As yet I looked upon crime as a distant evil, benevolence and generosity were ever present before me, inciting within me a desire to become an actor in the busy scene where so many admirable qualities were called forth and displayed. But in giving an account of the progress of my intellect, I must not omit a circumstance which occurred in the beginning of the month of August of the same year.

“One night during my accustomed visit to the neighbouring wood where I collected my own food and brought home firing for my protectors, I found on the ground a leathern portmanteau containing several articles of dress and some books. I eagerly seized the prize and returned with it to my hovel. Fortunately the books were written in the language, the elements of which I had acquired at the cottage; they consisted of Paradise Lost, a volume of Plutarch’s Lives, and the Sorrows of Werter. The possession of these treasures gave me extreme delight; I now continually studied and exercised my mind upon these histories, whilst my friends were employed in their ordinary occupations.
“I can hardly describe to you the effect of these books. They produced in me an infinity of new images and feelings, that sometimes raised me to ecstasy, but more frequently sunk me into the lowest dejection. In the Sorrows of Werter, besides the interest of its simple and affecting story, so many opinions are canvassed and so many lights thrown upon what had hitherto been to me obscure subjects that I found in it a never-ending source of speculation and astonishment. The gentle and domestic manners it described, combined with lofty sentiments and feelings, which had for their object something out of self, accorded well with my experience among my protectors and with the wants which were for ever alive in my own bosom. But I thought Werter himself a more divine being than I had ever beheld or imagined; his character contained no pretension, but it sank deep. The disquisitions upon death and suicide were calculated to fill me with wonder. I did not pretend to enter into the merits of the case, yet I inclined towards the opinions of the hero, whose extinction I wept, without precisely understanding it.

“As I read, however, I applied much personally to my own feelings and condition. I found myself similar yet at the same time strangely unlike to the beings concerning whom I read and to whose conversation I was a listener. I sympathised with and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind; I was dependent on none and related to none. ‘The path of my departure was free,’ and there was none to lament my annihilation. My person was hideous and my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them.

“The volume of Plutarch’s Lives which I possessed contained the histories of the first founders of the ancient republics. This book had a far different effect upon me from the Sorrows of Werter. I learned from Werter’s imaginations despondency and gloom, but Plutarch taught me high thoughts; he elevated me above the wretched sphere of my own reflections, to admire and love the heroes of past ages. Many things I read surpassed my understanding and experience. I had a very confused knowledge of kingdoms, wide extents of country, mighty rivers, and boundless seas. But I was perfectly unacquainted with towns and large assemblages of men. The cottage of my protectors had been the only school in which I had studied human nature, but this book developed new and mightier scenes of action. I read of men concerned in public affairs, governing or massacring their species. I felt the greatest ardour for virtue rise within me, and abhorrence for vice, as far as I understood the signification of those terms, relative as they were, as I applied them, to pleasure and pain alone. Induced by these feelings, I was of course led to admire peaceable lawgivers, Numa, Solon, and Lycurgus, in preference to Romulus and Theseus. The patriarchal lives of my protectors caused these impressions to take a firm hold on my mind; perhaps, if my first introduction to humanity had been made by a young soldier, burning for glory and slaughter, I should have been imbued with different sensations.

“But Paradise Lost excited different and far deeper emotions. I read it, as I had read the other volumes which had fallen into my hands, as a true history. It moved every feeling of wonder and awe that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting. I often referred the several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature, but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition, for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me.

“Another circumstance strengthened and confirmed these feelings. Soon after my arrival in the hovel I discovered some papers in the pocket of the dress which I had taken from your laboratory. At first I had neglected them, but now that I was able to decipher the characters in which they were written, I began to study them with diligence. It was your journal of the four months that preceded
my creation. You minutely described in these papers every step you took in the progress of your work; this history was mingled with accounts of domestic occurrences. You doubtless recollect these papers. Here they are. Everything is related in them which bears reference to my accursed origin; the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produced it is set in view; the minutest description of my odious and loathsome person is given, in language which painted your own horrors and rendered mine indelible. I sickened as I read. 'Hateful day when I received life!' I exclaimed in agony. 'Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow devils, to admire and encourage him, but I am solitary and abhorred.'

"These were the reflections of my hours of despondency and solitude; but when I contemplated the virtues of the cottagers, their amiable and benevolent dispositions, I persuaded myself that when they should become acquainted with my admiration of their virtues they would compassionateme and overlook my personal deformity. Could they turn from their door one, however monstrous, who solicited their compassion and friendship? I resolved, at least, not to despair, but in every way to fit myself for an interview with them which would decide my fate. I postponed this attempt for some months longer, for the importance attached to its success inspired me with a dread lest I should fail. Besides, I found that my understanding improved so much with every day's experience that I was unwilling to commence this undertaking until a few more months should have added to my sagacity.

"Several changes, in the meantime, took place in the cottage. The presence of Safie diffused happiness among its inhabitants, and I also found that a greater degree of plenty reigned there. Felix and Agatha spent more time in amusement and conversation, and were assisted in their labours by servants. They did not appear rich, but they were contented and happy; their feelings were serene and peaceful, while mine became every day more tumultuous. Increase of knowledge only discovered to me more clearly what a wretched outcast I was. I cherished hope, it is true, but it vanished when I beheld my person reflected in water or my shadow in the moonshine, even as that frail image and that inconstant shade.

"I endeavoured to crush these fears and to fortify myself for the trial which in a few months I resolved to undergo; and sometimes I allowed my thoughts, unchecked by reason, to ramble in the fields of Paradise, and dared to fancy amiable and lovely creatures sympathising with my feelings and cheering my gloom; their angelic countenances breathed smiles of consolation. But it was all a dream; no Eve soothed my sorrows nor shared my thoughts; I was alone. I remembered Adam's supplication to his Creator. But where was mine? He had abandoned me, and in the bitterness of my heart I cursed him.

"Autumn passed thus. I saw, with surprise and grief, the leaves decay and fall, and nature again assume the barren and bleak appearance it had worn when I first beheld the woods and the lovely moon. Yet I did not heed the bleakness of the weather; I was better fitted by my conformation for the endurance of cold than heat. But my chief delights were the sight of the flowers, the birds, and all the gay apparel of summer; when those deserted me, I turned with more attention towards the cottagers. Their happiness was not decreased by the absence of summer. They loved and sympathised with one another; and their joys, depending on each other, were not interrupted by the casualties that took place around them. The more I saw of them, the greater became my desire to claim their protection and kindness; my heart yearned to be known and loved by these amiable creatures; to see their sweet looks directed towards me with affection was the utmost limit of my ambition. I dared not think that they would turn them from me with disdain and horror. The poor that stopped at their door were never driven away. I asked, it is true, for greater treasures than a little food or rest: I required kindness and sympathy; but I did not believe myself utterly unworthy of it.

"The winter advanced, and an entire revolution of the seasons had taken place since I awoke into life. My attention at this time was solely directed towards my plan of introducing myself into the
cottage of my protectors. I revolved many projects, but that on which I finally fixed was to enter the
dwelling when the blind old man should be alone. I had sagacity enough to discover that the unnatural
hideousness of my person was the chief object of horror with those who had formerly beheld me. My
voice, although harsh, had nothing terrible in it; I thought, therefore, that if in the absence of his
children I could gain the good will and mediation of the old De Lacey, I might by his means be
tolerated by my younger protectors.

“One day, when the sun shone on the red leaves that strewed the ground and diffused
cheerfulness, although it denied warmth, Safie, Agatha, and Felix departed on a long country walk,
and the old man, at his own desire, was left alone in the cottage. When his children had departed, he
took up his guitar and played several mournful but sweet airs, more sweet and mournful than I had
ever heard him play before. At first his countenance was illuminated with pleasure, but as he
continued, thoughtfulness and sadness succeeded; at length, laying aside the instrument, he sat
absorbed in reflection.

“My heart beat quick; this was the hour and moment of trial, which would decide my hopes or
realise my fears. The servants were gone to a neighbouring fair. All was silent in and around the
cottage; it was an excellent opportunity; yet, when I proceeded to execute my plan, my limbs failed
me and I sank to the ground. Again I rose, and exerting all the firmness of which I was master,
removed the planks which I had placed before my hovel to conceal my retreat. The fresh air revived
me, and with renewed determination I approached the door of their cottage.

“I knocked. ‘Who is there?’ said the old man. ‘Come in.’

“I entered. ‘Pardon this intrusion,’ said I; ‘I am a traveller in want of a little rest; you would greatly
oblige me if you would allow me to remain a few minutes before the fire.’

“‘Enter,’ said De Lacey, ‘and I will try in what manner I can to relieve your wants; but,
unfortunately, my children are from home, and as I am blind, I am afraid I shall find it difficult to
procure food for you.’

“‘Do not trouble yourself, my kind host; I have food; it is warmth and rest only that I need.’

“I sat down, and a silence ensued. I knew that every minute was precious to me, yet I remained
irresolute in what manner to commence the interview, when the old man addressed me.

‘By your language, stranger, I suppose you are my countryman; are you French?’

“‘No; but I was educated by a French family and understand that language only. I am now going
to claim the protection of some friends, whom I sincerely love, and of whose favour I have some
hopes.’

“‘Are they Germans?’

“‘No, they are French. But let us change the subject. I am an unfortunate and deserted creature, I
look around and I have no relation or friend upon earth. These amiable people to whom I go have
never seen me and know little of me. I am full of fears, for if I fail there, I am an outcast in the world
for ever.’

“‘Do not despair. To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate, but the hearts of men, when
unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity. Rely, therefore, on
your hopes; and if these friends are good and amiable, do not despair.’

“‘They are kind—they are the most excellent creatures in the world; but, unfortunately, they are
prejudiced against me. I have good dispositions; my life has been hitherto harmless and in some
degree beneficial; but a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and
kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster.’

“‘That is indeed unfortunate; but if you are really blameless, cannot you undeceive them?’
"I am about to undertake that task; and it is on that account that I feel so many overwhelming terrors. I tenderly love these friends; I have, unknown to them, been for many months in the habits of daily kindness towards them; but they believe that I wish to injure them, and it is that prejudice which I wish to overcome."

"Where do these friends reside?"

"Near this spot."

"The old man paused and then continued, 'If you will unreservedly confide to me the particulars of your tale, I perhaps may be of use in undeceiving them. I am blind and cannot judge of your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere. I am poor and an exile, but it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature.'

"'Excellent man! I thank you and accept your generous offer. You raise me from the dust by this kindness; and I trust that, by your aid, I shall not be driven from the society and sympathy of your fellow creatures.'

"'Heaven forbid! Even if you were really criminal, for that can only drive you to desperation, and not instigate you to virtue. I also am unfortunate; I and my family have been condemned, although innocent; judge, therefore, if I do not feel for your misfortunes.'

"'How can I thank you, my best and only benefactor? From your lips first have I heard the voice of kindness directed towards me; I shall be for ever grateful; and your present humanity assures me of success with those friends whom I am on the point of meeting.'

"'May I know the names and residence of those friends?'

"I paused. This, I thought, was the moment of decision, which was to rob me of or bestow happiness on me for ever. I struggled vainly for firmness sufficient to answer him, but the effort destroyed all my remaining strength; I sank on the chair and sobbed aloud. At that moment I heard the steps of my younger protectors. I had not a moment to lose, but seizing the hand of the old man, I cried, 'Now is the time! Save and protect me! You and your family are the friends whom I seek. Do not you desert me in the hour of trial!'

"'Great God!' exclaimed the old man. 'Who are you?'

"At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and Agatha entered. Who can describe their horror and consternation on beholding me? Agatha fainted, and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung, in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope. But my heart sank within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained. I saw him on the point of repeating his blow, when, overcome by pain and anguish, I quitted the cottage, and in the general tumult escaped unperceived to my hovel."

Chapter 16

"Cursed, cursed creator! Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not extinguish the spark of existence which you had so wantonly bestowed? I know not; despair had not yet taken possession of me; my feelings were those of rage and revenge. I could with pleasure have destroyed the cottage and its inhabitants and have glutted myself with their shrieks and misery.

"When night came I quitted my retreat and wandered in the wood; and now, no longer restrained by the fear of discovery, I gave vent to my anguish in fearful
howlings. I was like a wild beast that had broken the toils, destroying the objects that obstructed me and ranging through the wood with a stag-like swiftness. Oh! What a miserable night I passed! The cold stars shone in mockery, and the bare trees waved their branches above me; now and then the sweet voice of a bird burst forth amidst the universal stillness. All, save I, were at rest or in enjoyment; I, like the arch-fiend, bore a hell within me, and finding myself unsympathised with, wished to tear up the trees, spread havoc and destruction around me, and then to have sat down and enjoyed the ruin.

“But this was a luxury of sensation that could not endure; I became fatigued with excess of bodily exertion and sank on the damp grass in the sick impotence of despair. There was none among the myriads of men that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness towards my enemies? No; from that moment I declared everlasting war against the species, and more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery.

“The sun rose; I heard the voices of men and knew that it was impossible to return to my retreat during that day. Accordingly I hid myself in some thick underwood, determining to devote the ensuing hours to reflection on my situation.

“The pleasant sunshine and the pure air of day restored me to some degree of tranquillity; and when I considered what had passed at the cottage, I could not help believing that I had been too hasty in my conclusions. I had certainly acted imprudently. It was apparent that my conversation had interested the father in my behalf, and I was a fool in having exposed my person to the horror of his children. I ought to have familiarised the old De Lacey to me, and by degrees to have discovered myself to the rest of his family, when they should have been prepared for my approach. But I did not believe my errors to be irretrievable, and after much consideration I resolved to return to the cottage, seek the old man, and by my representations win him to my party.

“These thoughts calmed me, and in the afternoon I sank into a profound sleep; but the fever of my blood did not allow me to be visited by peaceful dreams. The horrible scene of the preceding day was for ever acting before my eyes; the females were flying and the enraged Felix tearing me from his father's feet. I awoke exhausted, and finding that it was already night, I crept forth from my hiding-place, and went in search of food.

“When my hunger was appeased, I directed my steps towards the well-known path that conducted to the cottage. All there was at peace. I crept into my hovel and remained in silent expectation of the accustomed hour when the family arose. That hour passed, the sun mounted high in the heavens, but the cottagers did not appear. I trembled violently, apprehending some dreadful misfortune. The inside
of the cottage was dark, and I heard no motion; I cannot describe the agony of this suspense.

"Presently two countrymen passed by, but pausing near the cottage, they entered into conversation, using violent gesticulations; but I did not understand what they said, as they spoke the language of the country, which differed from that of my protectors. Soon after, however, Felix approached with another man; I was surprised, as I knew that he had not quitted the cottage that morning, and waited anxiously to discover from his discourse the meaning of these unusual appearances.

"‘Do you consider,’ said his companion to him, ‘that you will be obliged to pay three months’ rent and to lose the produce of your garden? I do not wish to take any unfair advantage, and I beg therefore that you will take some days to consider of your determination.’

"‘It is utterly useless,’ replied Felix; ‘we can never again inhabit your cottage. The life of my father is in the greatest danger, owing to the dreadful circumstance that I have related. My wife and my sister will never recover from their horror. I entreat you not to reason with me any more. Take possession of your tenement and let me fly from this place.’

"Felix trembled violently as he said this. He and his companion entered the cottage, in which they remained for a few minutes, and then departed. I never saw any of the family of De Lacey more.

"I continued for the remainder of the day in my hovel in a state of utter and stupid despair. My protectors had departed and had broken the only link that held me to the world. For the first time the feelings of revenge and hatred filled my bosom, and I did not strive to control them, but allowing myself to be borne away by the stream, I bent my mind towards injury and death. When I thought of my friends, of the mild voice of De Lacey, the gentle eyes of Agatha, and the exquisite beauty of the Arabian, these thoughts vanished and a gush of tears somewhat soothed me. But again when I reflected that they had spurned and deserted me, anger returned, a rage of anger, and unable to injure anything human, I turned my fury towards inanimate objects. As night advanced, I placed a variety of combustibles around the cottage, and after having destroyed every vestige of cultivation in the garden, I waited with forced impatience until the moon had sunk to commence my operations.

"As the night advanced, a fierce wind arose from the woods and quickly dispersed the clouds that had loitered in the heavens; the blast tore along like a mighty avalanche and produced a kind of insanity in my spirits that burst all bounds of reason and reflection. I lighted the dry branch of a tree and danced with fury around the devoted cottage, my eyes still fixed on the western horizon, the
edge of which the moon nearly touched. A part of its orb was at length hid, and I waved my brand; it sank, and with a loud scream I fired the straw, and heath, and bushes, which I had collected. The wind fanned the fire, and the cottage was quickly enveloped by the flames, which clung to it and licked it with their forked and destroying tongues.

“As soon as I was convinced that no assistance could save any part of the habitation, I quitted the scene and sought for refuge in the woods.

“And now, with the world before me, whither should I bend my steps? I resolved to fly far from the scene of my misfortunes; but to me, hated and despised, every country must be equally horrible. At length the thought of you crossed my mind. I learned from your papers that you were my father, my creator; and to whom could I apply with more fitness than to him who had given me life? Among the lessons that Felix had bestowed upon Safie, geography had not been omitted; I had learned from these the relative situations of the different countries of the earth. You had mentioned Geneva as the name of your native town, and towards this place I resolved to proceed.

“But how was I to direct myself? I knew that I must travel in a southwesterly direction to reach my destination, but the sun was my only guide. I did not know the names of the towns that I was to pass through, nor could I ask information from a single human being; but I did not despair. From you only could I hope for succour, although towards you I felt no sentiment but that of hatred. Unfeeling, heartless creator! You had endowed me with perceptions and passions and then cast me abroad an object for the scorn and horror of mankind. But on you only had I any claim for pity and redress, and from you I determined to seek that justice which I vainly attempted to gain from any other being that wore the human form.

“My travels were long and the sufferings I endured intense. It was late in autumn when I quitted the district where I had so long resided. I travelled only at night, fearful of encountering the visage of a human being. Nature decayed around me, and the sun became heatless; rain and snow poured around me; mighty rivers were frozen; the surface of the earth was hard and chill, and bare, and I found no shelter. Oh, earth! How often did I imprecate curses on the cause of my being! The mildness of my nature had fled, and all within me was turned to gall and bitterness. The nearer I approached to your habitation, the more deeply did I feel the spirit of revenge enkindled in my heart. Snow fell, and the waters were hardened, but I rested not. A few incidents now and then directed me, and I possessed a map of the country; but I often wandered wide from my path. The agony of my feelings allowed me no respite; no incident occurred from which my rage and misery could not extract its food; but a circumstance that happened when I arrived on the confines of Switzerland, when the sun had recovered its warmth and the earth
again began to look green, confirmed in an especial manner the bitterness and horror of my feelings.

"I generally rested during the day and travelled only when I was secured by night from the view of man. One morning, however, finding that my path lay through a deep wood, I ventured to continue my journey after the sun had risen; the day, which was one of the first of spring, cheered even me by the loveliness of its sunshine and the balminess of the air. I felt emotions of gentleness and pleasure, that had long appeared dead, revive within me. Half surprised by the novelty of these sensations, I allowed myself to be borne away by them, and forgetting my solitude and deformity, dared to be happy. Soft tears again bedewed my cheeks, and I even raised my humid eyes with thankfulness towards the blessed sun, which bestowed such joy upon me.

"I continued to wind among the paths of the wood, until I came to its boundary, which was skirted by a deep and rapid river, into which many of the trees bent their branches, now budding with the fresh spring. Here I paused, not exactly knowing what path to pursue, when I heard the sound of voices, that induced me to conceal myself under the shade of a cypress. I was scarcely hid when a young girl came running towards the spot where I was concealed, laughing, as if she ran from someone in sport. She continued her course along the precipitous sides of the river, when suddenly her foot slipped, and she fell into the rapid stream. I rushed from my hiding-place and with extreme labour, from the force of the current, saved her and dragged her to shore. She was senseless, and I endeavoured by every means in my power to restore animation, when I was suddenly interrupted by the approach of a rustic, who was probably the person from whom she had playfully fled. On seeing me, he darted towards me, and tearing the girl from my arms, hastened towards the deeper parts of the wood. I followed speedily, I hardly knew why; but when the man saw me draw near, he aimed a gun, which he carried, at my body and fired. I sank to the ground, and my injurer, with increased swiftness, escaped into the wood.

"This was then the reward of my benevolence! I had saved a human being from destruction, and as a recompense I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound which shattered the flesh and bone. The feelings of kindness and gentleness which I had entertained but a few moments before gave place to hellish rage and gnashing of teeth. Inflamed by pain, I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind. But the agony of my wound overcame me; my pulses paused, and I fainted.

"For some weeks I led a miserable life in the woods, endeavouring to cure the wound which I had received. The ball had entered my shoulder, and I knew not whether it had remained there or passed through; at any rate I had no means of extracting it. My sufferings were augmented also by the oppressive sense of the
injustice and ingratitude of their infliction. My daily vows rose for revenge—a deep and deadly revenge, such as would alone compensate for the outrages and anguish I had endured.

"After some weeks my wound healed, and I continued my journey. The labours I endured were no longer to be alleviated by the bright sun or gentle breezes of spring; all joy was but a mockery which insulted my desolate state and made me feel more painfully that I was not made for the enjoyment of pleasure.

"But my toils now drew near a close, and in two months from this time I reached the environs of Geneva.

"It was evening when I arrived, and I retired to a hiding-place among the fields that surround it to meditate in what manner I should apply to you. I was oppressed by fatigue and hunger and far too unhappy to enjoy the gentle breezes of evening or the prospect of the sun setting behind the stupendous mountains of Jura.

"At this time a slight sleep relieved me from the pain of reflection, which was disturbed by the approach of a beautiful child, who came running into the recess I had chosen, with all the sportiveness of infancy. Suddenly, as I gazed on him, an idea seized me that this little creature was unprejudiced and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity. If, therefore, I could seize him and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth.

"Urged by this impulse, I seized on the boy as he passed and drew him towards me. As soon as he beheld my form, he placed his hands before his eyes and uttered a shrill scream; I drew his hand forcibly from his face and said, 'Child, what is the meaning of this? I do not intend to hurt you; listen to me.'

"He struggled violently. 'Let me go,' he cried; 'monster! Ugly wretch! You wish to eat me and tear me to pieces. You are an ogre. Let me go, or I will tell my papa.'

"'Boy, you will never see your father again; you must come with me.'

"'Hideous monster! Let me go. My papa is a syndic—he is M. Frankenstein—he will punish you. You dare not keep me.'

"'Frankenstein! you belong then to my enemy—to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim.'

"The child still struggled and loaded me with epithets which carried despair to my heart; I grasped his throat to silence him, and in a moment he lay dead at my feet.

"I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph; clapping my hands, I exclaimed, 'I too can create desolation; my enemy is not invulnerable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him.'
“As I fixed my eyes on the child, I saw something glittering on his breast. I took it; it was a portrait of a most lovely woman. In spite of my malignity, it softened and attracted me. For a few moments I gazed with delight on her dark eyes, fringed by deep lashes, and her lovely lips; but presently my rage returned; I remembered that I was for ever deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow and that she whose resemblance I contemplated would, in regarding me, have changed that air of divine benignity to one expressive of disgust and affright.

“Can you wonder that such thoughts transported me with rage? I only wonder that at that moment, instead of venting my sensations in exclamations and agony, I did not rush among mankind and perish in the attempt to destroy them.

“While I was overcome by these feelings, I left the spot where I had committed the murder, and seeking a more secluded hiding-place, I entered a barn which had appeared to me to be empty. A woman was sleeping on some straw; she was young, not indeed so beautiful as her whose portrait I held, but of an agreeable aspect and blooming in the loveliness of youth and health. Here, I thought, is one of those whose joy-imparting smiles are bestowed on all but me. And then I bent over her and whispered, ‘Awake, fairest, thy lover is near—he who would give his life but to obtain one look of affection from thine eyes; my beloved, awake!’

“The sleeper stirred; a thrill of terror ran through me. Should she indeed awake, and see me, and curse me, and denounce the murderer? Thus would she assuredly act if her darkened eyes opened and she beheld me. The thought was madness; it stirred the fiend within me—not I, but she, shall suffer; the murder I have committed because I am for ever robbed of all that she could give me, she shall atone. The crime had its source in her; be hers the punishment! Thanks to the lessons of Felix and the sanguinary laws of man, I had learned now to work mischief. I bent over her and placed the portrait securely in one of the folds of her dress. She moved again, and I fled.

“For some days I haunted the spot where these scenes had taken place, sometimes wishing to see you, sometimes resolved to quit the world and its miseries for ever. At length I wandered towards these mountains, and have ranged through their immense recesses, consumed by a burning passion which you alone can gratify. We may not part until you have promised to comply with my requisition. I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species and have the same defects. This being you must create.”
Women Writers – Novels - 225

Harriet Beecher Stowe / Uncle Tom’s Cabin

CHAPTER I
In Which the
Reader Is
Introduced to a
Man of Humanity

Late in the afternoon of a chilly day in February, two gentlemen were sitting alone over their wine, in a well-furnished dining parlor, in the town of P——, in Kentucky. There were no servants present, and the gentlemen, with chairs closely approaching, seemed to be discussing some subject with great earnestness.

For convenience sake, we have said, hitherto, two gentlemen. One of the parties, however, when critically examined, did not seem, strictly speaking, to come under the species. He was a short, thick-set man, with coarse, commonplace features, and that swaggering air of pretension which marks a low man who is trying to elbow his way upward in the world. He was much over-dressed, in a gaudy vest of many colors, a blue neckerchief, bedropped gayly with yellow spots, and arranged with a flaunting tie, quite in keeping with the general air of the man. His hands, large and coarse, were plentifully bedecked with rings; and he wore a heavy gold watch-chain, with a bundle of seals of portentous size, and a great variety of colors, attached to it,—which, in the ardor of conversation, he was in the habit of flourishing and jingling with evident satisfaction. His conversation was in free and easy defiance of Murray’s Grammar,* and was garnished at convenient intervals with various profane expressions, which not even the desire to be graphic in our account shall induce us to transcribe.

* English Grammar (1795), by Lindley Murray (1745-1826), the most authoritative American grammarian of his day.

His companion, Mr. Shelby, had the appearance of a gentleman; and the arrangements of the house, and the general air of the housekeeping, indicated easy, and even opulent circumstances. As we before stated, the two were in the midst of an earnest conversation.

“That is the way I should arrange the matter,” said Mr. Shelby.

“I can’t make trade that way—I positively can’t, Mr. Shelby,” said the other, holding up a glass of wine between his eye and the light.

“Why, the fact is, Haley, Tom is an uncommon fellow; he is certainly worth that sum anywhere,—steady, honest, capable, manages my whole farm like a clock.”

“You mean honest, as niggers go,” said Haley, helping himself to a glass of brandy.

“No; I mean, really, Tom is a good, steady, sensible, pious fellow. He got religion at a camp-meeting, four years ago; and I believe he really did get it. I’ve trusted him, since then, with everything I have,—money, house, horses,—and let him come and go round the country; and I always found him true and square in everything.”

“Some folks don’t believe there is pious niggers Shelby,” said Haley, with a candid flourish of his hand, “but I do. I had a fellow, now, in this yer last lot I took to Orleans—‘t was as good as a meetin, now, really, to hear that critter pray; and he was quite gentle and quiet like. He fetched me a good sum, too, for I bought him cheap of a man that was ‘bliged to sell out; so I realized six hundred on him. Yes, I consider religion a valeyable thing in a nigger, when it’s the genuine article, and no mistake.”

“Well, Tom’s got the real article, if ever a fellow had,” rejoined the other. “Why, last fall, I let him go to Cincinnati alone, to do business for me, and bring home five hundred dollars. ‘Tom,’ says I to him, ‘I trust you, because I think you’re a Christian—I know you wouldn’t cheat.’ Tom comes back, sure
enough; I knew he would. Some low fellows, they say, said to him—Tom, why don't you make tracks for Canada?' ‘Ah, master trusted me, and I couldn't,'—they told me about it. I am sorry to part with Tom, I must say. You ought to let him cover the whole balance of the debt; and you would, Haley, if you had any conscience.”

“Well, I've got just as much conscience as any man in business can afford to keep,—just a little, you know, to swear by, as 't were,” said the trader, jocularly; “and, then, I'm ready to do anything in reason to 'blige friends; but this yer, you see, is a leetle too hard on a fellow—a leetle too hard.” The trader sighed contemplatively, and poured out some more brandy.

“Well, then, Haley, how will you trade?” said Mr. Shelby, after an uneasy interval of silence.

“Well, haven't you a boy or gal that you could throw in with Tom?”

“Hum!—none that I could well spare; to tel the truth, it's only hard necessity makes me willing to sell at all. I don't like parting with any of my hands, that's a fact.”

Here the door opened, and a small quadroon boy, between four and five years of age, entered the room. There was something in his appearance remarkably beautiful and engaging. His black hair, fine as floss silk, hung in glossy curls about his round, dimpled face, while a pair of large dark eyes, full of fire and softness, looked out from beneath the rich, long lashes, as he peered curiously into the apartment. A gay robe of scarlet and yellow plaid, carefully made and neatly fitted, set off to advantage the dark and rich style of his beauty; and a certain comic air of assurance, blended with bashfulness, showed that he had been not unused to being petted and noticed by his master.

“Hulloa, Jim Crow!” said Mr. Shelby, whistling, and snapping a bunch of raisins towards him, “pick that up, now!”

The child scampered, with all his little strength, after the prize, while his master laughed.

“Come here, Jim Crow,” said he. The child came up, and the master patted the curly head, and chucked him under the chin.

“Now, Jim, show this gentleman how you can dance and sing.” The boy commenced one of those wild, grotesque songs common among the negroes, in a rich, clear voice, accompanying his singing with many comic evolutions of the hands, feet, and whole body, all in perfect time to the music.

“Bravo!” said Haley, throwing him a quarter of an orange.

“Now, Jim, walk like old Uncle Cudjoe, when he has the rheumatism,” said his master.

Instantly the flexible limbs of the child assumed the appearance of deformity and distortion, as, with his back humped up, and his master's stick in his hand, he hobbled about the room, his childish face drawn into a doleful pucker, and spitting from right to left, in imitation of an old man.

Both gentlemen laughed uproariously.

“Now, Jim,” said his master, “show us how old Elder Robbins leads the psalm.” The boy drew his chubby face down to a formidable length, and commenced toning a psalm tune through his nose, with imperturbable gravity.

“Hurrah! bravo! what a young 'un!” said Haley; “that chap's a case, I'll promise. Tell you what,” said he, suddenly clapping his hand on Mr. Shelby's shoulder, “fling in that chap, and I'll settle the business—I will. Come, now, if that ain't doing the thing up about the rightest!”

At this moment, the door was pushed gently open, and a young quadroon woman, apparently about twenty-five, entered the room.

There needed only a glance from the child to her, to identify her as its mother. There was the same rich, full, dark eye, with its long lashes; the same ripples of silky black hair. The brown of her complexion gave way on the cheek to a perceptible flush, which deepened as she saw the gaze of the strange man fixed upon her in bold and undisguised admiration. Her dress was of the neatest possible fit, and set off to advantage her finely moulded shape;—a delicately formed hand and a trim foot and
ankle were items of appearance that did not escape the quick eye of the trader, well used to run up at a glance the points of a fine female article.

“Well, Eliza?” said her master, as she stopped and looked hesitatingly at him.

“I was looking for Harry, please, sir;” and the boy bounded toward her, showing his spoils, which he had gathered in the skirt of his robe.

“Well, take him away then,” said Mr. Shelby; and hastily she withdrew, carrying the child on her arm.

“By Jupiter,” said the trader, turning to him in admiration, “there’s an article, now! You might make your fortune on that ar gal in Orleans, any day. I’ve seen over a thousand, in my day, paid down for gals not a bit handsomer.”

“I don’t want to make my fortune on her,” said Mr. Shelby, dryly; and, seeking to turn the conversation, he uncorked a bottle of fresh wine, and asked his companion’s opinion of it.

“Capital, sir,—first chop!” said the trader; then turning, and slapping his hand familiarly on Shelby’s shoulder, he added—

“Come, how will you trade about the gal?—what shall I say for her—what’ll you take?”

“Mr. Haley, she is not to be sold,” said Shelby. “My wife would not part with her for her weight in gold.”

“Ay, ay! women always say such things, cause they ha’nt no sort of calculation. Just show ’em how many watches, feathers, and trinkets, one’s weight in gold would buy, and that alters the case, I reckon.”

“I tell you, Haley, this must not be spoken of; I say no, and I mean no,” said Shelby, decidedly.

“Well, you’ll let me have the boy, though,” said the trader; “you must own I’ve come down pretty handsomely for him.”

“What on earth can you want with the child?” said Shelby.

“Why, I’ve got a friend that’s going into this yer branch of the business—wants to buy up handsome boys to raise for the market. Fancy articles entirely—sell for waiters, and so on, to rich ‘uns, that can pay for handsome ‘uns. It sets off one of yer great places—a real handsome boy to open door, wait, and tend. They fetch a good sum; and this little devil is such a comical, musical concern, he’s just the article!’

“I would rather not sell him,” said Mr. Shelby, thoughtfully; “the fact is, sir, I’m a humane man, and I hate to take the boy from his mother, sir.”

“O, you do?—La! yes—something of that ar natur. I understand, perfectly. It is mighty onpleasant getting on with women, sometimes, I al’ays hates these yer screechin’, screamin’ times. They are mighty onpleasant; but, as I manages business, I generally avoids ’em, sir. Now, what if you get the girl off for a day, or a week, or so; then the thing’s done quietly,—all over before she comes home. Your wife might get her some ear-rings, or a new gown, or some such truck, to make up with her.”

“I’m afraid not.”

“Lor bless ye, yes! These critters ain’t like white folks, you know; they gets over things, only manage right. Now, they say,” said Haley, assuming a candid and confidential air, “that this kind o’ trade is hardening to the feelings; but I never found it so. Fact is, I never could do things up the way some fellers manage the business. I’ve seen ’em as would pull a woman’s child out of her arms, and set him up to sell, and she screechin’ like mad all the time;—very bad policy—damages the article—makes ’em quite unfit for service sometimes. I knew a real handsome gal once, in Orleans, as was entirely ruined by this sort o’ handling. The fellow that was trading for her didn’t want her baby; and she was one of your real high sort, when her blood was up. I tell you, she squeezed up her child in her arms, and talked, and went on real awful. It kinder makes my blood run cold to think of ’t; and when they
carried off the child, and locked her up, she jest went ravin’ mad, and died in a week. Clear waste, sir, of a thousand dollars, just for want of management,—there’s where ‘t is. It’s always best to do the humane thing, sir; that’s been my experience.” And the trader leaned back in his chair, and folded his arm, with an air of virtuous decision, apparently considering himself a second Wilberforce.

The subject appeared to interest the gentleman deeply; for while Mr. Shelby was thoughtfully peeling an orange, Haley broke out afresh, with becoming diffidence, but as if actually driven by the force of truth to say a few words more.

“It don’t look well, now, for a feller to be praisin’ himself; but I say it jest because it’s the truth. I believe I’m reckoned to bring in about the finest droves of niggers that is brought in,—at least, I’ve been told so; if I have once, I reckon I have a hundred times,—all in good case,—fat and likely, and I lose as few as any man in the business. And I lays it all to my management, sir; and humanity, sir, I may say, is the great pillar of my management.”

Mr. Shelby did not know what to say, and so he said, “Indeed!”

“Now, I’ve been laughed at for my notions, sir, and I’ve been talked to. They ain’t pop’lar, and they ain’t common; but I stuck to ’em, sir; I’ve stuck to ’em, and realized well on ’em; yes, sir, they have paid their passage, I may say,” and the trader laughed at his joke.

There was something so piquant and original in these elucidations of humanity, that Mr. Shelby could not help laughing in company. Perhaps you laugh too, dear reader; but you know humanity comes out in a variety of strange forms now-a-days, and there is no end to the odd things that humane people will say and do.

Mr. Shelby’s laugh encouraged the trader to proceed.

“It’s strange, now, but I never could beat this into people’s heads. Now, there was Tom Loker, my old partner, down in Natchez; he was a clever fellow, Tom was, only the very devil with niggers,—on principle ’t was, you see, for a better hearted feller never broke bread; ’t was his system, sir. I used to talk to Tom. ‘Why, Tom,’ I used to say, ‘when your gals takes on and cry, what’s the use of crackin’ on ’em over the head, and knockin’ on ’em round? It’s ridiculous,’ says I, ‘and don’t do no sort o’ good. Why, I don’t see no harm in their cryin’,’ says I; ’it’s natur,’ says I, ‘and if natur can’t blow off one way, it will another. Besides, Tom,’ says I, ‘it jest spiles your gals; they get sickly, and down in the mouth; and sometimes they gets ugly,—particular yallow gals do,—and it’s the devil and all gettin’ on ’em broke in. Now,’ says I, ‘why can’t you kinder coax ’em up, and speak ’em fair? Depend on it, Tom, a little humanity, thrown in along, goes a heap further than all your jawin’ and crackin’; and it pays better,’ says I, ‘depend on ’t.’ But Tom couldn’t get the hang on ’t; and he spiled so many for me, that I had to break off with him, tho’ he was a good-hearted fellow, and as fair a business hand as is goin’.”

“And do you find your ways of managing do the business better than Tom’s?” said Mr. Shelby.

“Why, yes, sir, I may say so. You see, when I any ways can, I takes a leetle care about the onpleasant parts, like selling young uns and that,—get the gals out of the way—out of sight, out of mind, you know,—and when it’s clean done, and can’t be helped, they naturally gets used to it. ’Tan’t, you know, as if it was white folks, that’s brought up in the way of spectin’ to keep their children and wives, and all that. Niggers, you know, that’s fetched up properly, ha’n’t no kind of spectations of no kind; so all these things comes easier.”

“I’m afraid mine are not properly brought up, then,” said Mr. Shelby.

“S’pose not; you Kentucky folks spile your niggers. You mean well by ’em, but ’tan’t no real kindness, arter all. Now, a nigger, you see, what’s got to be hacked and tumbled round the world, and sold to Tom, and Dick, and the Lord knows who, ’tan’t no kindness to be givin’ on him notions and expectations, and bringin’ on him up too well, for the rough and tumble comes all the harder on him arter. Now, I venture to say, your niggers would be quite chop-fallen in a place where some of your
planted plantation niggers would be singing and whooping like all possessed. Every man, you know, Mr. Shelby, naturally thinks well of his own ways; and I think I treat niggers just about as well as it’s ever worth while to treat ’em.”

“It’s a happy thing to be satisfied,” said Mr. Shelby, with a slight shrug, and some perceptible feelings of a disagreeable nature.

“Well,” said Haley, after they had both silently picked their nuts for a season, “what do you say?”

“I’ll think the matter over, and talk with my wife,” said Mr. Shelby. “Meantime, Haley, if you want the matter carried on in the quiet way you speak of, you’d best not let your business in this neighborhood be known. It will get out among my boys, and it will not be a particularly quiet business getting away any of my fellows, if they know it, I’ll promise you.”

“Oh! certainly, by all means, mum! of course. But I’ll tell you. I’m in a devil of a hurry, and shall want to know, as soon as possible, what I may depend on,” said he, rising and putting on his overcoat.

“Well, call up this evening, between six and seven, and you shall have my answer,” said Mr. Shelby, and the trader bowed himself out of the apartment.

“I’d like to have been able to kick the fellow down the steps,” said he to himself, as he saw the door fairly closed, “with his impudent assurance; but he knows how much he has me at advantage. If anybody had ever said to me that I should sell Tom down south to one of those rascally traders, I should have said, ‘Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?’ And now it must come, for aught I see. And Eliza’s child, too! I know that I shall have some fuss with wife about that; and, for that matter, about Tom, too. So much for being in debt,—heigho! The fellow sees his advantage, and means to push it.”

Perhaps the mildest form of the system of slavery is to be seen in the State of Kentucky. The general prevalence of agricultural pursuits of a quiet and gradual nature, not requiring those periodic seasons of hurry and pressure that are called for in the business of more southern districts, makes the task of the negro a more healthful and reasonable one; while the master, content with a more gradual style of acquisition, has not those temptations to hardheartedness which always overcome frail human nature when the prospect of sudden and rapid gain is weighed in the balance, with no heavier counterpoise than the interests of the helpless and unprotected.

Whoever visits some estates there, and witnesses the good-humored indulgence of some masters and mistresses, and the affectionate loyalty of some slaves, might be tempted to dream the oft-fabled poetic legend of a patriarchal institution, and all that; but over and above the scene there broods a portentous shadow—the shadow of law. So long as the law considers all these human beings, with beating hearts and living affections, only as so many things belonging to a master,—so long as the failure, or misfortune, or imprudence, or death of the kindest owner, may cause them any day to exchange a life of kind protection and indulgence for one of hopeless misery and toil,—so long it is impossible to make anything beautiful or desirable in the best regulated administration of slavery.

Mr. Shelby was a fair average kind of man, good-natured and kindly, and disposed to easy indulgence of those around him, and there had never been a lack of anything which might contribute to the physical comfort of the negroes on his estate. He had, however, speculated largely and quite loosely; had involved himself deeply, and his notes to a large amount had come into the hands of Haley; and this small piece of information is the key to the preceding conversation.

Now, it had so happened that, in approaching the door, Eliza had caught enough of the conversation to know that a trader was making offers to her master for somebody.

She would gladly have stopped at the door to listen, as she came out; but her mistress just then calling, she was obliged to hasten away.
Still she thought she heard the trader make an offer for her boy;—could she be mistaken? Her heart swelled and throbbed, and she involuntarily strained him so tight that the little fellow looked up into her face in astonishment.

“Eliza, girl, what ails you today?” said her mistress, when Eliza had upset the wash-pitcher, knocked down the workstand, and finally was abstractedly offering her mistress a long nightgown in place of the silk dress she had ordered her to bring from the wardrobe.

Eliza started. “O, missis!” she said, raising her eyes; then, bursting into tears, she sat down in a chair, and began sobbing.

“Why, Eliza child, what ails you?” said her mistress.

“O! missis, missis,” said Eliza, “there’s been a trader talking with master in the parlor! I heard him.”

“Well, silly child, suppose there has.”

“O, missis, do you suppose mas’r would sell my Harry?” And the poor creature threw herself into a chair, and sobbed convulsively.

“Sell him! No, you foolish girl! You know your master never deals with those southern traders, and never means to sell any of his servants, as long as they behave well. Why, you silly child, who do you think would want to buy your Harry? Do you think all the world are set on him as you are, you goosie? Come, cheer up, and hook my dress. There now, put my back hair up in that pretty braid you learnt the other day, and don’t go listening at doors any more.”

“Well, but, missis, you never would give your consent—to—to—”

“Nonsense, child! to be sure, I shouldn’t. What do you talk so for? I would as soon have one of my own children sold. But really, Eliza, you are getting altogether too proud of that little fellow. A man can’t put his nose into the door, but you think he must be coming to buy him.”

Reassured by her mistress’ confident tone, Eliza proceeded nimbly and adroitly with her toilet, laughing at her own fears, as she proceeded.

Mrs. Shelby was a woman of high class, both intellectually and morally. To that natural magnanimity and generosity of mind which one often marks as characteristic of the women of Kentucky, she added high moral and religious sensibility and principle, carried out with great energy and ability into practical results. Her husband, who made no professions to any particular religious character, nevertheless revered and respected the consistency of hers, and stood, perhaps, a little in awe of her opinion. Certain it was that he gave her unlimited scope in all her benevolent efforts for the comfort, instruction, and improvement of her servants, though he never took any decided part in them himself. In fact, if not exactly a believer in the doctrine of the efficiency of the extra good works of saints, he really seemed somehow or other to fancy that his wife had piety and benevolence enough for two—to indulge a shadowy expectation of getting into heaven through her superabundance of qualities to which he made no particular pretension.

The heaviest load on his mind, after his conversation with the trader, lay in the foreseen necessity of breaking to his wife the arrangement contemplated,—meeting the importunities and opposition which he knew she should have reason to encounter.

Mrs. Shelby, being entirely ignorant of her husband’s embarrassments, and knowing only the general kindliness of his temper, had been quite sincere in the entire incredulity with which she had met Eliza’s suspicions. In fact, she dismissed the matter from her mind, without a second thought; and being occupied in preparations for an evening visit, it passed out of her thoughts entirely.
CHAPTER II
The Mother

Eliza had been brought up by her mistress, from girlhood, as a petted and indulged favorite.

The traveller in the south must often have remarked that peculiar air of refinement, that softness of voice and manner, which seems in many cases to be a particular gift to the quadroon and mulatto women. These natural graces in the quadroon are often united with beauty of the most dazzling kind, and in almost every case with a personal appearance prepossessing and agreeable. Eliza, such as we have described her, is not a fancy sketch, but taken from remembrance, as we saw her, years ago, in Kentucky. Safe under the protecting care of her mistress, Eliza had reached maturity without those temptations which make beauty so fatal an inheritance to a slave. She had been married to a bright and talented young mulatto man, who was a slave on a neighboring estate, and bore the name of George Harris.

This young man had been hired out by his master to work in a bagging factory, where his adroitness and ingenuity caused him to be considered the first hand in the place. He had invented a machine for the cleaning of the hemp, which, considering the education and circumstances of the inventor, displayed quite as much mechanical genius as Whitney's cotton-gin.*

* A machine of this description was really the invention of a young colored man in Kentucky. [Mrs. Stowe's note.]

He was possessed of a handsome person and pleasing manners, and was a general favorite in the factory. Nevertheless, as this young man was in the eye of the law not a man, but a thing, all these superior qualifications were subject to the control of a vulgar, narrow-minded, tyrannical master. This same gentleman, having heard of the fame of George's invention, took a ride over to the factory, to see what this intelligent chattel had been about. He was received with great enthusiasm by the employer, who congratulated him on possessing so valuable a slave.

He was waited upon over the factory, shown the machinery by George, who, in high spirits, talked so fluently, held himself so erect, looked so handsome and manly, that his master began to feel an uneasy consciousness of inferiority. What business had his slave to be marching round the country, inventing machines, and holding up his head among gentlemen? He'd soon put a stop to it. He'd take him back, and put him to hoeing and digging, and "see if he'd step about so smart." Accordingly, the manufacturer and all hands concerned were astounded when he suddenly demanded George's wages, and announced his intention of taking him home.

"But, Mr. Harris," remonstrated the manufacturer, "isn't this rather sudden?"

"What if it is?—isn't the man mine?"

"We would be willing, sir, to increase the rate of compensation."

"No object at all, sir. I don't need to hire any of my hands out, unless I've a mind to."

"But, sir, he seems peculiarly adapted to this business."

"Dare say he may be; never was much adapted to anything that I set him about, I'll be bound."

"But only think of his inventing this machine," interposed one of the workmen, rather unluckily.

"O yes! a machine for saving work, is it? He'd invent that, I'll be bound; let a nigger alone for that, any time. They are all labor-saving machines themselves, every one of 'em. No, he shall tramp!"

George had stood like one transfixed, at hearing his doom thus suddenly pronounced by a power that he knew was irresistible. He folded his arms, tightly pressed in his lips, but a whole volcano of bitter feelings burned in his bosom, and sent streams of fire through his veins. He breathed short, and his large dark eyes flashed like live coals; and he might have broken out into some dangerous ebullition, had not the kindly manufacturer touched him on the arm, and said, in a low tone,

"Give way, George; go with him for the present. We'll try to help you, yet."
The tyrant observed the whisper, and conjectured its import, though he could not hear what was said; and he inwardly strengthened himself in his determination to keep the power he possessed over his victim.

George was taken home, and put to the meanest drudgery of the farm. He had been able to repress every disrespectful word; but the flashing eye, the gloomy and troubled brow, were part of a natural language that could not be repressed,—indubitable signs, which showed too plainly that the man could not become a thing.

It was during the happy period of his employment in the factory that George had seen and married his wife. During that period,—being much trusted and favored by his employer,—he had free liberty to come and go at discretion. The marriage was highly approved of by Mrs. Shelby, who, with a little womanly complacency in match-making, felt pleased to unite her handsome favorite with one of her own class who seemed in every way suited to her; and so they were married in her mistress’ great parlor, and her mistress herself adorned the bride’s beautiful hair with orange-blossoms, and threw over it the bridal veil, which certainly could scarce have rested on a fairer head; and there was no lack of white gloves, and cake and wine,—of admiring guests to praise the bride’s beauty, and her mistress’ indulgence and liberality. For a year or two Eliza saw her husband frequently, and there was nothing to interrupt their happiness, except the loss of two infant children, to whom she was passionately attached, and whom she mourned with a grief so intense as to call for gentle remonstrance from her mistress, who sought, with maternal anxiety, to direct her naturally passionate feelings within the bounds of reason and religion.

After the birth of little Harry, however, she had gradually become tranquillized and settled; and every bleeding tie and throbbing nerve, once more entwined with that little life, seemed to become sound and healthful, and Eliza was a happy woman up to the time that her husband was rudely torn from his kind employer, and brought under the iron sway of his legal owner.

The manufacturer, true to his word, visited Mr. Harris a week or two after George had been taken away, when, as he hoped, the heat of the occasion had passed away, and tried every possible inducement to lead him to restore him to his former employment.

“You needn’t trouble yourself to talk any longer,” said he, doggedly; “I know my own business, sir.”

“I did not presume to interfere with it, sir. I only thought that you might think it for your interest to let your man to us on the terms proposed.”

“Oh, I understand the matter well enough. I saw your winking and whispering, the day I took him out of the factory; but you don’t come it over me that way. It’s a free country, sir; the man’s mine, and I do what I please with him,—that’s it!”

And so fell George’s last hope;—nothing before him but a life of toil and drudgery, rendered more bitter by every little smarting vexation and indignity which tyrannical ingenuity could devise.

A very humane jurist once said, The worst use you can put a man to is to hang him. No; there is another use that a man can be put to that is WORSE!

CHAPTER III
The Husband and
Father

Mrs. Shelby had gone on her visit, and Eliza stood in the verandah, rather dejectedly looking after the retreating carriage, when a hand was laid on her shoulder. She turned, and a bright smile lighted up her fine eyes.
“George, is it you? How you frightened me! Well; I am so glad you ’s come! Missis is gone to spend the afternoon; so come into my little room, and we’ll have the time all to ourselves.”

Saying this, she drew him into a neat little apartment opening on the verandah, where she generally sat at her sewing, within call of her mistress.

“How glad I am!—why don’t you smile?—and look at Harry—how he grows.” The boy stood shyly regarding his father through his curls, holding close to the skirts of his mother’s dress. “Isn’t he beautiful?” said Eliza, lifting his long curls and kissing him.

“I wish he’d never been born!” said George, bitterly. “I wish I’d never been born myself!”

Surprised and frightened, Eliza sat down, leaned her head on her husband’s shoulder, and burst into tears.

“There now, Eliza, it’s too bad for me to make you feel so, poor girl!” said he, fondly; “it’s too bad: O, how I wish you never had seen me—you might have been happy!”

“George! George! how can you talk so? What dreadful thing has happened, or is going to happen? I’m sure we’ve been very happy, till lately.”

“So we have, dear,” said George. Then drawing his child on his knee, he gazed intently on his glorious dark eyes, and passed his hands through his long curls.

“Just like you, Eliza; and you are the handsomest woman I ever saw, and the best one I ever wish to see; but, oh, I wish I’d never seen you, nor you me!”

“O, George, how can you!”

“Yes, Eliza, it’s all misery, misery, misery! My life is bitter as wormwood; the very life is burning out of me. I’m a poor, miserable, forlorn drudge; I shall only drag you down with me, that’s all. What’s the use of our trying to do anything, trying to know anything, trying to be anything? What’s the use of living? I wish I was dead!”

“O, now, dear George, that is really wicked! I know how you feel about losing your place in the factory, and you have a hard master; but pray be patient, and perhaps something—”

“Patient!” said he, interrupting her; “haven’t I been patient? Did I say a word when he came and took me away, for no earthly reason, from the place where everybody was kind to me? I’d paid him truly every cent of my earnings,—and they all say I worked well.”

“Well, it is dreadful,” said Eliza; “but, after all, he is your master, you know.”

“My master! and who made him my master? That’s what I think of—what right has he to me? I’m a man as much as he is. I’m a better man than he is. I know more about business than he does; I am a better manager than he is; I can read better than he can; I can write a better hand,—and I’ve learned it all myself, and no thanks to him,—I’ve learned it in spite of him; and now what right has he to make a dray-horse of me?—to take me from things I can do, and do better than he can, and put me to work that any horse can do? He tries to do it; he says he’ll bring me down and humble me, and he puts me to just the hardest, meanest and dirtiest work, on purpose!”

“O, George! George! you frighten me! Why, I never heard you talk so; I’m afraid you’ll do something dreadful. I don’t wonder at your feelings, at all; but oh, do be careful—do, do—for my sake—for Harry’s!”

“I have been careful, and I have been patient, but it’s growing worse and worse; flesh and blood can’t bear it any longer;—every chance he can get to insult and torment me, he takes. I thought I could do my work well, and keep on quiet, and have some time to read and learn out of work hours; but the more he sees I can do, the more he loads on. He says that though I don’t say anything, he sees I’ve got the devil in me, and he means to bring it out; and one of these days it will come out in a way that he won’t like, or I’m mistaken!”

“O dear! what shall we do?” said Eliza, mournfully.
“It was only yesterday,” said George, “as I was busy loading stones into a cart, that young Mas’r Tom stood there, slashing his whip so near the horse that the creature was frightened. I asked him to stop, as pleasant as I could,—he just kept right on. I begged him again, and then he turned on me, and began striking me. I held his hand, and then he screamed and kicked and ran to his father, and told him that I was fighting him. He came in a rage, and said he’d teach me who was my master; and he tied me to a tree, and cut switches for young master, and told him that he might whip me till he was tired;—and he did do it! If I don’t make him remember it, some time!” and the brow of the young man grew dark, and his eyes burned with an expression that made his young wife tremble. “Who made this man my master? That’s what I want to know!” he said.

“Well,” said Eliza, mournfully, “I always thought that I must obey my master and mistress, or I couldn’t be a Christian.”

“There is some sense in it, in your case; they have brought you up like a child, fed you, clothed you, indulged you, and taught you, so that you have a good education; that is some reason why they should claim you. But I have been kicked and cuffed and sworn at, and at the best only let alone; and what do I owe? I’ve paid for all my keeping a hundred times over. I won’t bear it. No, I won’t!” he said, clenching his hand with a fierce frown.

Eliza trembled, and was silent. She had never seen her husband in this mood before; and her gentle system of ethics seemed to bend like a reed in the surges of such passions.

“You know poor little Carlo, that you gave me,” added George; “the creature has been about all the comfort that I’ve had. He has slept with me nights, and followed me around days, and kind o’ looked at me as if he understood how I felt. Well, the other day I was just feeding him with a few old scraps I picked up by the kitchen door, and Mas’r came along, and said I was feeding him up at his expense, and that he couldn’t afford to have every nigger keeping his dog, and ordered me to tie a stone to his neck and throw him in the pond.”

“O, George, you didn’t do it!”

“Do it? not I!—but he did. Mas’r and Tom pelted the poor drowning creature with stones. Poor thing! he looked at me so mournful, as if he wondered why I didn’t save him. I had to take a flogging because I wouldn’t do it myself. I don’t care. Mas’r will find out that I’m one that whipping won’t tame. My day will come yet, if he don’t look out.”

“What are you going to do? O, George, don’t do anything wicked; if you only trust in God, and try to do right, he’ll deliver you.”

“I ain’t a Christian like you, Eliza; my heart’s full of bitterness; I can’t trust in God. Why does he let things be so?”

“O, George, we must have faith. Mistress says that when all things go wrong to us, we must believe that God is doing the very best.”

“That’s easy to say for people that are sitting on their sofas and riding in their carriages; but let ’em be where I am, I guess it would come some harder. I wish I could be good; but my heart burns, and can’t be reconciled, anyhow. You couldn’t in my place,—you can’t now, if I tell you all I’ve got to say. You don’t know the whole yet.”

“What can be coming now?”

“Well, lately Mas’r has been saying that he was a fool to let me marry off the place; that he hates Mr. Shelby and all his tribe, because they are proud, and hold their heads up above him, and that I’ve got proud notions from you; and he says he won’t let me come here any more, and that I shall take a wife and settle down on his place. At first he only scolded and grumbled these things; but yesterday he told me that I should take Mina for a wife, and settle down in a cabin with her, or he would sell me down river.”
“Why—but you were married to me, by the minister, as much as if you’d been a white man!” said Eliza, simply.

“Don’t you know a slave can’t be married? There is no law in this country for that; I can’t hold you for my wife, if he chooses to part us. That’s why I wish I’d never seen you,—why I wish I’d never been born; it would have been better for us both,—it would have been better for this poor child if he had never been born. All this may happen to him yet!”

“O, but master is so kind!”

“Yes, but who knows?—he may die—and then he may be sold to nobody knows who. What pleasure is it that he is handsome, and smart, and bright? I tell you, Eliza, that a sword will pierce through your soul for every good and pleasant thing your child is or has; it will make him worth too much for you to keep.”

The words smote heavily on Eliza’s heart; the vision of the trader came before her eyes, and, as if some one had struck her a deadly blow, she turned pale and gasped for breath. She looked nervously out on the verandah, where the boy, tired of the grave conversation, had retired, and where he was riding triumphantly up and down on Mr. Shelby’s walking-stick. She would have spoken to tell her husband her fears, but checked herself.

“No, no,—he has enough to bear, poor fellow!” she thought. “No, I won’t tell him; besides, it an’t true; Missis never deceives us.”

“So, Eliza, my girl,” said the husband, mournfully, “bear up, now; and good-by, for I’m going.”

“Going, George! Going where?”

“To Canada,” said he, straightening himself up; “and when I’m there, I’ll buy you; that’s all the hope that’s left us. You have a kind master, that won’t refuse to sell you. I’ll buy you and the boy;—God helping me, I will!”

“O, dreadful! if you should be taken?”

“I won’t be taken, Eliza; I’ll die first! I’ll be free, or I’ll die!”

“You won’t kill yourself!”

“No need of that. They will kill me, fast enough; they never will get me down the river alive!”

“O, George, for my sake, do be careful! Don’t do anything wicked; don’t lay hands on yourself, or anybody else! You are tempted too much—too much; but don’t—go you must—but go carefully, prudently; pray God to help you.”

“Well, then, Eliza, hear my plan. Mas’r took it into his head to send me right by here, with a note to Mr. Symmes, that lives a mile past. I believe he expected I should come here to tell you what I have. It would please him, if he thought it would aggravate ‘Shelby’s folks,’ as he calls ’em. I’m going home quite resigned, you understand, as if all was over. I’ve got some preparations made,—and there are those that will help me; and, in the course of a week or so, I shall be among the missing, some day. Pray for me, Eliza; perhaps the good Lord will hear you.”

“O, pray yourself, George, and go trusting in him; then you won’t do anything wicked.”

“Well, now, good-by,” said George, holding Eliza’s hands, and gazing into her eyes, without moving. They stood silent; then there were last words, and sobs, and bitter weeping,—such parting as those may make whose hope to meet again is as the spider’s web,—and the husband and wife were parted.
CHAPTER V
Showing the
Feelings of Living
Property on
Changing Owners

Mr. and Mrs. Shelby had retired to their apartment for the night. He was lounging in a large easy-chair, looking over some letters that had come in the afternoon mail, and she was standing before her mirror, brushing out the complicated braids and curls in which Eliza had arranged her hair; for, noticing her pale cheeks and haggard eyes, she had excused her attendance that night, and ordered her to bed. The employment, naturally enough, suggested her conversation with the girl in the morning; and turning to her husband, she said, carelessly,

“By the by, Arthur, who was that low-bred fellow that you lugged in to our dinner-table today?”

“Haley is his name,” said Shelby, turning himself rather uneasily in his chair, and continuing with his eyes fixed on a letter.

“Haley! Who is he, and what may be his business here, pray?”

“Well, he’s a man that I transacted some business with, last time I was at Natchez,” said Mr. Shelby.

“And he presumed on it to make himself quite at home, and call and dine here, ay?”

“Why, I invited him; I had some accounts with him,” said Shelby.

“Is he a negro-trader?” said Mrs. Shelby, noticing a certain embarrassment in her husband’s manner.

“Why, my dear, what put that into your head?” said Shelby, looking up.

“Nothing,—only Eliza came in here, after dinner, in a great worry, crying and taking on, and said you were talking with a trader, and that she heard him make an offer for her boy—the ridiculous little goose!”

“She did, hey?” said Mr. Shelby, returning to his paper, which he seemed for a few moments quite intent upon, not perceiving that he was holding it bottom upwards.

“It will have to come out,” said he, mentally; “as well now as ever.”

“I told Eliza,” said Mrs. Shelby, as she continued brushing her hair, “that she was a little fool for her pains, and that you never had anything to do with that sort of persons. Of course, I knew you never meant to sell any of our people,—least of all, to such a fellow.”

“Well, Emily,” said her husband, “so I have always felt and said; but the fact is that my business lies so that I cannot get on without. I shall have to sell some of my hands.”

“To that creature? Impossible! Mr. Shelby, you cannot be serious.”

“I’m sorry to say that I am,” said Mr. Shelby. “I’ve agreed to sell Tom.”

“What! our Tom—that good, faithful creature!—been your faithful servant from a boy! O, Mr. Shelby!—and you have promised him his freedom, too,—you and I have spoken to him a hundred times of it. Well, I can believe anything now,—I can believe now that you could sell little Harry, poor Eliza’s only child!” said Mrs. Shelby, in a tone between grief and indignation.

“Well, since you must know all, it is so. I have agreed to sell Tom and Harry both; and I don’t know why I am to be rated, as if I were a monster, for doing what every one does every day.”

“But why, of all others, choose these?” said Mrs. Shelby. “Why sell them, of all on the place, if you must sell at all?”

“Because they will bring the highest sum of any,—that’s why. I could choose another, if you say so. The fellow made me a high bid on Eliza, if that would suit you any better,” said Mr. Shelby.
“The wretch!” said Mrs. Shelby, vehemently.

“Well, I didn't listen to it, a moment,—out of regard to your feelings, I wouldn't;—so give me some credit.”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Shelby, recollecting herself, “forgive me. I have been hasty. I was surprised, and entirely unprepared for this;—but surely you will allow me to intercede for these poor creatures. Tom is a noble-hearted, faithful fellow, if he is black. I do believe, Mr. Shelby, that if he were put to it, he would lay down his life for you.”

“I know it,—I dare say;—but what's the use of all this?—I can't help myself.”

“Why not make a pecuniary sacrifice? I'm willing to bear my part of the inconvenience. O, Mr. Shelby, I have tried—tried most faithfully, as a Christian woman should—to do my duty to these poor, simple, dependent creatures. I have cared for them, instructed them, watched over them, and know all their little cares and joys, for years; and how can I ever hold up my head again among them, if, for the sake of a little paltry gain, we sell such a faithful, excellent, confiding creature as poor Tom, and tear from him in a moment all we have taught him to love and value? I have taught them the duties of the family, of parent and child, and husband and wife; and how can I bear to have this open acknowledgment that we care for no tie, no duty, no relation, however sacred, compared with money? I have talked with Eliza about her boy—her duty to him as a Christian mother, to watch over him, pray for him, and bring him up in a Christian way; and now what can I say, if you tear him away, and sell him, soul and body, to a profane, unprincipled man, just to save a little money? I have told her that one soul is worth more than all the money in the world; and how will she believe me when she sees us turn round and sell her child?—sell him, perhaps, to certain ruin of body and soul!”

“I'm sorry you feel so about it,—indeed I am,” said Mr. Shelby; “and I respect your feelings, too, though I don't pretend to share them to their full extent; but I tell you now, solemnly, it's of no use—I can't help myself. I didn't mean to tell you this Emily; but, in plain words, there is no choice between selling these two and selling everything. Either they must go, or all must. Haley has come into possession of a mortgage, which, if I don't clear off with him directly, will take everything before it. I've raked, and scraped, and borrowed, and all but begged,—and the price of these two was needed to make up the balance, and I had to give them up. Haley fancied the child; he agreed to settle the matter that way, and no other. I was in his power, and had to do it. If you feel so to have them sold, would it be any better to have all sold?”

Mrs. Shelby stood like one stricken. Finally, turning to her toilet, she rested her face in her hands, and gave a sort of groan.

“This is God's curse on slavery!—a bitter, bitter, most accursed thing!—a curse to the master and a curse to the slave! I was a fool to think I could make anything good out of such a deadly evil. It is a sin to hold a slave under laws like ours,—I always felt it was,—I always thought so when I was a girl,—I thought so still more after I joined the church; but I thought I could gild it over,—I thought, by kindness, and care, and instruction, I could make the condition of mine better than freedom—fool that I was!”

“Why, wife, you are getting to be an abolitionist, quite.”

“Abolitionist! if they knew all I know about slavery, they might talk! We don't need them to tell us; you know I never thought that slavery was right—never felt willing to own slaves.”

“Well, therein you differ from many wise and pious men,” said Mr. Shelby. “You remember Mr. B.'s sermon, the other Sunday?”

“I don't want to hear such sermons; I never wish to hear Mr. B. in our church again. Ministers can't help the evil, perhaps,—can't cure it, any more than we can,—but defend it!—it always went against my common sense. And I think you didn't think much of that sermon, either.”
“Well,” said Shelby, “I must say these ministers sometimes carry matters further than we poor sinners would exactly dare to do. We men of the world must wink pretty hard at various things, and get used to a deal that isn’t the exact thing. But we don’t quite fancy, when women and ministers come out broad and square, and go beyond us in matters of either modesty or morals, that’s a fact. But now, my dear, I trust you see the necessity of the thing, and you see that I have done the very best that circumstances would allow.”

“O yes, yes!” said Mrs. Shelby, hurriedly and abstractedly fingering her gold watch,—“I haven’t any jewelry of any amount,” she added, thoughtfully; “but would not this watch do something?—it was an expensive one, when it was bought. If I could only at least save Eliza’s child, I would sacrifice anything I have.”

“I’m sorry, very sorry, Emily,” said Mr. Shelby, “I’m sorry this takes hold of you so; but it will do no good. The fact is, Emily, the thing’s done; the bills of sale are already signed, and in Haley’s hands; and you must be thankful it is no worse. That man has had it in his power to ruin us all,—and now he is fairly off. If you knew the man as I do, you’d think that we had had a narrow escape.”

“Is he so hard, then?”

“Why, not a cruel man, exactly, but a man of leather,—a man alive to nothing but trade and profit,—cool, and unhesitating, and unrelenting, as death and the grave. He’d sell his own mother at a good percentage—not wishing the old woman any harm, either.”

“And this wretch owns that good, faithful Tom, and Eliza’s child!”

“Well, my dear, the fact is that this goes rather hard with me; it’s a thing I hate to think of. Haley wants to drive matters, and take possession tomorrow. I’m going to get out my horse bright and early, and be off. I can’t see Tom, that’s a fact; and you had better arrange a drive somewhere, and carry Eliza off. Let the thing be done when she is out of sight.”

“No, no,” said Mrs. Shelby; “I’ll be in no sense accomplice or help in this cruel business. I’ll go and see poor old Tom, God help him, in his distress! They shall see, at any rate, that their mistress can feel for and with them. As to Eliza, I dare not think about it. The Lord forgive us! What have we done, that this cruel necessity should come on us?”

There was one listener to this conversation whom Mr. and Mrs. Shelby little suspected.

Communicating with their apartment was a large closet, opening by a door into the outer passage. When Mrs. Shelby had dismissed Eliza for the night, her feverish and excited mind had suggested the idea of this closet; and she had hidden herself there, and, with her ear pressed close against the crack of the door, had lost not a word of the conversation.

When the voices died into silence, she rose and crept stealthily away. Pale, shivering, with rigid features and compressed lips, she looked an entirely altered being from the soft and timid creature she had been hitherto. She moved cautiously along the entry, paused one moment at her mistress’ door, and raised her hands in mute appeal to Heaven, and then turned and glided into her own room. It was a quiet, neat apartment, on the same floor with her mistress. There was a pleasant sunny window, where she had often sat singing at her sewing; there a little case of books, and various little fancy articles, ranged by them, the gifts of Christmas holidays; there was her simple wardrobe in the closet and in the drawers:—here was, in short, her home; and, on the whole, a happy one it had been to her. But there, on the bed, lay her slumbering boy, his long curls falling negligently around his unconscious face, his rosy mouth half open, his little fat hands thrown out over the bedclothes, and a smile spread like a sunbeam over his whole face.

“Poor boy! poor fellow!” said Eliza; “they have sold you! but your mother will save you yet!”

No tear dropped over that pillow; in such straits as these, the heart has no tears to give,—it drops only blood, bleeding itself away in silence. She took a piece of paper and a pencil, and wrote, hastily,
“O, Missis! dear Missis! don’t think me ungrateful,—don’t think hard of me, any way,—I heard all you and master said tonight. I am going to try to save my boy—you will not blame me! God bless and reward you for all your kindness!”

Hastily folding and directing this, she went to a drawer and made up a little package of clothing for her boy, which she tied with a handkerchief firmly round her waist; and, so fond is a mother’s remembrance, that, even in the terrors of that hour, she did not forget to put in the little package one or two of his favorite toys, reserving a gayly painted parrot to amuse him, when she should be called on to awaken him. It was some trouble to arouse the little sleeper; but, after some effort, he sat up, and was playing with his bird, while his mother was putting on her bonnet and shawl.

“Where are you going, mother?” said he, as she drew near the bed, with his little coat and cap.

His mother drew near, and looked so earnestly into his eyes, that he at once divined that something unusual was the matter.

“Hush, Harry,” she said; “mustn’t speak loud, or they will hear us. A wicked man was coming to take little Harry away from his mother, and carry him 'way off in the dark; but mother won’t let him—she’s going to put on her little boy’s cap and coat, and run off with him, so the ugly man can’t catch him.”

Saying these words, she had tied and buttoned on the child’s simple outfit, and, taking him in her arms, she whispered to him to be very still; and, opening a door in her room which led into the outer verandah, she glided noiselessly out.

It was a sparkling, frosty, starlight night, and the mother wrapped the shawl close round her child, as, perfectly quiet with vague terror, he clung round her neck.

Old Bruno, a great Newfoundland, who slept at the end of the porch, rose, with a low growl, as she came near. She gently spoke his name, and the animal, an old pet and playmate of hers, instantly, wagging his tail, prepared to follow her, though apparently revolving much, in this simple dog’s head, what such an indiscreet midnight promenade might mean. Some dim ideas of imprudence or impropriety in the measure seemed to embarrass him considerably; for he often stopped, as Eliza glided forward, and looked wistfully, first at her and then at the house, and then, as if reassured by reflection, he pattered along after her again. A few minutes brought them to the window of Uncle Tom’s cottage, and Eliza stopping, tapped lightly on the window-pane.

The prayer-meeting at Uncle Tom’s had, in the order of hymn-singing, been protracted to a very late hour; and, as Uncle Tom had indulged himself in a few lengthy solos afterwards, the consequence was, that, although it was now between twelve and one o’clock, he and his worthy helpmeet were not yet asleep.

“Good Lord! what’s that?” said Aunt Chloe, starting up and hastily drawing the curtain. “My sakes alive, if it an’t Lizy! Get on your clothes, old man, quick!—there’s old Bruno, too, a pawin round; what on airth! I’m gwine to open the door.”

And suiting the action to the word, the door flew open, and the light of the tallow candle, which Tom had hastily lighted, fell on the haggard face and dark, wild eyes of the fugitive.

“Lord bless you!—I’m skeered to look at ye, Lizy! Are ye tuck sick, or what’s come over ye?”

“I’m running away—Uncle Tom and Aunt Chloe—carrying off my child—Master sold him!”

“Sold him?” echoed both, lifting up their hands in dismay.

“Yes, sold him!” said Eliza, firmly; “I crept into the closet by Mistress’ door tonight, and I heard Master tell Missis that he had sold my Harry, and you, Uncle Tom, both, to a trader; and that he was going off this morning on his horse, and that the man was to take possession today.”
Tom had stood, during this speech, with his hands raised, and his eyes dilated, like a man in a dream. Slowly and gradually, as its meaning came over him, he collapsed, rather than seated himself, on his old chair, and sunk his head down upon his knees.

“The good Lord have pity on us!” said Aunt Chloe. “O! it don’t seem as if it was true! What has he done, that Mas’r should sell him?”

“He hasn’t done anything,—it isn’t for that. Master don’t want to sell, and Missis she’s always good. I heard her plead and beg for us; but he told her ‘t was no use; that he was in this man’s debt, and that this man had got the power over him; and that if he didn’t pay him off clear, it would end in his having to sell the place and all the people, and move off. Yes, I heard him say there was no choice between selling these two and selling all, the man was driving him so hard. Master said he was sorry; but oh, Missis—you ought to have heard her talk! If she an’t a Christian and an angel, there never was one. I’m a wicked girl to leave her so; but, then, I can’t help it. She said, herself, one soul was worth more than the world; and this boy has a soul, and if I let him be carried off, who knows what’ll become of it? It must be right: but, if it an’t right, the Lord forgive me, for I can’t help doing it!”

“Well, old man!” said Aunt Chloe, “why don’t you go, too? Will you wait to be toted down river, where they kill niggers with hard work and starving? I’d a heap rather die than go there, any day! There’s time for ye,—be off with Lizy,—you’ve got a pass to come and go any time. Come, bustle up, and I’ll get your things together.”

Tom slowly raised his head, and looked sorrowfully but quietly around, and said,

“No, no—I an’t going. Let Eliza go—it’s her right! I wouldn’t be the one to say no—’tan’t in natur for her to stay; but you heard what she said! If I must be sold, or all the people on the place, and everything go to rack, why, let me be sold. I s’pose I can bar it as well as any on ’em,” he added, while something like a sob and a sigh shook his broad, rough chest convulsively. “Mas’r always found me on the spot—he always will. I never have broke trust, nor used my pass no ways contrary to my word, and I never will. It’s better for me alone to go, than to break up the place and sell all. Mas’r an’t to blame, Chloe, and he’ll take care of you and the poor—”

Here he turned to the rough trundle bed full of little woolly heads, and broke fairly down. He leaned over the back of the chair, and covered his face with his large hands. Sobs, heavy, hoarse and loud, shook the chair, and great tears fell through his fingers on the floor; just such tears, sir, as you dropped into the coffin where lay your first-born son; such tears, woman, as you shed when you heard the cries of your dying babe. For, sir, he was a man,—and you are but another man. And, woman, though dressed in silk and jewels, you are but a woman, and, in life’s great straits and mighty griefs, ye feel but one sorrow!

“And now,” said Eliza, as she stood in the door, “I saw my husband only this afternoon, and I little knew then what was to come. They have pushed him to the very last standing place, and he told me, today, that he was going to run away. Do try, if you can, to get word to him. Tell him how I went, and why I went; and tell him I’m going to try and find Canada. You must give my love to him, and tell him, if I never see him again,” she turned away, and stood with her back to them for a moment, and then added, in a husky voice, “tell him to be as good as he can, and try and meet me in the kingdom of heaven.”

“Call Bruno in there,” she added. “Shut the door on him, poor beast! He mustn’t go with me!”

A few last words and tears, a few simple adieus and blessings, and clasping her wondering and affrighted child in her arms, she glided noiselessly away.
CHAPTER VI

Discovery

Mr. and Mrs. Shelby, after their protracted discussion of the night before, did not readily sink to repose, and, in consequence, slept somewhat later than usual, the ensuing morning.

“I wonder what keeps Eliza,” said Mrs. Shelby, after giving her bell repeated pulls, to no purpose. Mr. Shelby was standing before his dressing-glass, sharpening his razor; and just then the door opened, and a colored boy entered, with his shaving-water.

“Andy,” said his mistress, “step to Eliza’s door, and tell her I have rung for her three times. Poor thing!” she added, to herself, with a sigh.

Andy soon returned, with eyes very wide in astonishment.

“Lor, Missis! Lizy’s drawers is all open, and her things all lying every which way; and I believe she’s just done clared out!”

The truth flashed upon Mr. Shelby and his wife at the same moment. He exclaimed, “Then she suspected it, and she’s off!”

“The Lord be thanked!” said Mrs. Shelby. “I trust she is.”

“Wife, you talk like a fool! Really, it will be something pretty awkward for me, if she is. Haley saw that I hesitated about selling this child, and he’ll think I connived at it, to get him out of the way. It touches my honor!” And Mr. Shelby left the room hastily.

There was great running and ejaculating, and opening and shutting of doors, and appearance of faces in all shades of color in different places, for about a quarter of an hour. One person only, who might have shed some light on the matter, was entirely silent, and that was the head cook, Aunt Chloe. Silently, and with a heavy cloud settled down over her once joyous face, she proceeded making out her breakfast biscuits, as if she heard and saw nothing of the excitement around her.

Very soon, about a dozen young imps were roosting, like so many crows, on the verandah railings, each one determined to be the first one to apprize the strange Mas’r of his ill luck.

“He’ll be rael mad, I’ll be bound,” said Andy.

“Won’t he swar!” said little black Jake.

“Yes, for he does swar,” said woolly-headed Mandy. “I hear him yesterday, at dinner. I hear all about it then, ’cause I got into the closet where Missis keeps the great jugs, and I hear every word.”

And Mandy, who had never in her life thought of the meaning of a word she had heard, more than a black cat, now took airs of superior wisdom, and strutted about, forgetting to state that, though actually coiled up among the jugs at the time specified, she had been fast asleep all the time.

When, at last, Haley appeared, booted and spurred, he was saluted with the bad tidings on every hand. The young imps on the verandah were not disappointed in their hope of hearing him “swar,” which he did with a fluency and fervency which delighted them all amazingly, as they ducked and dodged hither and thither, to be out of the reach of his riding-whip; and, all whooping off together, they tumbled, in a pile of immeasurable giggle, on the withered turf under the verandah, where they kicked up their heels and shouted to their full satisfaction.

“If I had the little devils!” muttered Haley, between his teeth.

“But you ha’nt got ’em, though!” said Andy, with a triumphant flourish, and making a string of indescribable mouths at the unfortunate trader’s back, when he was fairly beyond hearing.

“I say now, Shelby, this yer’ s a most extro’rmary business!” said Haley, as he abruptly entered the parlor. “It seems that gal’s off, with her young un.”

“Mr. Haley, Mrs. Shelby is present,” said Mr. Shelby.
"I beg pardon, ma'am," said Haley, bowing slightly, with a still lowering brow; "but still I say, as I said before, this yer's a sing'lar report. Is it true, sir?"

"Sir," said Mr. Shelby, "if you wish to communicate with me, you must observe something of the decorum of a gentleman. Andy, take Mr. Haley's hat and riding-whip. Take a seat, sir. Yes, sir; I regret to say that the young woman, excited by overhearing, or having reported to her, something of this business, has taken her child in the night, and made off."

"I did expect fair dealing in this matter, I confess," said Haley.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Shelby, turning sharply round upon him, "what am I to understand by that remark? If any man calls my honor in question, I have but one answer for him."

The trader cowered at this, and in a somewhat lower tone said that "it was plaguy hard on a fellow, that had made a fair bargain, to be gulled that way."

"Mr. Haley," said Mr. Shelby, "if I did not think you had some cause for disappointment, I should not have borne from you the rude and unceremonious style of your entrance into my parlor this morning. I say thus much, however, since appearances call for it, that I shall allow of no insinuations cast upon me, as if I were at all partner to any unfairness in this matter. Moreover, I shall feel bound to give you every assistance, in the use of horses, servants, &c., in the recovery of your property. So, in short, Haley," said he, suddenly dropping from the tone of dignified coolness to his ordinary one of easy frankness, "the best way for you is to keep good-natured and eat some breakfast, and we will then see what is to be done."

Mrs. Shelby now rose, and said her engagements would prevent her being at the breakfast-table that morning; and, deputing a very respectable mulatto woman to attend to the gentlemen's coffee at the side-board, she left the room.

"Old lady don't like your humble servant, over and above," said Haley, with an uneasy effort to be very familiar.

"I am not accustomed to hear my wife spoken of with such freedom," said Mr. Shelby, dryly.

"Beg pardon; of course, only a joke, you know," said Haley, forcing a laugh.

"Some jokes are less agreeable than others," rejoined Shelby.

"Devilish free, now I've signed those papers, cuss him!" muttered Haley to himself; "quite grand, since yesterday!"

Never did fall of any prime minister at court occasion wider surges of sensation than the report of Tom's fate among his compeers on the place. It was the topic in every mouth, everywhere; and nothing was done in the house or in the field, but to discuss its probable results. Eliza's flight—an unprecedented event on the place—was also a great accessory in stimulating the general excitement.

Black Sam, as he was commonly called, from his being about three shades blacker than any other son of ebony on the place, was revolving the matter profoundly in all its phases and bearings, with a comprehensiveness of vision and a strict lookout to his own personal well-being, that would have done credit to any white patriot in Washington.

"It's an ill wind dat blow nowhar,—dat ar a fact," said Sam, sententiously, giving an additional hoist to his pantaloons, and adroitly substituting a long nail in place of a missing suspender-button, with which effort of mechanical genius he seemed highly delighted.

"Yes, it's an ill wind blows nowhar," he repeated. "Now, dar, Tom's down—wal, course der's room for some nigger to be up—and why not dis nigger?—dat's de idee. Tom, a ridin' round de country—boots blacked—pass in his pocket—all grand as Cuffee—but who he? Now, why shouldn't Sam?—dat's what I want to know."

"Halloo, Sam—O Sam! Mas'r wants you to cotch Bill and Jerry," said Andy, cutting short Sam's soliloquy.
“High! what’s afoot now, young un?”

“Why, you don’t know, I s’pose, that Lizy’s cut stick, and clared out, with her young un?”

“You teach your granny!” said Sam, with infinite contempt; “knowed it a heap sight sooner than you did; this nigger an’t so green, now!”

“Well, anyhow, Mas’r wants Bill and Jerry geared right up; and you and I ’s to go with Mas’r Haley, to look arter her.”

“Good, now! dat’s de time o’ day!” said Sam. “It’s Sam dat’s called for in dese yer times. He’s de nigger. See if I don’t cotch her, now; Mas’r’ll see what Sam can do!”

“Ah! but, Sam,” said Andy, “you’d better think twice; for Missis don’t want her cotched, and she’ll be in yer wool.”

“High!” said Sam, opening his eyes. “How you know dat?”

“Heard her say so, my own self, dis blessed mornin’, when I bring in Mas’r’s shaving-water. She sent me to see why Lizy didn’t come to dress her; and when I telled her she was off, she jest ris up, and ses she, ’The Lord be praised;’ and Mas’r, he seemed rael mad, and ses he, ’Wife, you talk like a fool.’ But Lor! she’ll bring him to! I knows well enough how that’ll be,—it’s allers best to stand Missis’ side the fence, now I tell yer.”

Black Sam, upon this, scratched his woolly pate, which, if it did not contain very profound wisdom, still contained a great deal of a particular species much in demand among politicians of all complexions and countries, and vulgarly denominated “knowing which side the bread is buttered;” so, stopping with grave consideration, he again gave a hitch to his pantaloons, which was his regularly organized method of assisting his mental perplexities.

“Der an’t no saying’—never—’bout no kind o’ thing in dis yer world,” he said, at last. Sam spoke like a philosopher, emphasizing this—as if he had had a large experience in different sorts of worlds, and therefore had come to his conclusions advisedly.

“Now, sartin I’d a said that Missis would a scoured the varsal world after Lizy,” added Sam, thoughtfully.

“So she would,” said Andy; “but can’t ye see through a ladder, ye black nigger? Missis don’t want dis yer Mas’r Haley to get Lizy’s boy; dat’s de go!”

“High!” said Sam, with an indescribable intonation, known only to those who have heard it among the negroes.

“And I’ll tell yer more ’n all,” said Andy; “I specs you’d better be making tracks for dem hosses,—mighty sudden, too,—for I hear Missis’ quirin’ arter yer,—so you’ve stood foolin’ long enough.”

Sam, upon this, began to bestir himself in real earnest, and after a while appeared, bearing down gloriously towards the house, with Bill and Jerry in a full canter, and adroitly throwing himself off before they had any idea of stopping, he brought them up alongside of the horse-post like a tornado. Haley’s horse, which was a skittish young colt, winced, and bounced, and pulled hard at his halter.

“Ho, ho!” said Sam, “skeery, ar ye?” and his black visage lighted up with a curious, mischievous gleam. “I’ll fix ye now!” said he.

There was a large beech-tree overshadowing the place, and the small, sharp, triangular beech-nuts lay scattered thickly on the ground. With one of these in his fingers, Sam approached the colt, stroked and patted, and seemed apparently busy in soothing his agitation. On pretence of adjusting the saddle, he adroitly slipped under it the sharp little nut, in such a manner that the least weight brought upon the saddle would annoy the nervous sensibilities of the animal, without leaving any perceptible graze or wound.

“Dar!” he said, rolling his eyes with an approving grin; “me fix ’em!”
At this moment Mrs. Shelby appeared on the balcony, beckoning to him. Sam approached with as good a determination to pay court as did ever suitor after a vacant place at St. James’ or Washington.

“Why have you been loitering so, Sam? I sent Andy to tell you to hurry.”

“Lord bless you, Missis!” said Sam, “horses won’t be cotched all in a minit; they’d done clared out way down to the south pasture, and the Lord kno—

“Sam, how often must I tell you not to say ‘Lord bless you, and the Lord knows,’ and such things? It’s wicked.”

“O, Lord bless my soul! I done forgot, Missis! I won’t say nothing of de sort no more.”

“Why, Sam, you just have said it again.”

“Did I? O, Lord! I mean—I didn’t go fur to say it.”

“You must be careful, Sam.”

“Just let me get my breath, Missis, and I’ll start fair. I’ll be bery careful.”

“Well, Sam, you are to go with Mr. Haley, to show him the road, and help him. Be careful of the horses, Sam; you know Jerry was a little lame last week; don’t ride them too fast.”

Mrs. Shelby spoke the last words with a low voice, and strong emphasis.

“Let dis child alone for dat!” said Sam, rolling up his eyes with a volume of meaning. “Lord knows! High! Didn’t say dat!” said he, suddenly catching his breath, with a ludicrous flourish of apprehension, which made his mistress laugh, spite of herself. “Yes, Missis, I’ll look out for de hosses!”

“Now, Andy,” said Sam, returning to his stand under the beech-trees, “you see I wouldn’t be ‘t all surprised if dat ar gen’lman’s crittur should gib a fling, by and by, when he comes to be a gettin’ up. You know, Andy, critturs will do such things;” and therewith Sam poked Andy in the side, in a highly suggestive manner.

“High!” said Andy, with an air of instant appreciation.

“Yes, you see, Andy, Missis wants to make time,—dat ar’s clar to der most or’nary ‘bserver. I jis make a little for her. Now, you see, get all dese yer hosses loose, caperin’ permiscus round dis yer lot and down to de wood dar, and I spec Mas’r won’t be off in a hurry.”

Andy grinned.

“Yer see,” said Sam, “yer see, Andy, if any such thing should happen as that Mas’r Haley’s horse should begin to act contrary, and cut up, you and I jist lets go of our’n to help him, and we’ll help him—oh yes!” And Sam and Andy laid their heads back on their shoulders, and broke into a low, immoderate laugh, snapping their fingers and flourishing their heels with exquisite delight.

At this instant, Haley appeared on the verandah. Somewhat mollified by certain cups of very good coffee, he came out smiling and talking, in tolerably restored humor. Sam and Andy, clawing for certain fragmentary palm-leaves, which they were in the habit of considering as hats, flew to the horseposts, to be ready to “help Mas’r.”

Sam’s palm-leaf had been ingeniously disentangled from all pretensions to braid, as respects its brim; and the slivers starting apart, and standing upright, gave it a blazing air of freedom and defiance, quite equal to that of any Fejee chief; while the whole brim of Andy’s being departed bodily, he rapped the crown on his head with a dexterous thump, and looked about well pleased, as if to say, “Who says I haven’t got a hat?”

“Well, boys,” said Haley, “look alive now; we must lose no time.”

“Not a bit of him, Mas’r!” said Sam, putting Haley’s rein in his hand, and holding his stirrup, while Andy was untying the other two horses.

The instant Haley touched the saddle, the mettlesome creature bounded from the earth with a sudden spring, that threw his master sprawling, some feet off, on the soft, dry turf. Sam, with frantic
ejaculations, made a dive at the reins, but only succeeded in brushing the blazing palm-leaf afore-named into the horse’s eyes, which by no means tended to allay the confusion of his nerves. So, with great vehemence, he overturned Sam, and, giving two or three contemptuous snorts, flourished his heels vigorously in the air, and was soon prancing away towards the lower end of the lawn, followed by Bill and Jerry, whom Andy had not failed to set loose, according to contract, speeding them off with various direful ejaculations. And now ensued a miscellaneous scene of confusion. Sam and Andy ran and shouted,—dogs barked here and there,—and Mike, Mose, Mandy, Fanny, and all the smaller specimens on the place, both male and female, raced, clapped hands, whooped, and shouted, with outrageous officiousness and untiring zeal.

Haley’s horse, which was a white one, and very fleet and spirited, appeared to enter into the spirit of the scene with great gusto; and having for his coursing ground a lawn of nearly half a mile in extent, gently sloping down on every side into indefinite woodland, he appeared to take infinite delight in seeing how near he could allow his pursuers to approach him, and then, when within a hand’s breadth, whisk off with a start and a snort, like a mischievous beast as he was and career far down into some alley of the wood-lot. Nothing was further from Sam’s mind than to have any one of the troop taken until such season as should seem to him most befitting,—and the exertions that he made were certainly most heroic. Like the sword of Coeur De Lion, which always blazed in the front and thickest of the battle, Sam’s palm-leaf was to be seen everywhere when there was the least danger that a horse could be caught; there he would bear down full tilt, shouting, “Now for it! cotch him! cotch him!” in a way that would set everything to indiscriminate rout in a moment.

Haley ran up and down, and cursed and swore and stamped miscellaneously. Mr. Shelby in vain tried to shout directions from the balcony, and Mrs. Shelby from her chamber window alternately laughed and wondered,—not without some inkling of what lay at the bottom of all this confusion.

At last, about twelve o’clock, Sam appeared triumphant, mounted on Jerry, with Haley’s horse by his side, reeking with sweat, but with flashing eyes and dilated nostrils, showing that the spirit of freedom had not yet entirely subsided.

“He’s cotched!” he exclaimed, triumphantly. “If’t hadn’t been for me, they might a bust themselves, all on ’em; but I cotched him!”

“You!” growled Haley, in no amiable mood. “If it hadn’t been for you, this never would have happened.”

“Lord bless us, Mas’r,” said Sam, in a tone of the deepest concern, “and me that has been racin’ and chasin’ till the sweat jest pours off me!”

“Well, well!” said Haley, “you’ve lost me near three hours, with your cursed nonsense. Now let’s be off, and have no more fooling.”

“Why, Mas’r,” said Sam, in a deprecating tone, “I believe you mean to kill us all clar, horses and all. Here we are all just ready to drop down, and the critters all in a reek of sweat. Why, Mas’r won’t think of startin’ on now till arter dinner. Mas’r’s hoss wants rubben down; see how he splashed hisself; and Jerry limps too; don’t think Missis would be willin’ to have us start dis yer way, no how. Lord bless you, Mas’r, we can ketch up, if we do stop. Lizy never was no great of a walker.”

Mrs. Shelby, who, greatly to her amusement, had overheard this conversation from the verandah, now resolved to do her part. She came forward, and, courteously expressing her concern for Haley’s accident, pressed him to stay to dinner, saying that the cook should bring it on the table immediately.

Thus, all things considered, Haley, with rather an equivocal grace, proceeded to the parlor, while Sam, rolling his eyes after him with unutterable meaning, proceeded gravely with the horses to the stable-yard.

“Did yer see him, Andy? did yer see him?” said Sam, when he had got fairly beyond the shelter of the barn, and fastened the horse to a post. “O, Lor, if it warn’t as good as a meetin’, now, to see him a
dancin’ and kickin’ and swarin’ at us. Didn’t I hear him? Swar away, ole fellow (says I to myself); will yer have yer hoss now, or wait till you catch him? (says I). Lor, Andy, I think I can see him now.” And Sam and Andy leaned up against the barn and laughed to their hearts’ content.

“Yer oughter seen how mad he looked, when I brought the hoss up. Lord, he’d a killed me, if he durs’ to; and there I was a standin’ as innercent and as humble.”

“Lor, I seed you,” said Andy; “an’t you an old hoss, Sam?”

“Rather specks I am,” said Sam; “did yer see Missis up stars at the winder? I seed her laughin’.”

“I’m sure, I was racin’ so, I didn’t see nothing,” said Andy.

“Well, yer see,” said Sam, proceeding gravely to wash down Haley’s pony, “I 'se 'quired what yer may call a habit o’ _observation_, Andy. It’s a very 'portant habit, Andy; and I 'commend yer to be cultivatin’ it, now yer young. Hist up that hind foot, Andy. Yer see, Andy, it's _observation_ makes all de difference in niggers. Didn’t I see which way the wind blew dis yer mornin’? Didn’t I see what Missis wanted, though she never let on? Dat ar’s _observation_, Andy. I 'spects it's what you may call a faculty. Faculties is different in different peoples, but cultivation of 'em goes a great way.”

“I guess if I hadn’t helped your _observation_ dis mornin’, yer wouldn’t have seen your way so smart,” said Andy.

“And,” said Sam, “you’s a promisin’ child, der an’t no manner o’ doubt. I thinks lots of yer, Andy; and I don’t feel no ways ashamed to take idees from you. We oughtenter overlook nobody, Andy, cause the smartest on us gets tripped up sometimes. And so, Andy, let’s go up to the house now. I’ll be boun’ Missis’ll give us an uncommon good bite, dis yer time.”

### CHAPTER VII

**The Mother’s Struggle**

It is impossible to conceive of a human creature more wholly desolate and forlorn than Eliza, when she turned her footsteps from Uncle Tom’s cabin.

Her husband’s suffering and dangers, and the danger of her child, all blended in her mind, with a confused and stunning sense of the risk she was running, in leaving the only home she had ever known, and cutting loose from the protection of a friend whom she loved and revered. Then there was the parting from every familiar object,—the place where she had grown up, the trees under which she had played, the groves where she had walked many an evening in happier days, by the side of her young husband,—everything, as it lay in the clear, frosty starlight, seemed to speak reproachfully to her, and ask her whither could she go from a home like that?

But stronger than all was maternal love, wrought into a paroxysm of frenzy by the near approach of a fearful danger. Her boy was old enough to have walked by her side, and, in an indifferent case, she would only have led him by the hand; but now the bare thought of putting him out of her arms made her shudder, and she strained him to her bosom with a convulsive grasp, as she went rapidly forward.

The frosty ground creaked beneath her feet, and she trembled at the sound; every quaking leaf and fluttering shadow sent the blood backward to her heart, and quickened her footsteps. She wondered within herself at the strength that seemed to be come upon her; for she felt the weight of her boy as if it had been a feather, and every flutter of fear seemed to increase the supernatural power that bore
her on, while from her pale lips burst forth, in frequent ejaculations, the prayer to a Friend above—
“Lord, help! Lord, save me!”

If it were your Harry, mother, or your Willie, that were going to be torn from you by a brutal trader, tomorrow morning,—if you had seen the man, and heard that the papers were signed and delivered, and you had only from twelve o’clock till morning to make good your escape,—how fast could you walk? How many miles could you make in those few brief hours, with the darling at your bosom,—the little sleepy head on your shoulder,—the small, soft arms trustingly holding on to your neck?

For the child slept. At first, the novelty and alarm kept him waking; but his mother so hurriedly repressed every breath or sound, and so assured him that if he were only still she would certainly save him, that he clung quietly round her neck, only asking, as he found himself sinking to sleep,

“Mother, I don’t need to keep awake, do I?”

“No, my darling; sleep, if you want to.”

“But, mother, if I do get asleep, you won’t let him get me?”

“No! so may God help me!” said his mother, with a paler cheek, and a brighter light in her large dark eyes.

“You’re sure, an’t you, mother?”

“Yes, sure!” said the mother, in a voice that startled herself; for it seemed to her to come from a spirit within, that was no part of her; and the boy dropped his little weary head on her shoulder, and was soon asleep. How the touch of those warm arms, the gentle breathings that came in her neck, seemed to add fire and spirit to her movements! It seemed to her as if strength poured into her in electric streams, from every gentle touch and movement of the sleeping, confiding child. Sublime is the dominion of the mind over the body, that, for a time, can make flesh and nerve impregnable, and string the sinews like steel, so that the weak become so mighty.

The boundaries of the farm, the grove, the wood-lot, passed by her dizzily, as she walked on; and still she went, slacking not, pausing not, till reddening daylight found her many a long mile from all traces of any familiar objects upon the open highway.

She had often been, with her mistress, to visit some connections, in the little village of T——, not far from the Ohio river, and knew the road well. To go thither, to escape across the Ohio river, were the first hurried outlines of her plan of escape; beyond that, she could only hope in God.

When horses and vehicles began to move along the highway, with that alert perception peculiar to a state of excitement, and which seems to be a sort of inspiration, she became aware that her headlong pace and distracted air might bring on her remark and suspicion. She therefore put the boy on the ground, and, adjusting her dress and bonnet, she walked on at as rapid a pace as she thought consistent with the preservation of appearances. In her little bundle she had provided a store of cakes and apples, which she used as expedients for quickening the speed of the child, rolling the apple some yards before them, when the boy would run with all his might after it; and this ruse, often repeated, carried them over many a half-mile.

After a while, they came to a thick patch of woodland, through which murmured a clear brook. As the child complained of hunger and thirst, she climbed over the fence with him; and, sitting down behind a large rock which concealed them from the road, she gave him a breakfast out of her little package. The boy wondered and grieved that she could not eat; and when, putting his arms round her neck, he tried to wedge some of his cake into her mouth, it seemed to her that the rising in her throat would choke her.

“No, no, Harry darling! mother can’t eat till you are safe! We must go on—on—till we come to the river!” And she hurried again into the road, and again constrained herself to walk regularly and composedly forward.
She was many miles past any neighborhood where she was personally known. If she should chance to meet any who knew her, she reflected that the well-known kindness of the family would be of itself a blind to suspicion, as making it an unlikely supposition that she could be a fugitive. As she was also so white as not to be known as of colored lineage, without a critical survey, and her child was white also, it was much easier for her to pass on unsuspected.

On this presumption, she stopped at noon at a neat farmhouse, to rest herself, and buy some dinner for her child and self; for, as the danger decreased with the distance, the supernatural tension of the nervous system lessened, and she found herself both weary and hungry.

The good woman, kindly and gossiping, seemed rather pleased than otherwise with having somebody come in to talk with; and accepted, without examination, Eliza's statement, that she "was going on a little piece, to spend a week with her friends,"—all which she hoped in her heart might prove strictly true.

An hour before sunset, she entered the village of T——, by the Ohio river, weary and foot-sore, but still strong in heart. Her first glance was at the river, which lay, like Jordan, between her and the Canaan of liberty on the other side.

It was now early spring, and the river was swollen and turbulent; great cakes of floating ice were swinging heavily to and fro in the turbid waters. Owing to the peculiar form of the shore on the Kentucky side, the land bending far out into the water, the ice had been lodged and detained in great quantities, and the narrow channel which swept round the bend was full of ice, piled one cake over another, thus forming a temporary barrier to the descending ice, which lodged, and formed a great, undulating raft, filling up the whole river, and extending almost to the Kentucky shore.

Eliza stood, for a moment, contemplating this unfavorable aspect of things, which she saw at once must prevent the usual ferry-boat from running, and then turned into a small public house on the bank, to make a few inquiries.

The hostess, who was busy in various fizzing and stewing operations over the fire, preparatory to the evening meal, stopped, with a fork in her hand, as Eliza's sweet and plaintive voice arrested her.

"What is it?" she said.

"Isn't there any ferry or boat, that takes people over to B——, now?" she said.

"No, indeed!" said the woman; "the boats has stopped running."

Eliza's look of dismay and disappointment struck the woman, and she said, inquiringly,

"May be you're wanting to get over?—anybody sick? Ye seem mighty anxious?"

"I've got a child that's very dangerous," said Eliza. "I never heard of it till last night, and I've walked quite a piece today, in hopes to get to the ferry."

"Well, now, that's onlucky," said the woman, whose motherly sympathies were much aroused; "I'm re'lly consarned for ye. Solomon!" she called, from the window, towards a small back building. A man, in leather apron and very dirty hands, appeared at the door.

"I say, Sol," said the woman, "is that ar man going to tote them bar'ls over tonight?"

"He said he should try, if 't was any way prudent," said the man.

"There's a man a piece down here, that's going over with some truck this evening, if he durs' to; he'll be in here to supper tonight, so you'd better set down and wait. That's a sweet little fellow," added the woman, offering him a cake.

But the child, wholly exhausted, cried with weariness.

"Poor fellow! he isn't used to walking, and I've hurried him on so," said Eliza.

"Well, take him into this room," said the woman, opening into a small bed-room, where stood a comfortable bed. Eliza laid the weary boy upon it, and held his hands in hers till he was fast asleep.
For her there was no rest. As a fire in her bones, the thought of the pursuer urged her on; and she
gazed with longing eyes on the sullen, surging waters that lay between her and liberty.

Here we must take our leave of her for the present, to follow the course of her pursuers.

Though Mrs. Shelby had promised that the dinner should be hurried on table, yet it was soon seen,
as the thing has often been seen before, that it required more than one to make a bargain. So, although
the order was fairly given out in Haley's hearing, and carried to Aunt Chloe by at least half a dozen
juvenile messengers, that dignitary only gave certain very gruff snorts, and tosses of her head, and
went on with every operation in an unusually leisurely and circumstantial manner.

For some singular reason, an impression seemed to reign among the servants generally that Missis
would not be particularly disobediled by delay; and it was wonderful what a number of counter
accidents occurred constantly, to retard the course of things. One luckless wight contrived to upset
the gravy; and then gravy had to be got up de novo, with due care and formality, Aunt Chloe watching
and stirring with dogged precision, answering shortly, to all suggestions of haste, that she “warn’t a
going to have raw gravy on the table, to help nobody’s catchings.” One tumbled down with the water,
and had to go to the spring for more; and another precipitated the butter into the path of events; and
there was from time to time giggling news brought into the kitchen that “Mas’r Haley was mighty
oneasy, and that he couldn’t sit in his cheer no ways, but was a walkin’ and stalkin’ to the winders
and through the porch.”

“Sarves him right!” said Aunt Chloe, indignantly. “He’ll get wus nor oneasy, one of these days, if he
don’t mend his ways. His master’ll be sending for him, and then see how he’ll look!”

“He’ll go to torment, and no mistake,” said little Jake.

“He desarves it!” said Aunt Chloe, grimly; “he’s broke a many, many, many hearts,—I tell ye all!”
she said, stopping, with a fork uplifted in her hands; “it’s like what Mas’r George reads in
Ravelations,—souls a callin’ under the altar! and a callin’ on the Lord for vengeance on sich!—and by
and by the Lord he’ll hear ’em—so he will!”

Aunt Chloe, who was much revered in the kitchen, was listened to with open mouth; and, the
dinner being now fairly sent in, the whole kitchen was at leisure to gossip with her, and to listen to
her remarks.

“Sich’ll be burnt up forever, and no mistake; won’t ther?” said Andy.

“I’d be glad to see it, I’ll be boun’,” said little Jake.

“Chil’en!” said a voice, that made them all start. It was Uncle Tom, who had come in, and stood
listening to the conversation at the door.

“Chil’en!” he said, “I’m afeard you don’t know what ye’re sayin’. Forever is a dre’ful word, chil’en;
it’s awful to think on ’t. You oughtenter wish that ar to any human crittur.”

“We wouldn’t to anybody but the soul-drivers,” said Andy; “nobody can help wishing it to them,
they ’s so awful wicked.”

“Don’t natur herself kinder cry out on ’em?” said Aunt Chloe. “Don’t dey tear der suckin’ baby right
off his mother’s breast, and sell him, and der little children as is crying and holding on by her
clothes,—don’t dey pull ’em off and sells ’em? Don’t dey tear wife and husband apart?” said Aunt
Chloe, beginning to cry, “when it’s jest takin’ the very life on ’em?—and all the while does they feel
one bit, don’t dey drink and smoke, and take it oncommon easy? Lor, if the devil don’t get them, what’s
he good for?” And Aunt Chloe covered her face with her checked apron, and began to sob in good
earnest.

“Pray for them that ’spitefully use you, the good book says,” says Tom.

“Pray for ’em!” said Aunt Chloe; “Lor, it’s too tough! I can’t pray for ’em.”
“It’s natur, Chloe, and natur ’s strong,” said Tom, “but the Lord’s grace is stronger; besides, you oughter think what an awful state a poor crittur’s soul ’s in that’ll do them ar things,—you oughter thank God that you an’t like him, Chloe. I’m sure I’d rather be sold, ten thousand times over, than to have all that ar poor crittur’ s got to answer for.”

“So’d I, a heap,” said Jake. “Lor, shouldn’t we cotch it, Andy?”

Andy shrugged his shoulders, and gave an acquiescent whistle.

“I’m glad Mas’r didn’t go off this morning, as he looked to,” said Tom; “that ar hurt me more than sellin’, it did. Mebbe it might have been natural for him, but ’t would have come desp’t hard on me, as has known him from a baby; but I’ve seen Mas’r, and I begin ter feel sort o’ reconciled to the Lord’s will now. Mas’r couldn’t help hisself; he did right, but I’m feared things will be kinder goin’ to rack, when I’m gone Mas’r can’t be spected to be a pryin’ round everywhar, as I’ve done, a keepin’ up all the ends. The boys all means well, but they ’s powerful car’less. That ar troubles me.”

The bell here rang, and Tom was summoned to the parlor.

“Tom,” said his master, kindly, “I want you to notice that I give this gentleman bonds to forfeit a thousand dollars if you are not on the spot when he wants you; he’s going today to look after his other business, and you can have the day to yourself. Go anywhere you like, boy.”

“Thank you, Mas’r,” said Tom.

“And mind yourself,” said the trader, “and don’t come it over your master with any o’ yer nigger tricks; for I’ll take every cent out of him, if you an’t thar. If he’d hear to me, he wouldn’t trust any on ye—slippery as eels!”

“Mas’r,” said Tom,—and he stood very straight,—“I was jist eight years old when ole Missis put you into my arms, and you wasn’t a year old. ’Thar,’ says she, ’Tom, that’s to be your young Mas’r; take good care on him,’ says she. And now I jist ask you, Mas’r, have I ever broke word to you, or gone contrary to you, ’specially since I was a Christian?”

Mr. Shelby was fairly overcome, and the tears rose to his eyes.

“My good boy,” said he, “the Lord knows you say but the truth; and if I was able to help it, all the world shouldn’t buy you.”

“And sure as I am a Christian woman,” said Mrs. Shelby, “you shall be redeemed as soon as I can any way bring together means. Sir,” she said to Haley, “take good account of who you sell him to, and let me know.”

“Lor, yes, for that matter,” said the trader, “I may bring him up in a year, not much the wuss for wear, and trade him back.”

“I’ll trade with you then, and make it for your advantage,” said Mrs. Shelby.

“Of course,” said the trader, “all ’s equal with me; li’ves trade ’em up as down, so I does a good business. All I want is a livin’, you know, ma’am; that’s all any on us wants, I, s’pose.”

Mr. and Mrs. Shelby both felt annoyed and degraded by the familiar impudence of the trader, and yet both saw the absolute necessity of putting a constraint on their feelings. The more hopelessly sordid and insensible he appeared, the greater became Mrs. Shelby’s dread of his succeeding in recapturing Eliza and her child, and of course the greater her motive for detaining him by every female artifice. She therefore graciously smiled, assented, chatted familiarly, and did all she could to make time pass imperceptibly.

At two o’clock Sam and Andy brought the horses up to the posts, apparently greatly refreshed and invigorated by the scamper of the morning.

Sam was there new oiled from dinner, with an abundance of zealous and ready officiousness. As Haley approached, he was boasting, in flourishing style, to Andy, of the evident and eminent success of the operation, now that he had “fairly come to it.”
“Your master, I s’pose, don’t keep no dogs,” said Haley, thoughtfully, as he prepared to mount.

“Heaps on ’em,” said Sam, triumphantly; “thar’s Bruno—he’s a roarer! and, besides that, ’bout every nigger of us keeps a pup of some natur or uther.”

“Poh!” said Haley,—and he said something else, too, with regard to the said dogs, at which Sam muttered,

“I don’t see no use cussin’ on ’em, no way.”

“But your master don’t keep no dogs (I pretty much know he don’t) for trackin’ out niggers.”

Sam knew exactly what he meant, but he kept on a look of earnest and desperate simplicity.

“Our dogs all smells round considable sharp. I spect they’s the kind, though they han’t never had no practice. They ’s far dogs, though, at most anything, if you’d get ’em started. Here, Bruno,” he called, whistling to the lumbering Newfoundland, who came pitching tumultuously toward them.

“You go hang!” said Haley, getting up. “Come, tumble up now.”

Sam tumbled up accordingly, dexterously contriving to tickle Andy as he did so, which occasioned Andy to split out into a laugh, greatly to Haley’s indignation, who made a cut at him with his riding-whip.

“I ’s ’stonished at yer, Andy,” said Sam, with awful gravity. “This yer’s a seris bisness, Andy. Yer mustn’t be a makin’ game. This yer an’t no way to help Mas’r.”

“I shall take the straight road to the river,” said Haley, decidedly, after they had come to the boundaries of the estate. “I know the way of all of ’em,—they makes tracks for the underground.”

“Sartin,” said Sam, “dat’s de idee. Mas’r Haley hits de thing right in de middle. Now, der’s two roads to de river,—de dirt road and der pike,—which Mas’r mean to take?”

Andy looked up innocently at Sam, surprised at hearing this new geographical fact, but instantly confirmed what he said, by a vehement reiteration.

“Cause,” said Sam, “I’d rather be ’clined to ’magine that Lizy ’d take de dirt road, bein’ it’s the least travelled.”

Haley, notwithstanding that he was a very old bird, and naturally inclined to be suspicious of chaff, was rather brought up by this view of the case.

“If yer warn’t both on yer such cussed liars, now!” he said, contemplatively as he pondered a moment.

The pensive, reflective tone in which this was spoken appeared to amuse Andy prodigiously, and he drew a little behind, and shook so as apparently to run a great risk of falling off his horse, while Sam’s face was immovably composed into the most doleful gravity.

“Course,” said Sam, “Mas’r can do as he’d ruther, go de straight road, if Mas’r thinks best,—it’s all one to us. Now, when I study ’pon it, I think de straight road de best, deridedly.”

“She would naturally go a lonesome way,” said Haley, thinking aloud, and not minding Sam’s remark.

“Dar an’t no sayin’,” said Sam; “gals is peculiar; they never does nothin’ ye thinks they will; mose gen’lly the contrary. Gals is nat’lly made contrary; and so, if you thinks they’ve gone one road, it is sartin you’d better go t’ other, and then you’ll be sure to find ’em. Now, my private ’pinion is, Lizy took der road; so I think we’d better take de straight one.”

This profound generic view of the female sex did not seem to dispose Haley particularly to the straight road, and he announced decidedly that he should go the other, and asked Sam when they should come to it.

“A little piece ahead,” said Sam, giving a wink to Andy with the eye which was on Andy’s side of the head; and he added, gravely, “but I’ve studded on de matter, and I’m quite clar we ought not to go dat
way. I neber been over it no way. It's despit lonesome, and we might lose our way,—war we'd come to, de Lord only knows."

"Nevertheless," said Haley, "I shall go that way."

"Now I think on 't, I think I hearn 'em tell that dat ar road was all fenced up and down by der creek, and thar, an't it, Andy?"

Andy wasn't certain; he'd only "hearn tell" about that road, but never been over it. In short, he was strictly noncommittal.

Haley, accustomed to strike the balance of probabilities between lies of greater or lesser magnitude, thought that it lay in favor of the dirt road aforesaid. The mention of the thing he thought he perceived was involuntary on Sam's part at first, and his confused attempts to dissuade him he set down to a desperate lying on second thoughts, as being unwilling to implicate Liza.

When, therefore, Sam indicated the road, Haley plunged briskly into it, followed by Sam and Andy.

Now, the road, in fact, was an old one, that had formerly been a thoroughfare to the river, but abandoned for many years after the laying of the new pike. It was open for about an hour's ride, and after that it was cut across by various farms and fences. Sam knew this fact perfectly well,—indeed, the road had been so long closed up, that Andy had never heard of it. He therefore rode along with an air of dutiful submission, only groaning and vociferating occasionally that 't was "desp't rough, and bad for Jerry's foot."

"Now, I jest give yer warning," said Haley, "I know yer; yer won't get me to turn off this road, with all yer fussin'—so you shut up!"

"Mas'r will go his own way!" said Sam, with rueful submission, at the same time winking most portentously to Andy, whose delight was now very near the explosive point.

Sam was in wonderful spirits,—professed to keep a very brisk lookout,—at one time exclaiming that he saw "a gal's bonnet" on the top of some distant eminence, or calling to Andy "if that thar wasn't 'Lizy' down in the hollow;" always making these exclamations in some rough or craggy part of the road, where the sudden quickening of speed was a special inconvenience to all parties concerned, and thus keeping Haley in a state of constant commotion.

After riding about an hour in this way, the whole party made a precipitate and tumultuous descent into a barn-yard belonging to a large farming establishment. Not a soul was in sight, all the hands being employed in the fields; but, as the barn stood conspicuously and plainly square across the road, it was evident that their journey in that direction had reached a decided finale.

"Wan't dat ar what I telled Mas'r?" said Sam, with an air of injured innocence. "How does strange gentleman spect to know more about a coontry dan de natives born and raised?"

"You rascal!" said Haley, "you knew all about this."

"Didn't I tell yer I knowd, and yer wouldn't believe me? I telled Mas'r 't was all shut up, and fenced up, and I didn't spect we could get through,—Andy heard me."

It was all too true to be disputed, and the unlucky man had to pocket his wrath with the best grace he was able, and all three faced to the right about, and took up their line of march for the highway.

In consequence of all the various delays, it was about three-quarters of an hour after Eliza had laid her child to sleep in the village tavern that the party came riding into the same place. Eliza was standing by the window, looking out in another direction, when Sam's quick eye caught a glimpse of her. Haley and Andy were two yards behind. At this crisis, Sam contrived to have his hat blown off, and uttered a loud and characteristic ejaculation, which startled her at once; she drew suddenly back; the whole train swept by the window, round to the front door.

A thousand lives seemed to be concentrated in that one moment to Eliza. Her room opened by a side door to the river. She caught her child, and sprang down the steps towards it. The trader caught
a full glimpse of her just as she was disappearing down the bank; and throwing himself from his horse, and calling loudly on Sam and Andy, he was after her like a hound after a deer. In that dizzy moment her feet to her scarce seemed to touch the ground, and a moment brought her to the water’s edge. Right on behind they came; and, nervèd with strength such as God gives only to the desperate, with one wild cry and flying leap, she vaultèd sheer over the turbid current by the shore, on to the raft of ice beyond. It was a desperate leap—impossible to anything but madness and despair; and Haley, Sam, and Andy, instinctively cried out, and lifted up their hands, as she did it.

The huge green fragment of ice on which she alighted pitched and creakèd as her weight came on it, but she staid there not a moment. With wild cries and desperate energy she leaped to another and still another cake; stumbling—leaping—slipping—springing upwards again! Her shoes are gone—her stockings cut from her feet—while blood marked every step; but she saw nothing, felt nothing, till dimly, as in a dream, she saw the Ohio side, and a man helping her up the bank.

“Yer a brave gal, now, whoever ye ar!” said the man, with an oath.

Eliza recognized the voice and face for a man who owned a farm not far from her old home.

“O, Mr. Symmes!—save me—do save me—do hide me!” said Eliza.

“Why, what’s this?” said the man. “Why, if ’tan’t Shelby’s gal!”

“My child!—this boy!—he’d sold him! There is his Mas’r,” said she, pointing to the Kentucky shore.

“O, Mr. Symmes, you’ve got a little boy!”

“So I have,” said the man, as he roughly, but kindly, drew her up the steep bank. “Besides, you’re a right brave gal. I like grit, wherever I see it.”

When they had gained the top of the bank, the man paused.

“I’d be glad to do something for ye,” said he; “but then there’s nowhar I could take ye. The best I can do is to tell ye to go thar,” said he, pointing to a large white house which stood by itself, off the main street of the village. “Go thar; they’re kind folks. Thar’s no kind o’ danger but they’ll help you,—they’re up to all that sort o’ thing.”

“The Lord bless you!” said Eliza, earnestly.

“No ’casion, no ’casion in the world,” said the man. “What I’ve done’s of no ’count.”

“And, oh, surely, sir, you won’t tell any one!”

“Go to thunder, gal! What do you take a feller for? In course not,” said the man. “Come, now, go along like a likely, sensible gal, as you are. You’ve arnt your liberty, and you shall have it, for all me.’

The woman folded her child to her bosom, and walked firmly and swiftly away. The man stood and looked after her.

“Shelby, now, mebbe won’t think this yer the most neighborly thing in the world; but what’s a feller to do? If he catches one of my gals in the same fix, he’s welcome to pay back. Somehow I never could see no kind o’ critter a strivin’ and pantin’, and trying to clar theirselves, with the dogs arter ’em and go agin ’em. Besides, I don’t see no kind of ’casion for me to be hunter and catcher for other folks, neither.”

So spoke this poor, heathenish Kentuckian, who had not been instructed in his constitutional relations, and consequently was betrayed into acting in a sort of Christianized manner, which, if he had been better situated and more enlightened, he would not have been left to do.

Haley had stood a perfectly amazed spectator of the scene, till Eliza had disappeared up the bank, when he turned a blank, inquiring look on Sam and Andy.

“That ar was a tolerable fair stroke of business,” said Sam.

“The gal’s got seven devils in her, I believe!” said Haley. “How like a wildcat she jumped!”
“Wal, now,” said Sam, scratching his head, “I hope Mas’r’ll ’scuse us trying dat ar road. Don’t think I feel spry enough for dat ar, no way!” and Sam gave a hoarse chuckle.

“You laugh!” said the trader, with a growl.

“Lord bless you, Mas’r, I couldn’t help it now,” said Sam, giving way to the long pent-up delight of his soul. “She looked so curi’s, a leapin’ and springin’—ice a crackin’—and only to hear her,—plump! ker chunk! ker splash! Spring! Lord! how she goes it!” and Sam and Andy laughed till the tears rolled down their cheeks.

“I’ll make ye laugh t’ other side yer mouths!” said the trader, laying about their heads with his riding-whip.

Both ducked, and ran shouting up the bank, and were on their horses before he was up.

“Good-evening, Mas’r!” said Sam, with much gravity. “I berry much spect Missis be anxious ’bout Jerry. Mas’r Haley won’t want us no longer. Missis wouldn’t hear of our ridin’ the critters over Lizy’s bridge tonight;” and, with a facetious poke into Andy’s ribs, he started off, followed by the latter, at full speed,—their shouts of laughter coming faintly on the wind.

CHAPTER IX

In Which It Appears That a Senator Is But a Man

The light of the cheerful fire shone on the rug and carpet of a cosey parlor, and glittered on the sides of the tea-cups and well-brightened tea-pot, as Senator Bird was drawing off his boots, preparatory to inserting his feet in a pair of new handsome slippers, which his wife had been working for him while away on his senatorial tour. Mrs. Bird, looking the very picture of delight, was superintending the arrangements of the table, ever and anon mingling admonitory remarks to a number of frolicsome juveniles, who were effervescing in all those modes of untold gambol and mischief that have astonished mothers ever since the flood.

“Tom, let the door-knob alone,—there’s a man! Mary! Mary! don’t pull the cat’s tail,—poor pussy! Jim, you mustn’t climb on that table,—no, no!—You don’t know, my dear, what a surprise it is to us all, to see you here tonight!” said she, at last, when she found a space to say something to her husband.

“Yes, yes, I thought I’d just make a run down, spend the night, and have a little comfort at home. I’m tired to death, and my head aches!”

Mrs. Bird cast a glance at a camphor-bottle, which stood in the half-open closet, and appeared to meditate an approach to it, but her husband interposed.

“No, no, Mary, no doctoring! a cup of your good hot tea, and some of our good home living, is what I want. It’s a tiresome business, this legislating!”

And the senator smiled, as if he rather liked the idea of considering himself a sacrifice to his country.

“Well,” said his wife, after the business of the tea-table was getting rather slack, “and what have they been doing in the Senate?”

Now, it was a very unusual thing for gentle little Mrs. Bird ever to trouble her head with what was going on in the house of the state, very wisely considering that she had enough to do to mind her own. Mr. Bird, therefore, opened his eyes in surprise, and said,

“Not very much of importance.”
“Well; but is it true that they have been passing a law forbidding people to give meat and drink to those poor colored folks that come along? I heard they were talking of some such law, but I didn’t think any Christian legislature would pass it!”

“Why, Mary, you are getting to be a politician, all at once.”

“No, nonsense! I wouldn’t give a fig for all your politics, generally, but I think this is something downright cruel and unchristian. I hope, my dear, no such law has been passed.”

“There has been a law passed forbidding people to help off the slaves that come over from Kentucky, my dear; so much of that thing has been done by these reckless Abolitionists, that our brethren in Kentucky are very strongly excited, and it seems necessary, and no more than Christian and kind, that something should be done by our state to quiet the excitement.”

“And what is the law? It don’t forbid us to shelter those poor creatures a night, does it, and to give 'em something comfortable to eat, and a few old clothes, and send them quietly about their business?”

“Why, yes, my dear; that would be aiding and abetting, you know.”

Mrs. Bird was a timid, blushing little woman, of about four feet in height, and with mild blue eyes, and a peach-blown complexion, and the gentlest, sweetest voice in the world;—as for courage, a moderate-sized cock-turkey had been known to put her to rout at the very first gobble, and a stout house-dog, of moderate capacity, would bring her into subjection merely by a show of his teeth. Her husband and children were her entire world, and in these she ruled more by entreaty and persuasion than by command or argument. There was only one thing that was capable of arousing her, and that provocation came in on the side of her unusually gentle and sympathetic nature;—anything in the shape of cruelty would throw her into a passion, which was the more alarming and inexplicable in proportion to the general softness of her nature. Generally the most indulgent and easy to be entreated of all mothers, still her boys had a very reverent remembrance of a most vehement chastisement she once bestowed on them, because she found them leagued with several graceless boys of the neighborhood, stoning a defenceless kitten.

“I’ll tell you what,” Master Bill used to say, “I was scared that time. Mother came at me so that I thought she was crazy, and I was whipped and tumbled off to bed, without any supper, before I could get over wondering what had come about; and, after that, I heard mother crying outside the door, which made me feel worse than all the rest. I’ll tell you what,” he’d say, “we boys never stoned another kitten!”

On the present occasion, Mrs. Bird rose quickly, with very red cheeks, which quite improved her general appearance, and walked up to her husband, with quite a resolute air, and said, in a determined tone,

“Now, John, I want to know if you think such a law as that is right and Christian?”

“You won’t shoot me, now, Mary, if I say I do!”

“I never could have thought of you, John; you didn’t vote for it?”

“Even so, my fair politician.”

“You ought to be ashamed, John! Poor, homeless, houseless creatures! It’s a shameful, wicked, abominable law, and I’ll break it, for one, the first time I get a chance; and I hope I shall have a chance, I do! Things have got to a pretty pass, if a woman can’t give a warm supper and a bed to poor, starving creatures, just because they are slaves, and have been abused and oppressed all their lives, poor things!”

“But, Mary, just listen to me. Your feelings are all quite right, dear, and interesting, and I love you for them; but, then, dear, we mustn’t suffer our feelings to run away with our judgment; you must consider it’s a matter of private feeling,—there are great public interests involved,—there is such a state of public agitation rising, that we must put aside our private feelings.”
“Now, John, I don’t know anything about politics, but I can read my Bible; and there I see that I must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the desolate; and that Bible I mean to follow.”

“But in cases where your doing so would involve a great public evil—”

“Obeying God never brings on public evils. I know it can’t. It’s always safest, all round, to do as He bids us.

“Now, listen to me, Mary, and I can state to you a very clear argument, to show—”

“O, nonsense, John! you can talk all night, but you wouldn’t do it. I put it to you, John,—would you now turn away a poor, shivering, hungry creature from your door, because he was a runaway? Would you, now?”

Now, if the truth must be told, our senator had the misfortune to be a man who had a particularly humane and accessible nature, and turning away anybody that was in trouble never had been his forte; and what was worse for him in this particular pinch of the argument was, that his wife knew it, and, of course was making an assault on rather an indefensible point. So he had recourse to the usual means of gaining time for such cases made and provided; he said “ahem,” and coughed several times, took out his pocket-handkerchief, and began to wipe his glasses. Mrs. Bird, seeing the defenceless condition of the enemy’s territory, had no more conscience than to push her advantage.

“I should like to see you doing that, John—I really should! Turning a woman out of doors in a snowstorm, for instance; or may be you’d take her up and put her in jail, wouldn’t you? You would make a great hand at that!”

“Of course, it would be a very painful duty,” began Mr. Bird, in a moderate tone.

“Duty, John! don’t use that word! You know it isn’t a duty—it can’t be a duty! If folks want to keep their slaves from running away, let ‘em treat ‘em well,—that’s my doctrine. If I had slaves (as I hope I never shall have), I’d risk their wanting to run away from me, or you either, John. I tell you folks don’t run away when they are happy; and when they do run, poor creatures! they suffer enough with cold and hunger and fear, without everybody’s turning against them; and, law or no law, I never will, so help me God!”

“Mary! Mary! My dear, let me reason with you.”

“I hate reasoning, John,—especially reasoning on such subjects. There’s a way you political folks have of coming round and round a plain right thing; and you don’t believe in it yourselves, when it comes to practice. I know you well enough, John. You don’t believe it’s right any more than I do; and you wouldn’t do it any sooner than I.”

At this critical juncture, old Cudjoe, the black man-of-all-work, put his head in at the door, and wished “Missis would come into the kitchen;” and our senator, tolerably relieved, looked after his little wife with a whimsical mixture of amusement and vexation, and, seating himself in the arm-chair, began to read the papers.

After a moment, his wife’s voice was heard at the door, in a quick, earnest tone,—“John! John! I do wish you’d come here, a moment.”

He laid down his paper, and went into the kitchen, and started, quite amazed at the sight that presented itself:—A young and slender woman, with garments torn and frozen, with one shoe gone, and the stocking torn away from the cut and bleeding foot, was laid back in a deadly swoon upon two chairs. There was the impress of the despised race on her face, yet none could help feeling its mournful and pathetic beauty, while its stony sharpness, its cold, fixed, deathly aspect, struck a solemn chill over him. He drew his breath short, and stood in silence. His wife, and their only colored domestic, old Aunt Dinah, were busily engaged in restorative measures; while old Cudjoe had got the boy on his knee, and was busy pulling off his shoes and stockings, and chafing his little cold feet.
“Sure, now, if she an’t a sight to behold!” said old Dinah, compassionately; “’pears like ’t was the heat that made her faint. She was tol’able peart when she cum in, and asked if she couldn’t warm herself here a spell; and I was just a-askin’ her where she cum from, and she fainted right down. Never done much hard work, guess, by the looks of her hands.”

“Poor creature!” said Mrs. Bird, compassionately, as the woman slowly unclosed her large, dark eyes, and looked vacantly at her. Suddenly an expression of agony crossed her face, and she sprang up, saying, “O, my Harry! Have they got him?”

The boy, at this, jumped from Cudjoe’s knee, and running to her side put up his arms. “O, he’s here! he’s here!” she exclaimed.

“Oh, ma’am!” said she, wildly, to Mrs. Bird, “do protect us! don’t let them get him!”

“Nobody shall hurt you here, poor woman,” said Mrs. Bird, encouragingly. “You are safe; don’t be afraid.”

“God bless you!” said the woman, covering her face and sobbing; while the little boy, seeing her crying, tried to get into her lap.

With many gentle and womanly offices, which none knew better how to render than Mrs. Bird, the poor woman was, in time, rendered more calm. A temporary bed was provided for her on the settle, near the fire; and, after a short time, she fell into a heavy slumber, with the child, who seemed no less weary, soundly sleeping on her arm; for the mother resisted, with nervous anxiety, the kindest attempts to take him from her; and, even in sleep, her arm encircled him with an unrelaxing clasp, as if she could not even then be beguiled of her vigilant hold.

Mr. and Mrs. Bird had gone back to the parlor, where, strange as it may appear, no reference was made, on either side, to the preceding conversation; but Mrs. Bird busied herself with her knitting-work, and Mr. Bird pretended to be reading the paper.

“I wonder who and what she is!” said Mr. Bird, at last, as he laid it down.

“When she wakes up and feels a little rested, we will see,” said Mrs. Bird.

“I say, wife!” said Mr. Bird after musing in silence over his newspaper.

“Well, dear!”

“She couldn’t wear one of your gowns, could she, by any letting down, or such matter? She seems to be rather larger than you are.”

A quite perceptible smile glimmered on Mrs. Bird’s face, as she answered, “We’ll see.”

Another pause, and Mr. Bird again broke out,

“I say, wife!”

“Well! What now?”

“Why, there’s that old bombazin cloak, that you keep on purpose to put over me when I take my afternoon’s nap; you might as well give her that,—she needs clothes.”

At this instant, Dinah looked in to say that the woman was awake, and wanted to see Missis.

Mr. and Mrs. Bird went into the kitchen, followed by the two eldest boys, the smaller fry having, by this time, been safely disposed of in bed.

The woman was now sitting up on the settle, by the fire. She was looking steadily into the blaze, with a calm, heart-broken expression, very different from her former agitated wildness.

“Did you want me?” said Mrs. Bird, in gentle tones. “I hope you feel better now, poor woman!”

A long-drawn, shivering sigh was the only answer; but she lifted her dark eyes, and fixed them on her with such a forlorn and imploring expression, that the tears came into the little woman’s eyes.
“You needn’t be afraid of anything; we are friends here, poor woman! Tell me where you came from, and what you want,” said she.

“I came from Kentucky,” said the woman.

“When?” said Mr. Bird, taking up the interrogatory.

“Tonight.”

“How did you come?”

“I crossed on the ice.”

“Crossed on the ice!” said every one present.

“Yes,” said the woman, slowly, “I did. God helping me, I crossed on the ice; for they were behind me—right behind—and there was no other way!”

“Law, Missis,” said Cudjoe, “the ice is all in broken-up blocks, a swinging and a tetering up and down in the water!”

“I know it was—I know it!” said she, wildly; “but I did it! I wouldn’t have thought I could,—I didn’t think I should get over, but I didn’t care! I could but die, if I didn’t. The Lord helped me; nobody knows how much the Lord can help ’em, till they try,” said the woman, with a flashing eye.

“Were you a slave?” said Mr. Bird.

“Yes, sir; I belonged to a man in Kentucky.”

“Was he unkind to you?”

“No, sir; he was a good master.”

“And was your mistress unkind to you?”

“No, sir—no! my mistress was always good to me.”

“What could induce you to leave a good home, then, and run away, and go through such dangers?”

The woman looked up at Mrs. Bird, with a keen, scrutinizing glance, and it did not escape her that she was dressed in deep mourning.

“Ma’am,” she said, suddenly, “have you ever lost a child?”

The question was unexpected, and it was thrust on a new wound; for it was only a month since a darling child of the family had been laid in the grave.

Mr. Bird turned around and walked to the window, and Mrs. Bird burst into tears; but, recovering her voice, she said,

“Why do you ask that? I have lost a little one.”

“Then you will feel for me. I have lost two, one after another,—left ’em buried there when I came away; and I had only this one left. I never slept a night without him; he was all I had. He was my comfort and pride, day and night; and, ma’am, they were going to take him away from me,—to sell him,—sell him down south, ma’am, to go all alone,—a baby that had never been away from his mother in his life! I couldn’t stand it, ma’am. I knew I never should be good for anything, if they did; and when I knew the papers the papers were signed, and he was sold, I took him and came off in the night; and they chased me,—the man that bought him, and some of Mas’r’s folks,—and they were coming down right behind me, and I heard ’em. I jumped right on to the ice; and how I got across, I don’t know,—but, first I knew, a man was helping me up the bank.”

The woman did not sob nor weep. She had gone to a place where tears are dry; but every one around her was, in some way characteristic of themselves, showing signs of hearty sympathy.

The two little boys, after a desperate rummaging in their pockets, in search of those pocket-handkerchiefs which mothers know are never to be found there, had thrown themselves disconsolately into the skirts of their mother’s gown, where they were sobbing, and wiping their eyes
and noses, to their hearts’ content;—Mrs. Bird had her face fairly hidden in her pocket-handkerchief; and old Dinah, with tears streaming down her black, honest face, was ejaculating, “Lord have mercy on us!” with all the fervor of a camp-meeting;—while old Cudjoe, rubbing his eyes very hard with his cuffs, and making a most uncommon variety of wry faces, occasionally responded in the same key, with great fervor. Our senator was a statesman, and of course could not be expected to cry, like other mortals; and so he turned his back to the company, and looked out of the window, and seemed particularly busy in clearing his throat and wiping his spectacle-glasses, occasionally blowing his nose in a manner that was calculated to excite suspicion, had any one been in a state to observe critically.

“How came you to tell me you had a kind master?” he suddenly exclaimed, gulping down very resolutely some kind of rising in his throat, and turning suddenly round upon the woman.

“Because he was a kind master; I’ll say that of him, any way;—and my mistress was kind; but they couldn’t help themselves. They were owing money; and there was some way, I can’t tell how, that a man had a hold on them, and they were obliged to give him his will. I listened, and heard him telling mistress that, and she begging and pleading for me,—and he told her he couldn’t help himself, and that the papers were all drawn;—and then it was I took him and left my home, and came away. I knew ’t was no use of my trying to live, if they did it; for ’t ’pears like this child is all I have.”

“Have you no husband?”

“Yes, but he belongs to another man. His master is real hard to him, and won’t let him come to see me, hardly ever; and he’s grown harder and harder upon us, and he threatens to sell him down south;—it’s like I’ll never see him again!”

The quiet tone in which the woman pronounced these words might have led a superficial observer to think that she was entirely apathetic; but there was a calm, settled depth of anguish in her large, dark eye, that spoke of something far otherwise.

“And where do you mean to go, my poor woman?” said Mrs. Bird.

“To Canada, if I only knew where that was. Is it very far off, is Canada?” said she, looking up, with a simple, confiding air, to Mrs. Bird’s face.

“Poor thing!” said Mrs. Bird, involuntarily.

“Is ’t a very great way off, think?” said the woman, earnestly.

“Much further than you think, poor child!” said Mrs. Bird; “but we will try to think what can be done for you. Here, Dinah, make her up a bed in your own room, close by the kitchen, and I’ll think what to do for her in the morning. Meanwhile, never fear, poor woman; put your trust in God; he will protect you.”

Mrs. Bird and her husband reentered the parlor. She sat down in her little rocking-chair before the fire, swaying thoughtfully to and fro. Mr. Bird strode up and down the room, grumbling to himself, “Pish! pshaw! confounded awkward business!” At length, striding up to his wife, he said,

“I say, wife, she’ll have to get away from here, this very night. That fellow will be down on the scent bright and early tomorrow morning: if ’t was only the woman, she could lie quiet till it was over; but that little chap can’t be kept still by a troop of horse and foot, I’ll warrant me; he’ll bring it all out, popping his head out of some window or door. A pretty kettle of fish it would be for me, too, to be caught with them both here, just now! No; they’ll have to be got off tonight.”

“Tonight! How is it possible?—where to?”

“Well, I know pretty well where to,” said the senator, beginning to put on his boots, with a reflective air; and, stopping when his leg was half in, he embraced his knee with both hands, and seemed to go off in deep meditation.
“It’s a confounded awkward, ugly business,” said he, at last, beginning to tug at his boot-straps again, “and that’s a fact!” After one boot was fairly on, the senator sat with the other in his hand, profoundly studying the figure of the carpet. “It will have to be done, though, for aught I see,—hang it all!” and he drew the other boot anxiously on, and looked out of the window.

Now, little Mrs. Bird was a discreet woman,—a woman who never in her life said, “I told you so!” and, on the present occasion, though pretty well aware of the shape her husband’s meditations were taking, she very prudently forbore to meddle with them, only sat veryquietly in her chair, and looked quite ready to hear her liege lord’s intentions, when he should think proper to utter them.

“You see,” he said, “there’s my old client, Van Trompe, has come over from Kentucky, and set all his slaves free; and he has bought a place seven miles up the creek, here, back in the woods, where nobody goes, unless they go on purpose; and it’s a place that isn’t found in a hurry. There she’d be safe enough; but the plague of the thing is, nobody could drive a carriage there tonight, but me.”

“Why not? Cudjoe is an excellent driver.”

“Ay, ay, but here it is. The creek has to be crossed twice; and the second crossing is quite dangerous, unless one knows it as I do. I have crossed it a hundred times on horseback, and know exactly the turns to take. And so, you see, there’s no help for it. Cudjoe must put in the horses, as quietly as may be, about twelve o’clock, and I’ll take her over; and then, to give color to the matter, he must carry me on to the next tavern to take the stage for Columbus, that comes by about three or four, and so it will look as if I had had the carriage only for that. I shall get into business bright and early in the morning. But I’m thinking I shall feel rather cheap there, after all that’s been said and done; but, hang it, I can’t help it!”

“Your heart is better than your head, in this case, John,” said the wife, laying her little white hand on his. “Could I ever have loved you, had I not known you better than you know yourself?” And the little woman looked so handsome, with the tears sparkling in her eyes, that the senator thought he must be a decidedly clever fellow, to get such a pretty creature into such a passionate admiration of him; and so, what could he do but walk off soberly, to see about the carriage. At the door, however, he stopped a moment, and then coming back, he said, with some hesitation.

“Mary, I don’t know how you’d feel about it, but there’s that drawer full of things—of—of—poor little Henry’s.” So saying, he turned quickly on his heel, and shut the door after him.

His wife opened the little bed-room door adjoining her room and, taking the candle, set it down on the top of a bureau there; then from a small recess she took a key, and put it thoughtfully in the lock of a drawer, and made a sudden pause, while two boys, who, boy like, had followed close on her heels, stood looking, with silent, significant glances, at their mother. And oh! mother that reads this, has there never been in your house a drawer, or a closet, the opening of which has been to you like the opening again of a little grave? Ah! happy mother that you are, if it has not been so.

Mrs. Bird slowly opened the drawer. There were little coats of many a form and pattern, piles of aprons, and rows of small stockings; and even a pair of little shoes, worn and rubbed at the toes, were peeping from the folds of a paper. There was a toy horse and wagon, a top, a ball,—memorials gathered with many a tear and many a heart-break! She sat down by the drawer, and, leaning her head on her hands over it, wept till the tears fell through her fingers into the drawer; then suddenly raising her head, she began, with nervous haste, selecting the plainest and most substantial articles, and gathering them into a bundle.

“Mamma,” said one of the boys, gently touching her arm, “you going to give away those things?”

“My dear boys,” she said, softly and earnestly, “if our dear, loving little Henry looks down from heaven, he would be glad to have us do this. I could not find it in my heart to give them away to anybody that was happy; but I give them to a mother more heart-broken and sorrowful than I am; and I hope God will send his blessings with them!”
There are in this world blessed souls, whose sorrows all spring up into joys for others; whose earthly hopes, laid in the grave with many tears, are the seed from which spring healing flowers and balm for the desolate and the distressed. Among such was the delicate woman who sits there by the lamp, dropping slow tears, while she prepares the memorials of her own lost one for the outcast wanderer.

After a while, Mrs. Bird opened a wardrobe, and, taking from thence a plain, serviceable dress or two, she sat down busily to her work-table, and, with needle, scissors, and thimble, at hand, quietly commenced the “letting down” process which her husband had recommended, and continued busily at it till the old clock in the corner struck twelve, and she heard the low rattling of wheels at the door.

“Mary,” said her husband, coming in, with his overcoat in his hand, “you must wake her up now; we must be off.”

Mrs. Bird hastily deposited the various articles she had collected in a small plain trunk, and locking it, desired her husband to see it in the carriage, and then proceeded to call the woman. Soon, arrayed in a cloak, bonnet, and shawl, that had belonged to her benefactress, she appeared at the door with her child in her arms. Mr. Bird hurried her into the carriage, and Mrs. Bird pressed on after her to the carriage steps. Eliza leaned out of the carriage, and put out her hand,—a hand as soft and beautiful as was given in return. She fixed her large, dark eyes, full of earnest meaning, on Mrs. Bird’s face, and seemed going to speak. Her lips moved,—she tried once or twice, but there was no sound,—and pointing upward, with a look never to be forgotten, she fell back in the seat, and covered her face. The door was shut, and the carriage drove on.

What a situation, now, for a patriotic senator, that had been all the week before spurring up the legislature of his native state to pass more stringent resolutions against escaping fugitives, their harborers and abettors!

Our good senator in his native state had not been exceeded by any of his brethren at Washington, in the sort of eloquence which has won for them immortal renown! How sublimely he had sat with his hands in his pockets, and scouted all sentimental weakness of those who would put the welfare of a few miserable fugitives before great state interests!

He was as bold as a lion about it, and “mightily convinced” not only himself, but everybody that heard him;—but then his idea of a fugitive was only an idea of the letters that spell the word,—or at the most, the image of a little newspaper picture of a man with a stick and bundle with “Ran away from the subscriber” under it. The magic of the real presence of distress,—the imploring human eye, the frail, trembling human hand, the despairing appeal of helpless agony,—these he had never tried. He had never thought that a fugitive might be a hapless mother, a defenceless child,—like that one which was now wearing his lost boy’s little well-known cap; and so, as our poor senator was not stone or steel,—as he was a man, and a downright noble-hearted one, too,—he was, as everybody must see, in a sad case for his patriotism. And you need not exult over him, good brother of the Southern States; for we have some inklings that many of you, under similar circumstances, would not do much better. We have reason to know, in Kentucky, as in Mississippi, are noble and generous hearts, to whom never was tale of suffering told in vain. Ah, good brother! is it fair for you to expect of us services which your own brave, honorable heart would not allow you to render, were you in our place?

Be that as it may, if our good senator was a political sinner, he was in a fair way to expiate it by his night’s penance. There had been a long continuous period of rainy weather, and the soft, rich earth of Ohio, as every one knows, is admirably suited to the manufacture of mud—and the road was an Ohio railroad of the good old times.

“And pray, what sort of a road may that be?” says some eastern traveller, who has been accustomed to connect no ideas with a railroad, but those of smoothness or speed.

Know, then, innocent eastern friend, that in benighted regions of the west, where the mud is of unfathomable and sublime depth, roads are made of round rough logs, arranged transversely side by
side, and coated over in their pristine freshness with earth, turf, and whatsoever may come to hand, and then the rejoicing native calleth it a road, and straightway essayeth to ride thereupon. In process of time, the rains wash off all the turf and grass aforesaid, move the logs hither and thither, in picturesque positions, up, down and crosswise, with divers chasms and ruts of black mud intervening.

Over such a road as this our senator went stumbling along, making moral reflections as continuously as under the circumstances could be expected,—the carriage proceeding along much as follows,—bump! bump! bump! slush! down in the mud!—the senator, woman and child, reversing their positions so suddenly as to come, without any very accurate adjustment, against the windows of the down-hill side. Carriage sticks fast, while Cudjoe on the outside is heard making a great muster among the horses. After various ineffectual pullings and twitchings, just as the senator is losing all patience, the carriage suddenly rights itself with a bounce,—two front wheels go down into another abyss, and senator, woman, and child, all tumble promiscuously on to the front seat,—senator's hat is jammed over his eyes and nose quite unceremoniously, and he considers himself fairly extinguished;—child cries, and Cudjoe on the outside delivers animated addresses to the horses, who are kicking, and floundering, and straining under repeated cracks of the whip. Carriage springs up, with another bounce,—down go the hind wheels,—senator, woman, and child, fly over on to the back seat, his elbows encountering her bonnet, and both her feet being jammed into his hat, which flies off in the concussion. After a few moments the "slough" is passed, and the horses stop, panting;—the senator finds his hat, the woman straightens her bonnet and hushes her child, and they brace themselves for what is yet to come.

For a while only the continuous bump! bump! intermingled, just by way of variety, with divers side plunges and compound shakes; and they begin to flatter themselves that they are not so badly off, after all. At last, with a square plunge, which puts all on to their feet and then down into their seats with incredible quickness, the carriage stops,—and, after much outside commotion, Cudjoe appears at the door.

"Please, sir, it's powerful bad spot, this' yer. I don't know how we's to get clar out. I'm a thinkin' we'll have to be a gettin' rails."

The senator despairingly steps out, picking gingerly for some firm foothold; down goes one foot an immeasurable depth,—he tries to pull it up, loses his balance, and tumbles over into the mud, and is fished out, in a very despairing condition, by Cudjoe.

But we forbear, out of sympathy to our readers' bones. Western travellers, who have beguiled the midnight hour in the interesting process of pulling down rail fences, to pry their carriages out of mud holes, will have a respectful and mournful sympathy with our unfortunate hero. We beg them to drop a silent tear, and pass on.

It was full late in the night when the carriage emerged, dripping and bespattered, out of the creek, and stood at the door of a large farmhouse.

It took no inconsiderable perseverance to arouse the inmates; but at last the respectable proprietor appeared, and undid the door. He was a great, tall, bristling Orson of a fellow, full six feet and some inches in his stockings, and arrayed in a red flannel hunting-shirt. A very heavy mat of sandy hair, in a decidedly tousled condition, and a beard of some days' growth, gave the worthy man an appearance, to say the least, not particularly prepossessing. He stood for a few minutes holding the candle aloft, and blinking on our travellers with a dismal and mystified expression that was truly ludicrous. It cost some effort of our senator to induce him to comprehend the case fully; and while he is doing his best at that, we shall give him a little introduction to our readers.

Honest old John Van Trompe was once quite a considerable land-owner and slave-owner in the State of Kentucky. Having "nothing of the bear about him but the skin," and being gifted by nature with a great, honest, just heart, quite equal to his gigantic frame, he had been for some years
witnessing with repressed uneasiness the workings of a system equally bad for oppressor and oppressed. At last, one day, John’s great heart had swelled altogether too big to wear his bonds any longer; so he just took his pocket-book out of his desk, and went over into Ohio, and bought a quarter of a township of good, rich land, made out free papers for all his people,—men, women, and children,—packed them up in wagons, and sent them off to settle down; and then honest John turned his face up the creek, and sat quietly down on a snug, retired farm, to enjoy his conscience and his reflections.

“Are you the man that will shelter a poor woman and child from slave-catchers?” said the senator, explicitly.

“I rather think I am,” said honest John, with some considerable emphasis.

“I thought so,” said the senator.

“If there’s anybody comes,” said the good man, stretching his tall, muscular form upward, “why here I’m ready for him: and I’ve got seven sons, each six foot high, and they’ll be ready for ‘em. Give our respects to ‘em,” said John; “tell ‘em it’s no matter how soon they call,—make no kinder difference to us,” said John, running his fingers through the shock of hair that thatched his head, and bursting out into a great laugh.

Weary, jaded, and spiritless, Eliza dragged herself up to the door, with her child lying in a heavy sleep on her arm. The rough man held the candle to her face, and uttering a kind of compassionate grunt, opened the door of a small bed-room adjoining to the large kitchen where they were standing, and motioned her to go in. He took down a candle, and lighting it, set it upon the table, and then addressed himself to Eliza.

“Now, I say, gal, you needn’t be a bit afeard, let who will come here. I’m up to all that sort o’ thing,” said he, pointing to two or three goodly rifles over the mantel-piece; “and most people that know me know that ‘t wouldn’t be healthy to try to get anybody out o’ my house when I’m agin it. So now you jist go to sleep now, as quiet as if yer mother was a rockin’ ye,” said he, as he shut the door.

“Why, this is an uncommon handsome un,” he said to the senator. “Ah, well; handsome uns has the greatest cause to run, sometimes, if they has any kind o’ feelin, such as decent women should. I know all about that.”

The senator, in a few words, briefly explained Eliza’s history.

“O! ou! aw! now, I want to know?” said the good man, pitifully; “sho! now sho! That’s natur now, poor crittur! hunted down now like a deer,—hunted down, jest for havin’ natural feelin’s, and doin’ what no kind o’ mother could help a doin’! I tell ye what, these yer things make me come the highest to swearin’, now, o’ most anything,” said honest John, as he wiped his eyes with the back of a great, freckled, yellow hand. “I tell yer what, stranger, it was years and years before I’d jine the church, ’cause the ministers round in our parts used to preach that the Bible went in for these ere cuttings up,—and I couldn’t be up to ’em with their Greek and Hebrew, and so I took up agin ’em, Bible and all. I never jined the church till I found a minister that was up to ’em all in Greek and all that, and he said right the contrary; and then I took right hold, and jined the church,—I did now, fact,” said John, who had been all this time uncorking some very frisky bottled cider, which at this juncture he presented.

“Ye’d better jest put up here, now, till daylight,” said he, heartily, “and I’ll call up the old woman, and have a bed got ready for you in no time.”

“Thank you, my good friend,” said the senator, “I must be along, to take the night stage for Columbus.”

“Ah! well, then, if you must, I’ll go a piece with you, and show you a cross road that will take you there better than the road you came on. That road’s mighty bad.”
John equipped himself, and, with a lantern in hand, was soon seen guiding the senator's carriage towards a road that ran down in a hollow, back of his dwelling. When they parted, the senator put into his hand a ten-dollar bill.

"It's for her," he said, briefly.

"Ay, ay," said John, with equal conciseness.

They shook hands, and parted.

CHAPTER XIV
Evangeline

"A young star! which shone
O'er life—too sweet an image, for such glass!
A lovely being, scarcely formed or moulded;
A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded."

The Mississippi! How, as by an enchanted wand, have its scenes been changed, since Chateaubriand wrote his prose-poetic description of it,* as a river of mighty, unbroken solitudes, rolling amid undreamed wonders of vegetable and animal existence.

* In Atala; or the Love and Constantcy of Two Savages in the Desert (1801) by Francois Auguste Rene, Vicomte de Chateaubriand (1768-1848).

But as in an hour, this river of dreams and wild romance has emerged to a reality scarcely less visionary and splendid. What other river of the world bears on its bosom to the ocean the wealth and enterprise of such another country?—a country whose products embrace all between the tropics and the poles! Those turbid waters, hurrying, foaming, tearing along, an apt resemblance of that headlong tide of business which is poured along its wave by a race more vehement and energetic than any the old world ever saw. Ah! would that they did not also bear along a more fearful freight,—the tears of the oppressed, the sighs of the helpless, the bitter prayers of poor, ignorant hearts to an unknown God—unknown, unseen and silent, but who will yet "come out of his place to save all the poor of the earth!"

The slanting light of the setting sun quivers on the sea-like expanse of the river; the shivery canes, and the tall, dark cypress, hung with wreaths of dark, funereal moss, glow in the golden ray, as the heavily-laden steamboat marches onward.

Piled with cotton-bales, from many a plantation, up over deck and sides, till she seems in the distance a square, massive block of gray, she moves heavily onward to the nearing mart. We must look some time among its crowded decks before we shall find again our humble friend Tom. High on the upper deck, in a little nook among the everywhere predominant cotton-bales, at last we may find him.

Partly from confidence inspired by Mr. Shelby's representations, and partly from the remarkably inoffensive and quiet character of the man, Tom had insensibly won his way far into the confidence even of such a man as Haley.

At first he had watched him narrowly through the day, and never allowed him to sleep at night unfettered; but the uncomplaining patience and apparent contentment of Tom's manner led him gradually to discontinue these restraints, and for some time Tom had enjoyed a sort of parole of honor, being permitted to come and go freely where he pleased on the boat.
Ever quiet and obliging, and more than ready to lend a hand in every emergency which occurred among the workmen below, he had won the good opinion of all the hands, and spent many hours in helping them with as hearty a good will as ever he worked on a Kentucky farm.

When there seemed to be nothing for him to do, he would climb to a nook among the cotton-bales of the upper deck, and busy himself in studying over his Bible,—and it is there we see him now.

For a hundred or more miles above New Orleans, the river is higher than the surrounding country, and rolls its tremendous volume between massive levees twenty feet in height. The traveller from the deck of the steamer, as from some floating castle top, overlooks the whole country for miles and miles around. Tom, therefore, had spread out full before him, in plantation after plantation, a map of the life to which he was approaching.

He saw the distant slaves at their toil; he saw afar their villages of huts gleaming out in long rows on many a plantation, distant from the stately mansions and pleasure-grounds of the master;—and as the moving picture passed on, his poor, foolish heart would be turning backward to the Kentucky farm, with its old shadowy beeches,—to the master's house, with its wide, cool halls, and, near by, the little cabin overgrown with the multiflora and bignonia. There he seemed to see familiar faces of comrades who had grown up with him from infancy; he saw his busy wife, bustling in her preparations for his evening meals; he heard the merry laugh of his boys at their play, and the chirrup of the baby at his knee; and then, with a start, all faded, and he saw again the canebrakes and cypresses and gliding plantations, and heard again the creaking and groaning of the machinery, all telling him too plainly that all that phase of life had gone by forever.

In such a case, you write to your wife, and send messages to your children; but Tom could not write,—the mail for him had no existence, and the gulf of separation was unbridged by even a friendly word or signal.

Is it strange, then, that some tears fall on the pages of his Bible, as he lays it on the cotton-bale, and, with patient finger, threading his slow way from word to word, traces out its promises? Having learned late in life, Tom was but a slow reader, and passed on laboriously from verse to verse. Fortunate for him was it that the book he was intent on was one which slow reading cannot injure,—nay, one whose words, like ingots of gold, seem often to need to be weighed separately, that the mind may take in their priceless value. Let us follow him a moment, as, pointing to each word, and pronouncing each half aloud, he reads,


Cicero, when he buried his darling and only daughter, had a heart as full of honest grief as poor Tom's,—perhaps no fuller, for both were only men;—but Cicero could pause over no such sublime words of hope, and look to no such future reunion; and if he had seen them, ten to one he would not have believed,—he must fill his head first with a thousand questions of authenticity of manuscript, and correctness of translation. But, to poor Tom, there it lay, just what he needed, so evidently true and divine that the possibility of a question never entered his simple head. It must be true; for, if not true, how could he live?

As for Tom's Bible, though it had no annotations and helps in margin from learned commentators, still it had been embellished with certain way-marks and guide-boards of Tom's own invention, and which helped him more than the most learned expositions could have done. It had been his custom to get the Bible read to him by his master's children, in particular by young Master George; and, as they read, he would designate, by bold, strong marks and dashes, with pen and ink, the passages which more particularly gratified his ear or affected his heart. His Bible was thus marked through, from one end to the other, with a variety of styles and designations; so he could in a moment seize upon his favorite passages, without the labor of spelling out what lay between them;—and while it lay there before him, every passage breathing of some old home scene, and recalling some past
enjoyment, his Bible seemed to him all of this life that remained, as well as the promise of a future one.

Among the passengers on the boat was a young gentleman of fortune and family, resident in New Orleans, who bore the name of St. Clare. He had with him a daughter between five and six years of age, together with a lady who seemed to claim relationship to both, and to have the little one especially under her charge.

Tom had often caught glimpses of this little girl,—for she was one of those busy, tripping creatures, that can be no more contained in one place than a sunbeam or a summer breeze,—nor was she one that, once seen, could be easily forgotten.

Her form was the perfection of childish beauty, without its usual chubbiness and squareness of outline. There was about it an undulating and aerial grace, such as one might dream of for some mythic and allegorical being. Her face was remarkable less for its perfect beauty of feature than for a singular and dreamy earnestness of expression, which made the ideal start when they looked at her, and by which the dullest and most literal were impressed, without exactly knowing why. The shape of her head and the turn of her neck and bust was peculiarly noble, and the long golden-brown hair that floated like a cloud around it, the deep spiritual gravity of her violet blue eyes, shaded by heavy fringes of golden brown,—all marked her out from other children, and made every one turn and look after her, as she glided hither and thither on the boat. Nevertheless, the little one was not what you would have called either a grave child or a sad one. On the contrary, an airy and innocent playfulness seemed to flicker like the shadow of summer leaves over her childish face, and around her buoyant figure. She was always in motion, always with a half smile on her rosy mouth, flying hither and thither, with an undulating and cloud-like tread, singing to herself as she moved as in a happy dream. Her father and female guardian were incessantly busy in pursuit of her,—but, when caught, she melted from them again like a summer cloud; and as no word of chiding or reproof ever fell on her ear for whatever she chose to do, she pursued her own way all over the boat. Always dressed in white, she seemed to move like a shadow through all sorts of places, without contracting spot or stain; and there was not a corner or nook, above or below, where those fairy footsteps had not glided, and that visionary golden head, with its deep blue eyes, fled along.

The fireman, as he looked up from his sweaty toil, sometimes found those eyes looking wonderingly into the raging depths of the furnace, and fearfully and pityingly at him, as if she thought him in some dreadful danger. Anon the steersman at the wheel paused and smiled, as the picture-like head gleamed through the window of the round house, and in a moment was gone again. A thousand times a day rough voices blessed her, and smiles of unwonted softness stole over hard faces, as she passed; and when she tripped fearlessly over dangerous places, rough, sooty hands were stretched involuntarily out to save her, and smooth her path.

Tom, who had the soft, impressible nature of his kindly race, ever yearning toward the simple and childlike, watched the little creature with daily increasing interest. To him she seemed something almost divine; and whenever her golden head and deep blue eyes peered out upon him from behind some dusky cotton-bale, or looked down upon him over some ridge of packages, he half believed that he saw one of the angels stepped out of his New Testament.

Often and often she walked mournfully round the place where Haley's gang of men and women sat in their chains. She would glide in among them, and look at them with an air of perplexed and sorrowful earnestness; and sometimes she would lift their chains with her slender hands, and then sigh wofully, as she glided away. Several times she appeared suddenly among them, with her hands full of candy, nuts, and oranges, which she would distribute joyfully to them, and then be gone again.

Tom watched the little lady a great deal, before he ventured on any overtures towards acquaintance. He knew an abundance of simple acts to propitiate and invite the approaches of the little people, and he resolved to play his part right skilfully. He could cut cunning little baskets
out of cherry-stones, could make grotesque faces on hickory-nuts, or odd-jumping figures out of elder-pith, and he was a very Pan in the manufacture of whistles of all sizes and sorts. His pockets were full of miscellaneous articles of attraction, which he had hoarded in days of old for his master’s children, and which he now produced, with commendable prudence and economy, one by one, as overtures for acquaintance and friendship.

The little one was shy, for all her busy interest in everything going on, and it was not easy to tame her. For a while, she would perch like a canary-bird on some box or package near Tom, while busy in the little arts afore-named, and take from him, with a kind of grave bashfulness, the little articles he offered. But at last they got on quite confidential terms.

“What’s little missy’s name?” said Tom, at last, when he thought matters were ripe to push such an inquiry.

“Evangeline St. Clare,” said the little one, “though papa and everybody else call me Eva. Now, what’s your name?”

“My name’s Tom; the little chil’en used to call me Uncle Tom, way back thar in Kentuck.”

“Then I mean to call you Uncle Tom, because, you see, I like you,” said Eva. “So, Uncle Tom, where are you going?”

“I don’t know, Miss Eva.”

“Don’t know?” said Eva.

“No, I am going to be sold to somebody. I don’t know who.”

“My papa can buy you,” said Eva, quickly; “and if he buys you, you will have good times. I mean to ask him, this very day.”

“Thank you, my little lady,” said Tom.

The boat here stopped at a small landing to take in wood, and Eva, hearing her father’s voice, bounded nimbly away. Tom rose up, and went forward to offer his service in wooding, and soon was busy among the hands.

Eva and her father were standing together by the railings to see the boat start from the landing-place, the wheel had made two or three revolutions in the water, when, by some sudden movement, the little one suddenly lost her balance and fell sheer over the side of the boat into the water. Her father, scarce knowing what he did, was plunging in after her, but was held back by some behind him, who saw that more efficient aid had followed his child.

Tom was standing just under her on the lower deck, as she fell. He saw her strike the water, and sink, and was after her in a moment. A broad-chested, strong-armed fellow, it was nothing for him to keep afloat in the water, till, in a moment or two the child rose to the surface, and he caught her in his arms, and, swimming with her to the boat-side, handed her up, all dripping, to the grasp of hundreds of hands, which, as if they had all belonged to one man, were stretched eagerly out to receive her. A few moments more, and her father bore her, dripping and senseless, to the ladies’ cabin, where, as is usual in cases of the kind, there ensued a very well-meaning and kind-hearted strife among the female occupants generally, as to who should do the most things to make a disturbance, and to hinder her recovery in every way possible.

It was a sultry, close day, the next day, as the steamer drew near to New Orleans. A general bustle of expectation and preparation was spread through the boat; in the cabin, one and another were gathering their things together, and arranging them, preparatory to going ashore. The steward and chambermaid, and all, were busily engaged in cleaning, furbishing, and arranging the splendid boat, preparatory to a grand entree.

On the lower deck sat our friend Tom, with his arms folded, and anxiously, from time to time, turning his eyes towards a group on the other side of the boat.
There stood the fair Evangeline, a little paler than the day before, but otherwise exhibiting no traces of the accident which had befallen her. A graceful, elegantly-formed young man stood by her, carelessly leaning one elbow on a bale of cotton while a large pocket-book lay open before him. It was quite evident, at a glance, that the gentleman was Eva's father. There was the same noble cast of head, the same large blue eyes, the same golden-brown hair; yet the expression was wholly different. In the large, clear blue eyes, though in form and color exactly similar, there was wanting that misty, dreamy depth of expression; all was clear, bold, and bright, but with a light wholly of this world: the beautifully cut mouth had a proud and somewhat sarcastic expression, while an air of free-and-easy superiority sat not ungracefully in every turn and movement of his fine form. He was listening, with a good-humored, negligent air, half comic, half contemptuous, to Haley, who was very volubly expatiating on the quality of the article for which they were bargaining.

“All the moral and Christian virtues bound in black Morocco, complete!” he said, when Haley had finished. “Well, now, my good fellow, what’s the damage, as they say in Kentucky; in short, what’s to be paid out for this business? How much are you going to cheat me, now? Out with it!”

“Wal,” said Haley, “if I should say thirteen hundred dollars for that ar fellow, I shouldn’t but just save myself; I shouldn’t, now, re’ly.”

“Poor fellow!” said the young man, fixing his keen, mocking blue eye on him; “but I suppose you’d let me have him for that, out of a particular regard for me.”

“Well, the young lady here seems to be sot on him, and nat’lly enough.”

“Oh! certainly, there’s a call on your benevolence, my friend. Now, as a matter of Christian charity, how cheap could you afford to let him go, to oblige a young lady that’s particular sot on him?”

“Wal, now, just think on ’t,” said the trader; “just look at them limbs,—broad-chested, strong as a horse. Look at his head; them high forrads allays shows calculatin niggers, that’ll do any kind o’ thing. I’ve, marked that ar. Now, a nigger of that ar heft and build is worth considerable, just as you may say, for his body, supposin he’s stupid; but come to put in his calculatin faculties, and them which I can show he has oncommon, why, of course, it makes him come higher. Why, that ar fellow managed his master’s whole farm. He has a strornary talent for business.”

“Bad, bad, very bad; knows altogether too much!” said the young man, with the same mocking smile playing about his mouth. “Never will do, in the world. Your smart fellows are always running off, stealing horses, and raising the devil generally. I think you’ll have to take off a couple of hundred for his smartness.”

“Wal, there might be something in that ar, if it warnt for his character; but I can show recommends from his master and others, to prove he is one of your real pious,—the most humble, prayin, pious crittur ye ever did see. Why, he’s been called a preacher in them parts he came from.”

“And I might use him for a family chaplain, possibly,” added the young man, dryly. “That’s quite an idea. Religion is a remarkably scarce article at our house.”

“You’re joking, now.”

“How do you know I am? Didn’t you just warrant him for a preacher? Has he been examined by any synod or council? Come, hand over your papers.”

If the trader had not been sure, by a certain good-humored twinkle in the large eye, that all this banter was sure, in the long run, to turn out a cash concern, he might have been somewhat out of patience; as it was, he laid down a greasy pocket-book on the cotton-bales, and began anxiously studying over certain papers in it, the young man standing by, the while, looking down on him with an air of careless, easy drollery.

“Papa, do buy him! it’s no matter what you pay,” whispered Eva, softly, getting up on a package, and putting her arm around her father’s neck. “You have money enough, I know. I want him.”
“What for, pussy? Are you going to use him for a rattle-box, or a rocking-horse, or what?

“I want to make him happy.”

“An original reason, certainly.”

Here the trader handed up a certificate, signed by Mr. Shelby, which the young man took with the tips of his long fingers, and glanced over carelessly.

“A gentlemanly hand,” he said, “and well spelt, too. Well, now, but I’m not sure, after all, about this religion,” said he, the old wicked expression returning to his eye; “the country is almost ruined with pious white people; such pious politicians as we have just before elections,—such pious goings on in all departments of church and state, that a fellow does not know who’ll cheat him next. I don’t know, either, about religion’s being up in the market, just now. I have not looked in the papers lately, to see how it sells. How many hundred dollars, now, do you put on for this religion?”

“You like to be jokin, now,” said the trader; “but, then, there’s sense under all that ar. I know there’s differences in religion. Some kinds is mis’rable: there’s your meetin pious; there’s your singin, roarin pious; them ar an’t no account, in black or white;—but these rayly is; and I’ve seen it in niggers as often as any, your rail softly, quiet, stiddy, honest, pious, that the hull world couldn’t tempt ’em to do nothing that they thinks is wrong; and ye see in this letter what Tom’s old master says about him.”

“Now,” said the young man, stooping gravely over his book of bills, “if you can assure me that I really can buy this kind of pious, and that it will be set down to my account in the book up above, as something belonging to me, I wouldn’t care if I did go a little extra for it. How d’ye say?”

“Wal, rayly, I can’t do that,” said the trader. “I’m a thinkin that every man’ll have to hang on his own hook, in them ar quarters.”

“Rather hard on a fellow that pays extra on religion, and can’t trade with it in the state where he wants it most, an’t it, now?” said the young man, who had been making out a roll of bills while he was speaking. “There, count your money, old boy!” he added, as he handed the roll to the trader.

“All right,” said Haley, his face beaming with delight; and pulling out an old inkhorn, he proceeded to fill out a bill of sale, which, in a few moments, he handed to the young man.

“I wonder, now, if I was divided up and inventoried,” said the latter as he ran over the paper, “how much I might bring. Say so much for the shape of my head, so much for a high forehead, so much for arms, and hands, and legs, and then so much for education, learning, talent, honesty, religion! Bless me! there would be small charge on that last, I’m thinking. But come, Eva,” he said; and taking the hand of his daughter, he stepped across the boat, and carelessly putting the tip of his finger under Tom’s chin, said good-humoredly, “Look-up, Tom, and see how you like your new master.”

Tom looked up. It was not in nature to look into that gay, young, handsome face, without a feeling of pleasure; and Tom felt the tears start in his eyes as he said, heartily, “God bless you, Mas’r!”

“Well, I hope he will. What’s your name? Tom? Quite as likely to do it for your asking as mine, from all accounts. Can you drive horses, Tom?”

“I’ve been allays used to horses,” said Tom. “Mas’r Shelby raised heaps of ’em.”

“Well, I think I shall put you in coachy, on condition that you won’t be drunk more than once a week, unless in cases of emergency, Tom.”

Tom looked surprised, and rather hurt, and said, “I never drink, Mas’r.”

“I’ve heard that story before, Tom; but then we’ll see. It will be a special accommodation to all concerned, if you don’t. Never mind, my boy,” he added, good-humoredly, seeing Tom still looked grave; “I don’t doubt you mean to do well.”

“I sartin do, Mas’r,” said Tom.

“And you shall have good times,” said Eva. “Papa is very good to everybody, only he always will laugh at them.”
“Papa is much obliged to you for his recommendation,” said St. Clare, laughing, as he turned on his heel and walked away.

Chapter XXIV
Foreshadowings

Two days after this, Alfred St. Clare and Augustine parted; and Eva, who had been stimulated, by the society of her young cousin, to exertions beyond her strength, began to fail rapidly. St. Clare was at last willing to call in medical advice,—a thing from which he had always shrank, because it was the admission of an unwelcome truth.

But, for a day or two, Eva was so unwell as to be confined to the house; and the doctor was called.

Marie St. Clare had taken no notice of the child’s gradually decaying health and strength, because she was completely absorbed in studying out two or three new forms of disease to which she believed she herself was a victim. It was the first principle of Marie’s belief that nobody ever was or could be so great a sufferer as herself; and, therefore, she always repelled quite indignantly any suggestion that any one around her could be sick. She was always sure, in such a case, that it was nothing but laziness, or want of energy; and that, if they had had the suffering she had, they would soon know the difference.

Miss Ophelia had several times tried to awaken her maternal fears about Eva; but to no avail.

“I don’t see as anything ails the child,” she would say; “she runs about, and plays.”

“But she has a cough.”

“Cough! you don’t need to tell me about a cough. I’ve always been subject to a cough, all my days. When I was of Eva’s age, they thought I was in a consumption. Night after night, Mammy used to sit up with me. O! Eva’s cough is not anything.”

“But she gets weak, and is short-breathed.”

“Law! I’ve had that, years and years; it’s only a nervous affection.”

“But she sweats so, nights!”

“Well, I have, these ten years. Very often, night after night, my clothes will be wringing wet. There won’t be a dry thread in my night-clothes and the sheets will be so that Mammy has to hang them up to dry! Eva doesn’t sweat anything like that!”

Miss Ophelia shut her mouth for a season. But, now that Eva was fairly and visibly prostrated, and a doctor called, Marie, all on a sudden, took a new turn.

“She knew it,” she said; “she always felt it, that she was destined to be the most miserable of mothers. Here she was, with her wretched health, and her only darling child going down to the grave before her eyes;”—and Marie routed up Mammy nights, and rumpussed and scolded, with more energy than ever, all day, on the strength of this new misery.

“My dear Marie, don’t talk so!” said St. Clare. “You ought not to give up the case so, at once.”

“You have not a mother’s feelings, St. Clare! You never could understand me!—you don’t now.”

“But don’t talk so, as if it were a gone case!”

“I can’t take it as indifferently as you can, St. Clare. If you don’t feel when your only child is in this alarming state, I do. It’s a blow too much for me, with all I was bearing before.”

“It’s true,” said St. Clare, “that Eva is very delicate, that I always knew; and that she has grown so rapidly as to exhaust her strength; and that her situation is critical. But just now she is only prostrated by the heat of the weather, and by the excitement of her cousin’s visit, and the exertions she made. The physician says there is room for hope.”
“Well, of course, if you can look on the bright side, pray do; it's a mercy if people haven't sensitive feelings, in this world. I am sure I wish I didn't feel as I do; it only makes me completely wretched! I wish I could be as easy as the rest of you!”

And the “rest of them” had good reason to breathe the same prayer, for Marie paraded her new misery as the reason and apology for all sorts of inflictions on every one about her. Every word that was spoken by anybody, everything that was done or was not done everywhere, was only a new proof that she was surrounded by hard-hearted, insensible beings, who were unmindful of her peculiar sorrows. Poor Eva heard some of these speeches; and nearly cried her little eyes out, in pity for her mamma, and in sorrow that she should make her so much distress.

In a week or two, there was a great improvement of symptoms,—one of those deceitful lulls, by which her inexorable disease so often beguiles the anxious heart, even on the verge of the grave. Eva's step was again in the garden,—in the balconies; she played and laughed again,—and her father, in a transport, declared that they should soon have her as hearty as anybody. Miss Ophelia and the physician alone felt no encouragement from this illusive truce. There was one other heart, too, that felt the same certainty, and that was the little heart of Eva. What is it that sometimes speaks in the soul so calmly, so clearly, that its earthly time is short? Is it the secret instinct of decaying nature, or the soul's impulsive throb, as immortality draws on? Be it what it may, it rested in the heart of Eva, a calm, sweet, prophetic certainty that Heaven was near; calm as the light of sunset, sweet as the bright stillness of autumn, there her little heart reposed, only troubled by sorrow for those who loved her so dearly.

For the child, though nursed so tenderly, and though life was unfolding before her with every brightness that love and wealth could give, had no regret for herself in dying.

In that book which she and her simple old friend had read so much together, she had seen and taken to her young heart the image of one who loved the little child; and, as she gazed and mused, He had ceased to be an image and a picture of the distant past, and come to be a living, all-surrounding reality. His love enfolded her childish heart with more than mortal tenderness; and it was to Him, she said, she was going, and to his home.

But her heart yearned with sad tenderness for all that she was to leave behind. Her father most,—for Eva, though she never distinctly thought so, had an instinctive perception that she was more in his heart than any other. She loved her mother because she was so loving a creature, and all the selfishness that she had seen in her only saddened and perplexed her; for she had a child's implicit trust that her mother could not do wrong. There was something about her that Eva never could make out; and she always smoothed it over with thinking that, after all, it was mamma, and she loved her very dearly indeed.

She felt, too, for those fond, faithful servants, to whom she was as daylight and sunshine. Children do not usually generalize; but Eva was an uncommonly mature child, and the things that she had witnessed of the evils of the system under which they were living had fallen, one by one, into the depths of her thoughtful, pondering heart. She had vague longings to do something for them,—to bless and save not only them, but all in their condition,—longings that contrasted sadly with the feebleness of her little frame.

“Uncle Tom,” she said, one day, when she was reading to her friend, “I can understand why Jesus wanted to die for us.”

“Why, Miss Eva?”

“Because I’ve felt so, too.”

“What is it Miss Eva?—I don’t understand.”

“I can’t tell you; but, when I saw those poor creatures on the boat, you know, when you came up and I,—some had lost their mothers, and some their husbands, and some mothers cried for their little
children—and when I heard about poor Prue,—oh, wasn't that dreadful!—and a great many other times, I've felt that I would be glad to die, if my dying could stop all this misery. I would die for them, Tom, if I could,” said the child, earnestly, laying her little thin hand on his.

Tom looked at the child with awe; and when she, hearing her father's voice, glided away, he wiped his eyes many times, as he looked after her.

“It's jest no use tryin' to keep Miss Eva here,” he said to Mammy, whom he met a moment after. “She's got the Lord's mark in her forehead.”

“Ah, yes, yes,” said Mammy, raising her hands; “I've allers said so. She wasn't never like a child that's to live—there was allers something deep in her eyes. I've told Missis so, many the time; it's a comin' true,—we all sees it,—dear, little, blessed lamb!”

Eva came tripping up the verandah steps to her father. It was late in the afternoon, and the rays of the sun formed a kind of glory behind her, as she came forward in her white dress, with her golden hair and glowing cheeks, her eyes unnaturally bright with the slow fever that burned in her veins.

St. Clare had called her to show a statuette that he had been buying for her; but her appearance, as she came on, impressed him suddenly and painfully. There is a kind of beauty so intense, yet so fragile, that we cannot bear to look at it. Her father folded her suddenly in his arms, and almost forgot what he was going to tell her.

“Eva, dear, you are better now-a-days,—are you not?”

“Papa,” said Eva, with sudden firmness “I've had things I wanted to say to you, a great while. I want to say them now, before I get weaker.”

St. Clare trembled as Eva seated herself in his lap. She laid her head on his bosom, and said,

“It's all no use, papa, to keep it to myself any longer. The time is coming that I am going to leave you. I am going, and never to come back!” and Eva sobbed.

“O, now, my dear little Eva!” said St. Clare, trembling as he spoke, but speaking cheerfully, “you've got nervous and low-spirited; you mustn't indulge such gloomy thoughts. See here, I've bought a statuette for you!”

“No, papa,” said Eva, putting it gently away, “don't deceive yourself!—I am not any better, I know it perfectly well,—and I am going, before long. I am not nervous,—I am not low-spirited. If it were not for you, papa, and my friends, I should be perfectly happy. I want to go,—I long to go!”

“Why, dear child, what has made your poor little heart so sad? You have had everything, to make you happy, that could be given you.”

“I had rather be in heaven; though, only for my friends' sake, I would be willing to live. There are a great many things here that make me sad, that seem dreadful to me; I had rather be there; but I don't want to leave you,—it almost breaks my heart!”

“What makes you sad, and seems dreadful, Eva?”

“O, things that are done, and done all the time. I feel sad for our poor people; they love me dearly, and they are all good and kind to me. I wish, papa, they were all free.”

“Why, Eva, child, don't you think they are well enough off now?”

“O, but, papa, if anything should happen to you, what would become of them? There are very few men like you, papa. Uncle Alfred isn't like you, and mamma isn't; and then, think of poor old Prue's owners! What horrid things people do, and can do!” and Eva shuddered.

“My dear child, you are too sensitive. I'm sorry I ever let you hear such stories.”

“O, that's what troubles me, papa. You want me to live so happy, and never to have any pain,—never suffer anything,—not even hear a sad story, when other poor creatures have nothing but pain and sorrow, all their lives;—it seems selfish. I ought to know such things, I ought to feel about them!
Such things always sunk into my heart; they went down deep; I’ve thought and thought about them. Papa, isn’t there any way to have all slaves made free?”

“That’s a difficult question, dearest. There’s no doubt that this way is a very bad one; a great many people think so; I do myself I heartily wish that there were not a slave in the land; but, then, I don’t know what is to be done about it!”

“Papa, you are such a good man, and so noble, and kind, and you always have a way of saying things that is so pleasant, couldn’t you go all round and try to persuade people to do right about this? When I am dead, papa, then you will think of me, and do it for my sake. I would do it, if I could.”

“When you are dead, Eva,” said St. Clare, passionately. “O, child, don’t talk to me so! You are all I have on earth.”

“Poor old Pru’s child was all that she had,—and yet she had to hear it crying, and she couldn’t help it! Papa, these poor creatures love their children as much as you do me. O! do something for them! There’s poor Mammy loves her children; I’ve seen her cry when she talked about them. And Tom loves his children; and it’s dreadful, papa, that such things are happening, all the time!”

“There, there, darling,” said St. Clare, soothingly; “only don’t distress yourself, don’t talk of dying, and I will do anything you wish.”

“And promise me, dear father, that Tom shall have his freedom as soon as”—she stopped, and said, in a hesitating tone—“I am gone!”

“Yes, dear, I will do anything in the world,—anything you could ask me to.”

“Dear papa,” said the child, laying her burning cheek against his, “how I wish we could go together!”

“To our Saviour’s home; it’s so sweet and peaceful there—it is all so loving there!” The child spoke unconsciously, as of a place where she had often been. “Don’t you want to go, papa?” she said.

St. Clare drew her closer to him, but was silent.

“You will come to me,” said the child, speaking in a voice of calm certainty which she often used unconsciously.

“I shall come after you. I shall not forget you.”

The shadows of the solemn evening closed round them deeper and deeper, as St. Clare sat silently holding the little frail form to his bosom. He saw no more the deep eyes, but the voice came over him as a spirit voice, and, as in a sort of judgment vision, his whole past life rose in a moment before his eyes: his mother’s prayers and hymns; his own early yearnings and aspirings for good; and, between them and this hour, years of worldliness and scepticism, and what man calls respectable living. We can think much, very much, in a moment. St. Clare saw and felt many things, but spoke nothing; and, as it grew darker, he took his child to her bed-room; and, when she was prepared for rest; he sent away the attendants, and rocked her in his arms, and sung to her till she was asleep.

CHAPTER XXXI
The Middle Passage

“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?”—HAB. 1: 13.

On the lower part of a small, mean boat, on the Red River, Tom sat,—chains on his wrists, chains on his feet, and a weight heavier than chains lay on his heart. All had faded from his sky,—moon and star; all had passed by him, as the trees and banks were now passing, to return no more. Kentucky
home, with wife and children, and indulgent owners; St. Clare home, with all its refinements and splendors; the golden head of Eva, with its saint-like eyes; the proud, gay, handsome, seemingly careless, yet ever-kind St. Clare; hours of ease and indulgent leisure,—all gone! and in place thereof, what remains?

It is one of the bitterest apportionments of a lot of slavery, that the negro, sympathetic and assimilative, after acquiring, in a refined family, the tastes and feelings which form the atmosphere of such a place, is not the less liable to become the bond-slave of the coarsest and most brutal,—just as a chair or table, which once decorated the superb saloon, comes, at last, battered and defaced, to the barroom of some filthy tavern, or some low haunt of vulgar debauchery. The great difference is, that the table and chair cannot feel, and the man can; for even a legal enactment that he shall be “taken, reputed, adjudged in law, to be a chattel personal,” cannot blot out his soul, with its own private little world of memories, hopes, loves, fears, and desires.

Mr. Simon Legree, Tom’s master, had purchased slaves at one place and another, in New Orleans, to the number of eight, and driven them, handcuffed, in couples of two and two, down to the good steamer Pirate, which lay at the levee, ready for a trip up the Red River.

Having got them fairly on board, and the boat being off, he came round, with that air of efficiency which ever characterized him, to take a review of them. Stopping opposite to Tom, who had been attired for sale in his best broadcloth suit, with well-starched linen and shining boots, he briefly expressed himself as follows:

“Stand up.”
Tom stood up.

“Take off that stock!” and, as Tom, encumbered by his fetters, proceeded to do it, he assisted him, by pulling it, with no gentle hand, from his neck, and putting it in his pocket.

Legree now turned to Tom’s trunk, which, previous to this, he had been ransacking, and, taking from it a pair of old pantaloons and dilapidated coat, which Tom had been wont to put on about his stable-work, he said, liberating Tom’s hands from the handcuffs, and pointing to a recess in among the boxes,

“You go there, and put these on.”
Tom obeyed, and in a few moments returned.

“Take off your boots,” said Mr. Legree.
Tom did so.

“There,” said the former, throwing him a pair of coarse, stout shoes, such as were common among the slaves, “put these on.”

In Tom’s hurried exchange, he had not forgotten to transfer his cherished Bible to his pocket. It was well he did so; for Mr. Legree, having refitted Tom’s handcuffs, proceeded deliberately to investigate the contents of his pockets. He drew out a silk handkerchief, and put it into his own pocket. Several little trifles, which Tom had treasured, chiefly because they had amused Eva, he looked upon with a contemptuous grunt, and tossed them over his shoulder into the river.

Tom’s Methodist hymn-book, which, in his hurry, he had forgotten, he now held up and turned over.

Humph! pious, to be sure. So, what’s yer name,—you belong to the church, eh?”

“Yes, Mas’r,” said Tom, firmly.

“Well, I’ll soon have that out of you. I have none o’ yer bawling, praying, singing niggers on my place; so remember. Now, mind yourself,” he said, with a stamp and a fierce glance of his gray eye, directed at Tom, “I’m your church now! You understand,—you’ve got to be as I say.”
Something within the silent black man answered *No!* and, as if repeated by an invisible voice, came the words of an old prophetic scroll, as Eva had often read them to him,—“Fear not! for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by name. Thou art MINE!”

But Simon Legree heard no voice. That voice is one he never shall hear. He only glared for a moment on the downcast face of Tom, and walked off. He took Tom’s trunk, which contained a very neat and abundant wardrobe, to the forecastle, where it was soon surrounded by various hands of the boat. With much laughing, at the expense of niggers who tried to be gentlemen, the articles very readily were sold to one and another, and the empty trunk finally put up at auction. It was a good joke, they all thought, especially to see how Tom looked after his things, as they were going this way and that; and then the auction of the trunk, that was funnier than all, and occasioned abundant witticisms.

This little affair being over, Simon sauntered up again to his property.

“Well, my dear,” he said, chucking her under the chin, “keep up yo’ spirits.”

The involuntary look of horror, fright and aversion, with which the girl regarded him, did not escape his eye. He frowned fiercely.

“None o’ your shines, gal! you’s got to keep a pleasant face, when I speak to ye,—d’ye hear? And you, you old yellow poco moonshine!” he said, giving a shove to the mulatto woman to whom Emmeline was chained, “don’t you carry that sort of face! You’s got to look chipper, I tell ye!”

“I say, all on ye,” he said retreating a pace or two back, “look at me,—look at me,—look me right in the eye,—straight, now!” said he, stamping his foot at every pause.

As by a fascination, every eye was now directed to the glaring greenish-gray eye of Simon.

“Now,” said he, doubling his great, heavy fist into something resembling a blacksmith’s hammer, “d’ye see this fist? Heft it!” he said, bringing it down on Tom’s hand. “Look at these yer bones! Well, I tell ye this yer fist has got as hard as iron *knocking down niggers*. I never see the nigger, yet, I couldn’t bring down with one crack,” said he, bringing his fist down so near to the face of Tom that he winked and drew back. “I don’t keep none o’ yer cussed overseers; I does my own overseeing; and I tell you things is seen to. You’s every one on ye got to toe the mark, I tell ye; quick,—straight,—the moment I speak. That’s the way to keep in with me. Ye won’t find no soft spot in me, nowhere. So, now, mind yerselves; for I don’t show no mercy!”

The women involuntarily drew in their breath, and the whole gang sat with downcast, dejected faces. Meanwhile, Simon turned on his heel, and marched up to the bar of the boat for a dram.

“That’s the way I begin with my niggers,” he said, to a gentlemanly man, who had stood by him during his speech. “It’s my system to begin strong,—just let ’em know what to expect.”

“Indeed!” said the stranger, looking upon him with the curiosity of a naturalist studying some out-of-the-way specimen.

“Yes, indeed. I’m none o’ yer gentlemen planters, with lily fingers, to slop round and be cheated by some old cuss of an overseer! Just feel of my knuckles, now; look at my fist. Tell ye, sir, the flesh on ’t has come jest like a stone, practising on nigger—feel on it.”

The stranger applied his fingers to the implement in question, and simply said, “’T is hard enough; and, I suppose,” he added, “practice has made your heart just like it.”
“Why, yes, I may say so,” said Simon, with a hearty laugh. “I reckon there’s as little soft in me as in any one going. Tell you, nobody comes it over me! Niggers never gets round me, neither with squalling nor soft soap,—that’s a fact.”

“You have a fine lot there.”

“Real,” said Simon. “There’s that Tom, they telled me he was suthin’ uncommon. I paid a little high for him, tendin’ him for a driver and a managing chap; only get the notions out that he’s larnt by bein’ treated as niggers never ought to be, he’ll do prime! The yellow woman I got took in on. I rayther think she’s sickly, but I shall put her through for what she’s worth; she may last a year or two. I don’t go for savin’ niggers. Use up, and buy more, ’s my way;—makes you less trouble, and I’m quite sure it comes cheaper in the end;” and Simon sipped his glass.

“And how long do they generally last?” said the stranger.

“Well, donno; ’cordin’ as their constitution is. Stout fellers last six or seven years; trashy ones gets worked up in two or three. I used to, when I fust begun, have considerable trouble fussin’ with ’em and trying to make ’em hold out,—doctorin’ on ’em up when they’s sick, and givin’ on ’em clothes and blankets, and what not, tryin’ to keep ’em all sort o’ decent and comfortable. Law, ’t wasn’t no sort o’ use; I lost money on ’em, and ’t was heaps o’ trouble. Now, you see, I just put ’em straight through, sick or well. When one nigger’s dead, I buy another; and I fin found it comes cheaper and easier, every way.”

The stranger turned away, and seated himself beside a gentleman, who had been listening to the conversation with repressed uneasiness.

“You must not take that fellow to be any specimen of Southern planters,” said he.

“I should hope not,” said the young gentleman, with emphasis.

“He is a mean, low, brutal fellow!” said the other.

“And yet your laws allow him to hold any number of human beings subject to his absolute will, without even a shadow of protection; and, lo, as he is, you cannot say that there are not many such.”

“Well,” said the other, “there are also many considerate and humane men among planters.”

“Granted,” said the young man; “but, in my opinion, it is you considerate, humane men, that are responsible for all the brutality and outrage wrought by these wretches; because, if it were not for your sanction and influence, the whole system could not keep foothold for an hour. If there were no planters except such as that one,” said he, pointing with his finger to Legree, who stood with his back to them, “the whole thing would go down like a millstone. It is your respectability and humanity that licenses and protects his brutality.”

“You certainly have a high opinion of my good nature,” said the planter, smiling, “but I advise you not to talk quite so loud, as there are people on board the boat who might not be quite so tolerant to opinion as I am. You had better wait till I get up to my plantation, and there you may abuse us all, quite at your leisure.”

The young gentleman colored and smiled, and the two were soon busy in a game of backgammon. Meanwhile, another conversation was going on in the lower part of the boat, between Emmeline and the mulatto woman with whom she was confined. As was natural, they were exchanging with each other some particulars of their history.

“Who did you belong to?” said Emmeline.

“Well, my Mas’r was Mr. Ellis,—lived on Levee-street. P’raps you’ve seen the house.”

“Was he good to you?” said Emmeline.

“Mostly, till he tuk sick. He’s lain sick, off and on, more than six months, and been orful oneasy. ’Pears like he warnt willin’ to have nobody rest, day or night; and got so curous, there couldn’t nobody suit him. ’Pears like he just grew crosser, every day; kep me up nights till I got fairly beat out, and
couldn't keep awake no longer; and cause I got to sleep, one night, Lors, he talk so orful to me, and he tell me he'd sell me to just the hardest master he could find; and he'd promised me my freedom, too, when he died."

"Had you any friends?" said Emmeline.

"Yes, my husband,—he's a blacksmith. Mas'r gen'ly hired him out. They took me off so quick, I didn't even have time to see him; and I's got four children. O, dear me!" said the woman, covering her face with her hands.

It is a natural impulse, in every one, when they hear a tale of distress, to think of something to say by way of consolation. Emmeline wanted to say something, but she could not think of anything to say. What was there to be said? As by a common consent, they both avoided, with fear and dread, all mention of the horrible man who was now their master.

True, there is religious trust for even the darkest hour. The mulatto woman was a member of the Methodist church, and had an unenlightened but very sincere spirit of piety. Emmeline had been educated much more intelligently,—taught to read and write, and diligently instructed in the Bible, by the care of a faithful and pious mistress; yet, would it not try the faith of the firmest Christian, to find themselves abandoned, apparently, of God, in the grasp of ruthless violence? How much more must it shake the faith of Christ's poor little ones, weak in knowledge and tender in years!

The boat moved on,—freighted with its weight of sorrow,—up the red, muddy, turbid current, through the abrupt tortuous windings of the Red river; and sad eyes gazed wearily on the steep red-clay banks, as they glided by in dreary sameness. At last the boat stopped at a small town, and Legree, with his party, disembarked.

Louisa May Alcott / Little Women

CHAPTER ONE / PLAYING PILGRIMS

"Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents," grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.

"It's so dreadful to be poor!" sighed Meg, looking down at her old dress.

"I don't think it's fair for some girls to have plenty of pretty things, and other girls nothing at all," added little Amy, with an injured sniff.

"We've got Father and Mother, and each other," said Beth contentedly from her corner.

The four young faces on which the firelight shone brightened at the cheerful words, but darkened again as Jo said sadly, "We haven't got Father, and shall not have him for a long time." She didn't say "perhaps never," but each silently added it, thinking of Father far away, where the fighting was.

Nobody spoke for a minute; then Meg said in an altered tone, "You know the reason Mother proposed not having any presents this Christmas was because it is going to be a hard winter for everyone; and she thinks we ought not to spend money for pleasure, when our men are suffering so in the army. We can't do much, but we can make our little sacrifices, and ought to do it gladly. But I am afraid I don't," and Meg shook her head, as she thought regretfully of all the pretty things she wanted.
"But I don't think the little we should spend would do any good. We've each got a dollar, and the army wouldn't be much helped by our giving that. I agree not to expect anything from Mother or you, but I do want to buy *Undine and Sintran* for myself. I've wanted it so long," said Jo, who was a bookworm.

"I planned to spend mine in new music," said Beth, with a little sigh, which no one heard but the hearth brush and kettle-holder.

"I shall get a nice box of Faber's drawing pencils; I really need them," said Amy decidedly.

"Mother didn't say anything about our money, and she won't wish us to give up everything. Let's each buy what we want, and have a little fun; I'm sure we work hard enough to earn it," cried Jo, examining the heels of her shoes in a gentlemanly manner.

"I know I do—teaching those tiresome children nearly all day, when I'm longing to enjoy myself at home," began Meg, in the complaining tone again.

"You don't have half such a hard time as I do," said Jo. "How would you like to be shut up for hours with a nervous, fussy old lady, who keeps you trotting, is never satisfied, and worries you till you're ready to fly out the window or cry?"

"It's naughty to fret, but I do think washing dishes and keeping things tidy is the worst work in the world. It makes me cross, and my hands get so stiff, I can't practice well at all." And Beth looked at her rough hands with a sigh that any one could hear that time.

"I don't believe any of you suffer as I do," cried Amy, "for you don't have to go to school with impertinent girls, who plague you if you don't know your lessons, and laugh at your dresses, and label your father if he isn't rich, and insult you when your nose isn't nice."

"If you mean libel, I'd say so, and not talk about labels, as if Papa was a pickle bottle," advised Jo, laughing.

"I know what I mean, and you needn't be statirical about it. It's proper to use good words, and improve your vocabulary," returned Amy, with dignity.

"Don't peck at one another, children. Don't you wish we had the money Papa lost when we were little, Jo? Dear me! How happy and good we'd be, if we had no worries!" said Meg, who could remember better times.

"You said the other day you thought we were a deal happier than the King children, for they were fighting and fretting all the time, in spite of their money."

"So I did, Beth. Well, I think we are. For though we do have to work, we make fun of ourselves, and are a pretty jolly set, as Jo would say."

"Jo does use such slang words!" observed Amy, with a reproving look at the long figure stretched on the rug.

Jo immediately sat up, put her hands in her pockets, and began to whistle.
"Don't, Jo. It's so boyish!"

"That's why I do it."

"I detest rude, unladylike girls!"

"I hate affected, niminy-piminy chits!"

"Birds in their little nests agree," sang Beth, the peacemaker, with such a funny face that both sharp voices softened to a laugh, and the "pecking" ended for that time.

"Really, girls, you are both to be blamed," said Meg, beginning to lecture in her elder-sisterly fashion. "You are old enough to leave off boyish tricks, and to behave better, Josephine. It didn't matter so much when you were a little girl, but now you are so tall, and turn up your hair, you should remember that you are a young lady."

"I'm not! And if turning up my hair makes me one, I'll wear it in two tails till I'm twenty," cried Jo, pulling off her net, and shaking down a chestnut mane. "I hate to think I've got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China Aster! It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boy's games and work and manners! I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy. And it's worse than ever now, for I'm dying to go and fight with Papa. And I can only stay home and knit, like a poky old woman!"

And Jo shook the blue army sock till the needles rattled like castanets, and her ball bounded across the room.

"Poor Jo! It's too bad, but it can't be helped. So you must try to be contented with making your name boyish, and playing brother to us girls," said Beth, stroking the rough head with a hand that all the dish washing and dusting in the world could not make ungentle in its touch.

"As for you, Amy," continued Meg, "you are altogether too particular and prim. Your airs are funny now, but you'll grow up an affected little goose, if you don't take care. I like your nice manners and refined ways of speaking, when you don't try to be elegant. But your absurd words are as bad as Jo's slang."

"If Jo is a tomboy and Amy a goose, what am I, please?" asked Beth, ready to share the lecture.

"You're a dear, and nothing else," answered Meg warmly, and no one contradicted her, for the 'Mouse' was the pet of the family.

As young readers like to know 'how people look', we will take this moment to give them a little sketch of the four sisters, who sat knitting away in the twilight, while the December snow fell quietly without, and the fire crackled cheerfully within. It was a comfortable room, though the carpet was faded and the furniture very plain, for a good picture or two hung on the walls, books filled the recesses, chrysanthemums and Christmas roses bloomed in the windows, and a pleasant atmosphere of home peace pervaded it.

Margaret, the eldest of the four, was sixteen, and very pretty, being plump and fair, with large eyes, plenty of soft brown hair, a sweet mouth, and white hands, of which she was rather vain. Fifteen-
year-old Jo was very tall, thin, and brown, and reminded one of a colt, for she never seemed to know what to do with her long limbs, which were very much in her way. She had a decided mouth, a comical nose, and sharp, gray eyes, which appeared to see everything, and were by turns fierce, funny, or thoughtful. Her long, thick hair was her one beauty, but it was usually bundled into a net, to be out of her way. Round shoulders had Jo, big hands and feet, a flyaway look to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman and didn’t like it. Elizabeth, or Beth, as everyone called her, was a rosy, smooth-haired, bright-eyed girl of thirteen, with a shy manner, a timid voice, and a peaceful expression which was seldom disturbed. Her father called her 'Little Miss Tranquility', and the name suited her excellently, for she seemed to live in a happy world of her own, only venturing out to meet the few whom she trusted and loved. Amy, though the youngest, was a most important person, in her own opinion at least. A regular snow maiden, with blue eyes, and yellow hair curling on her shoulders, pale and slender, and always carrying herself like a young lady mindful of her manners. What the characters of the four sisters were we will leave to be found out.

The clock struck six and, having swept up the hearth, Beth put a pair of slippers down to warm. Somehow the sight of the old shoes had a good effect upon the girls, for Mother was coming, and everyone brightened to welcome her. Meg stopped lecturing, and lighted the lamp, Amy got out of the easy chair without being asked, and Jo forgot how tired she was as she sat up to hold the slippers nearer to the blaze.

"They are quite worn out. Marmee must have a new pair."

"I thought I’d get her some with my dollar," said Beth.

"No, I shall!" cried Amy.

"I’m the oldest," began Meg, but Jo cut in with a decided, "I’m the man of the family now Papa is away, and I shall provide the slippers, for he told me to take special care of Mother while he was gone."

"I’ll tell you what we’ll do," said Beth, "let’s each get her something for Christmas, and not get anything for ourselves."

"That’s like you, dear! What will we get?" exclaimed Jo.

Everyone thought soberly for a minute, then Meg announced, as if the idea was suggested by the sight of her own pretty hands, "I shall give her a nice pair of gloves."

"Army shoes, best to be had," cried Jo.

"Some handkerchiefs, all hemmed," said Beth.

"I’ll get a little bottle of cologne. She likes it, and it won’t cost much, so I’ll have some left to buy my pencils," added Amy.

"How will we give the things?" asked Meg.
"Put them on the table, and bring her in and see her open the bundles. Don't you remember how we used to do on our birthdays?" answered Jo.

"I used to be so frightened when it was my turn to sit in the chair with the crown on, and see you all come marching round to give the presents, with a kiss. I liked the things and the kisses, but it was dreadful to have you sit looking at me while I opened the bundles," said Beth, who was toasting her face and the bread for tea at the same time.

"Let Marmee think we are getting things for ourselves, and then surprise her. We must go shopping tomorrow afternoon, Meg. There is so much to do about the play for Christmas night," said Jo, marching up and down, with her hands behind her back, and her nose in the air.

"I don't mean to act any more after this time. I'm getting too old for such things," observed Meg, who was as much a child as ever about 'dressing-up' frolics.

"You won't stop, I know, as long as you can trail round in a white gown with your hair down, and wear gold-paper jewelry. You are the best actress we've got, and there'll be an end of everything if you quit the boards," said Jo. "We ought to rehearse tonight. Come here, Amy, and do the fainting scene, for you are as stiff as a poker in that."

"I can't help it. I never saw anyone faint, and I don't choose to make myself all black and blue, tumbling flat as you do. If I can go down easily, I'll drop. If I can't, I shall fall into a chair and be graceful. I don't care if Hugo does come at me with a pistol," returned Amy, who was not gifted with dramatic power, but was chosen because she was small enough to be borne out shrieking by the villain of the piece.

"Do it this way. Clasp your hands so, and stagger across the room, crying frantically, 'Roderigo! Save me! Save me!'" and away went Jo, with a melodramatic scream which was truly thrilling.

Amy followed, but she poked her hands out stiffly before her, and jerked herself along as if she went by machinery, and her "Ow!" was more suggestive of pins being run into her than of fear and anguish. Jo gave a despairing groan, and Meg laughed outright, while Beth let her bread burn as she watched the fun with interest. "It's no use! Do the best you can when the time comes, and if the audience laughs, don't blame me. Come on, Meg."

Then things went smoothly, for Don Pedro defied the world in a speech of two pages without a single break. Hagar, the witch, chanted an awful incantation over her kettleful of simmering toads, with weird effect. Roderigo rent his chains asunder manfully, and Hugo died in agonies of remorse and arsenic, with a wild, "Ha! Ha!"

"It's the best we've had yet," said Meg, as the dead villain sat up and rubbed his elbows.

"I don't see how you can write and act such splendid things, Jo. You're a regular Shakespeare!" exclaimed Beth, who firmly believed that her sisters were gifted with wonderful genius in all things.

"Not quite," replied Jo modestly. "I do think The Witches Curse, an Operatic Tragedy is rather a nice thing, but I'd like to try Macbeth, if we only had a trapdoor for Banquo. I always wanted to do the killing part. 'Is that a dagger that I see before me?' muttered Jo, rolling her eyes and clutching at the air, as she had seen a famous tragedian do.
"No, it's the toasting fork, with Mother's shoe on it instead of the bread. Beth's stage-struck!" cried Meg, and the rehearsal ended in a general burst of laughter.

"Glad to find you so merry, my girls," said a cheery voice at the door, and actors and audience turned to welcome a tall, motherly lady with a 'can I help you' look about her which was truly delightful. She was not elegantly dressed, but a noble-looking woman, and the girls thought the gray cloak and unfashionable bonnet covered the most splendid mother in the world.

"Well, dearies, how have you got on today? There was so much to do, getting the boxes ready to go tomorrow, that I didn't come home to dinner. Has anyone called, Beth? How is your cold, Meg? Jo, you look tired to death. Come and kiss me, baby."

While making these maternal inquiries Mrs. March got her wet things off, her warm slippers on, and sitting down in the easy chair, drew Amy to her lap, preparing to enjoy the happiest hour of her busy day. The girls flew about, trying to make things comfortable, each in her own way. Meg arranged the tea table, Jo brought wood and set chairs, dropping, over-turning, and clattering everything she touched. Beth trotted to and fro between parlor kitchen, quiet and busy, while Amy gave directions to everyone, as she sat with her hands folded.

As they gathered about the table, Mrs. March said, with a particularly happy face, "I've got a treat for you after supper."

A quick, bright smile went round like a streak of sunshine. Beth clapped her hands, regardless of the biscuit she held, and Jo tossed up her napkin, crying, "A letter! A letter! Three cheers for Father!"

"Yes, a nice long letter. He is well, and thinks he shall get through the cold season better than we feared. He sends all sorts of loving wishes for Christmas, and an especial message to you girls," said Mrs. March, patting her pocket as if she had got a treasure there.

"Hurry and get done! Don't stop to quirk your little finger and simper over your plate, Amy," cried Jo, choking on her tea and dropping her bread, butter side down, on the carpet in her haste to get at the treat.

Beth ate no more, but crept away to sit in her shadowy corner and brood over the delight to come, till the others were ready.

"I think it was so splendid in Father to go as chaplain when he was too old to be drafted, and not strong enough for a soldier," said Meg warmly.

"Don't I wish I could go as a drummer, a vivan—what's its name? Or a nurse, so I could be near him and help him," exclaimed Jo, with a groan.

"It must be very disagreeable to sleep in a tent, and eat all sorts of bad-tasting things, and drink out of a tin mug," sighed Amy.

"When will he come home, Marmee?" asked Beth, with a little quiver in her voice.
"Not for many months, dear, unless he is sick. He will stay and do his work faithfully as long as he can, and we won't ask for him back a minute sooner than he can be spared. Now come and hear the letter."

They all drew to the fire, Mother in the big chair with Beth at her feet, Meg and Amy perched on either arm of the chair, and Jo leaning on the back, where no one would see any sign of emotion if the letter should happen to be touching. Very few letters were written in those hard times that were not touching, especially those which fathers sent home. In this one little was said of the hardships endured, the dangers faced, or the homesickness conquered. It was a cheerful, hopeful letter, full of lively descriptions of camp life, marches, and military news, and only at the end did the writer's heart overflow with fatherly love and longing for the little girls at home.

"Give them all of my dear love and a kiss. Tell them I think of them by day, pray for them by night, and find my best comfort in their affection at all times. A year seems very long to wait before I see them, but remind them that while we wait we may all work, so that these hard days need not be wasted. I know they will remember all I said to them, that they will be loving children to you, will do their duty faithfully, fight their bosom enemies bravely, and conquer themselves so beautifully that when I come back to them I may be fonder and prouder than ever of my little women." Everybody sniffed when they came to that part. Jo wasn't ashamed of the great tear that dropped off the end of her nose, and Amy never minded the rumpling of her curls as she hid her face on her mother's shoulder and sobbed out, "I am a selfish girl! But I'll truly try to be better, so he mayn't be disappointed in me by-and-by."

"We all will," cried Meg. "I think too much of my looks and hate to work, but won't any more, if I can help it."

"I'll try and be what he loves to call me, 'a little woman' and not be rough and wild, but do my duty here instead of wanting to be somewhere else," said Jo, thinking that keeping her temper at home was a much harder task than facing a rebel or two down South.

Beth said nothing, but wiped away her tears with the blue army sock and began to knit with all her might, losing no time in doing the duty that lay nearest her, while she resolved in her quiet little soul to be all that Father hoped to find her when the year brought round the happy coming home.

Mrs. March broke the silence that followed Jo's words, by saying in her cheery voice, "Do you remember how you used to play Pilgrims Progress when you were little things? Nothing delighted you more than to have me tie my piece bags on your backs for burdens, give you hats and sticks and rolls of paper, and let you travel through the house from the cellar, which was the City of Destruction, up, up, to the housetop, where you had all the lovely things you could collect to make a Celestial City."

"What fun it was, especially going by the lions, fighting Apollyon, and passing through the valley where the hob-goblins were," said Jo.

"I liked the place where the bundles fell off and tumbled downstairs," said Meg.

"I don't remember much about it, except that I was afraid of the cellar and the dark entry, and always liked the cake and milk we had up at the top. If I wasn't too old for such things, I'd rather like to play it over again," said Amy, who began to talk of renouncing childish things at the mature age of twelve.
"We never are too old for this, my dear, because it is a play we are playing all the time in one way or another. Our burdens are here, our road is before us, and the longing for goodness and happiness is the guide that leads us through many troubles and mistakes to the peace which is a true Celestial City. Now, my little pilgrims, suppose you begin again, not in play, but in earnest, and see how far on you can get before Father comes home."

"Really, Mother? Where are our bundles?" asked Amy, who was a very literal young lady.

"Each of you told what your burden was just now, except Beth. I rather think she hasn’t got any," said her mother.

"Yes, I have. Mine is dishes and dusters, and envying girls with nice pianos, and being afraid of people."

Beth’s bundle was such a funny one that everybody wanted to laugh, but nobody did, for it would have hurt her feelings very much.

"Let us do it," said Meg thoughtfully. "It is only another name for trying to be good, and the story may help us, for though we do want to be good, it’s hard work and we forget, and don’t do our best."

"We were in the Slough of Despond tonight, and Mother came and pulled us out as Help did in the book. We ought to have our roll of directions, like Christian. What shall we do about that?" asked Jo, delighted with the fancy which lent a little romance to the very dull task of doing her duty.

"Look under your pillows Christmas morning, and you will find your guidebook," replied Mrs. March.

They talked over the new plan while old Hannah cleared the table, then out came the four little work baskets, and the needles flew as the girls made sheets for Aunt March. It was uninteresting sewing, but tonight no one grumbled. They adopted Jo’s plan of dividing the long seams into four parts, and calling the quarters Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, and in that way got on capitally, especially when they talked about the different countries as they stitched their way through them.

At nine they stopped work, and sang, as usual, before they went to bed. No one but Beth could get much music out of the old piano, but she had a way of softly touching the yellow keys and making a pleasant accompaniment to the simple songs they sang. Meg had a voice like a flute, and she and her mother led the little choir. Amy chirped like a cricket, and Jo wandered through the airs at her own sweet will, always coming out at the wrong place with a croak or a quaver that spoiled the most pensive tune. They had always done this from the time they could lisp...

Clink, clinkle, 'ittle 'tar,

and it had become a household custom, for the mother was a born singer. The first sound in the morning was her voice as she went about the house singing like a lark, and the last sound at night was the same cheery sound, for the girls never grew too old for that familiar lullaby.
CHAPTER TWO / A MERRY CHRISTMAS

Jo was the first to wake in the gray dawn of Christmas morning. No stockings hung at the fireplace, and for a moment she felt as much disappointed as she did long ago, when her little sock fell down because it was crammed so full of goodies. Then she remembered her mother's promise and, slipping her hand under her pillow, drew out a little crimson-covered book. She knew it very well, for it was that beautiful old story of the best life ever lived, and Jo felt that it was a true guidebook for any pilgrim going on a long journey. She woke Meg with a "Merry Christmas," and bade her see what was under her pillow. A green-covered book appeared, with the same picture inside, and a few words written by their mother, which made their one present very precious in their eyes. Presently Beth and Amy woke to rummage and find their little books also, one dove-colored, the other blue, and all sat looking at and talking about them, while the east grew rosy with the coming day.

In spite of her small vanities, Margaret had a sweet and pious nature, which unconsciously influenced her sisters, especially Jo, who loved her very tenderly, and obeyed her because her advice was so gently given.

"Girls," said Meg seriously, looking from the tumbled head beside her to the two little night-capped ones in the room beyond, "Mother wants us to read and love and mind these books, and we must begin at once. We used to be faithful about it, but since Father went away and all this war trouble unsettled us, we have neglected many things. You can do as you please, but I shall keep my book on the table here and read a little every morning as soon as I wake, for I know it will do me good and help me through the day."

Then she opened her new book and began to read. Jo put her arm round her and, leaning cheek to cheek, read also, with the quiet expression so seldom seen on her restless face.

"How good Meg is! Come, Amy, let's do as they do. I'll help you with the hard words, and they'll explain things if we don't understand," whispered Beth, very much impressed by the pretty books and her sisters' example.

"I'm glad mine is blue," said Amy. and then the rooms were very still while the pages were softly turned, and the winter sunshine crept in to touch the bright heads and serious faces with a Christmas greeting.

"Where is Mother?" asked Meg, as she and Jo ran down to thank her for their gifts, half an hour later.

"Goodness only knows. Some poor creeter came a-beggin', and your ma went straight off to see what was needed. There never was such a woman for givin' away vittles and drink, clothes and firin'," replied Hannah, who had lived with the family since Meg was born, and was considered by them all more as a friend than a servant.

"She will be back soon, I think, so fry your cakes, and have everything ready," said Meg, looking over the presents which were collected in a basket and kept under the sofa, ready to be produced at the proper time. "Why, where is Amy's bottle of cologne?" she added, as the little flask did not appear.
"She took it out a minute ago, and went off with it to put a ribbon on it, or some such notion," replied Jo, dancing about the room to take the first stiffness off the new army slippers.

"How nice my handkerchiefs look, don't they? Hannah washed and ironed them for me, and I marked them all myself," said Beth, looking proudly at the somewhat uneven letters which had cost her such labor.

"Bless the child! She's gone and put 'Mother' on them instead of 'M. March'. How funny!" cried Jo, taking one up.

"Isn't that right? I thought it was better to do it so, because Meg's initials are M.M., and I don't want anyone to use these but Marmee," said Beth, looking troubled.

"It's all right, dear, and a very pretty idea, quite sensible too, for no one can ever mistake now. It will please her very much, I know," said Meg, with a frown for Jo and a smile for Beth.

"There's Mother. Hide the basket, quick!" cried Jo, as a door slammed and steps sounded in the hall.

Amy came in hastily, and looked rather abashed when she saw her sisters all waiting for her.

"Where have you been, and what are you hiding behind you?" asked Meg, surprised to see, by her hood and cloak, that lazy Amy had been out so early.

"Don't laugh at me, Jo! I didn't mean anyone should know till the time came. I only meant to change the little bottle for a big one, and I gave all my money to get it, and I'm truly trying not to be selfish any more."

As she spoke, Amy showed the handsome flask which replaced the cheap one, and looked so earnest and humble in her little effort to forget herself that Meg hugged her on the spot, and Jo pronounced her 'a trump', while Beth ran to the window, and picked her finest rose to ornament the stately bottle.

"You see I felt ashamed of my present, after reading and talking about being good this morning, so I ran round the corner and changed it the minute I was up, and I'm so glad, for mine is the handsomest now."

Another bang of the street door sent the basket under the sofa, and the girls to the table, eager for breakfast.

"Merry Christmas, Marmee! Many of them! Thank you for our books. We read some, and mean to every day," they all cried in chorus.

"Merry Christmas, little daughters! I'm glad you began at once, and hope you will keep on. But I want to say one word before we sit down. Not far away from here lies a poor woman with a little newborn baby. Six children are huddled into one bed to keep from freezing, for they have no fire. There is nothing to eat over there, and the oldest boy came to tell me they were suffering hunger and cold. My girls, will you give them your breakfast as a Christmas present?"
They were all unusually hungry, having waited nearly an hour, and for a minute no one spoke, only a minute, for Jo exclaimed impetuously, "I'm so glad you came before we began!"

"May I go and help carry the things to the poor little children?" asked Beth eagerly.

"I shall take the cream and the muffings," added Amy, heroically giving up the article she most liked.

Meg was already covering the buckwheats, and piling the bread into one big plate.

"I thought you'd do it," said Mrs. March, smiling as if satisfied. "You shall all go and help me, and when we come back we will have bread and milk for breakfast, and make it up at dinnertime."

They were soon ready, and the procession set out. Fortunately it was early, and they went through back streets, so few people saw them, and no one laughed at the queer party.

A poor, bare, miserable room it was, with broken windows, no fire, ragged bedclothes, a sick mother, wailing baby, and a group of pale, hungry children cuddled under one old quilt, trying to keep warm.

How the big eyes stared and the blue lips smiled as the girls went in.

"Ach, mein Gott! It is good angels come to us!" said the poor woman, crying for joy.

"Funny angels in hoods and mittens," said Jo, and set them to laughing.

In a few minutes it really did seem as if kind spirits had been at work there. Hannah, who had carried wood, made a fire, and stopped up the broken panes with old hats and her own cloak. Mrs. March gave the mother tea and gruel, and comforted her with promises of help, while she dressed the little baby as tenderly as if it had been her own. The girls meantime spread the table, set the children round the fire, and fed them like so many hungry birds, laughing, talking, and trying to understand the funny broken English.

"Das ist gut! " "Die Engel-kinder!" cried the poor things as they ate and warmed their purple hands at the comfortable blaze. The girls had never been called angel children before, and thought it very agreeable, especially Jo, who had been considered a 'Sancho' ever since she was born. That was a very happy breakfast, though they didn't get any of it. And when they went away, leaving comfort behind, I think there were not in all the city four merrier people than the hungry little girls who gave away their breakfasts and contented themselves with bread and milk on Christmas morning.

"That's loving our neighbor better than ourselves, and I like it," said Meg, as they set out their presents while their mother was upstairs collecting clothes for the poor Hummels.

Not a very splendid show, but there was a great deal of love done up in the few little bundles, and the tall vase of red roses, white chrysanthemums, and trailing vines, which stood in the middle, gave quite an elegant air to the table.

"She's coming! Strike up, Beth! Open the door, Amy! Three cheers for Marmee!" cried Jo, prancing about while Meg went to conduct Mother to the seat of honor.
Beth played her gayest march, Amy threw open the door, and Meg enacted escort with great dignity. Mrs. March was both surprised and touched, and smiled with her eyes full as she examined her presents and read the little notes which accompanied them. The slippers went on at once, a new handkerchief was slipped into her pocket, well scented with Amy’s cologne, the rose was fastened in her bosom, and the nice gloves were pronounced a perfect fit.

There was a good deal of laughing and kissing and explaining, in the simple, loving fashion which makes these home festivals so pleasant at the time, so sweet to remember long afterward, and then all fell to work.

The morning charities and ceremonies took so much time that the rest of the day was devoted to preparations for the evening festivities. Being still too young to go often to the theater, and not rich enough to afford any great outlay for private performances, the girls put their wits to work, and necessity being the mother of invention, made whatever they needed. Very clever were some of their productions, pasteboard guitars, antique lamps made of old-fashioned butter boats covered with silver paper, gorgeous robes of old cotton, glittering with tin spangles from a pickle factory, and armor covered with the same useful diamond shaped bits left in sheets when the lids of preserve pots were cut out. The big chamber was the scene of many innocent revels.

No gentleman were admitted, so Jo played male parts to her heart’s content and took immense satisfaction in a pair of russet leather boots given her by a friend, who knew a lady who knew an actor. These boots, an old foil, and a slashed doublet once used by an artist for some picture, were Jo’s chief treasures and appeared on all occasions. The smallness of the company made it necessary for the two principal actors to take several parts apiece, and they certainly deserved some credit for the hard work they did in learning three or four different parts, whisking in and out of various costumes, and managing the stage besides. It was excellent drill for their memories, a harmless amusement, and employed many hours which otherwise would have been idle, lonely, or spent in less profitable society.

On Christmas night, a dozen girls piled onto the bed which was the dress circle, and sat before the blue and yellow chintz curtains in a most flattering state of expectancy. There was a good deal of rustling and whispering behind the curtain, a trifle of lamp smoke, and an occasional giggle from Amy, who was apt to get hysterical in the excitement of the moment. Presently a bell sounded, the curtains flew apart, and the operatic tragedy began.

"A gloomy wood," according to the one playbill, was represented by a few shrubs in pots, green baize on the floor, and a cave in the distance. This cave was made with a clothes horse for a roof, bureaus for walls, and in it was a small furnace in full blast, with a black pot on it and an old witch bending over it. The stage was dark and the glow of the furnace had a fine effect, especially as real steam issued from the kettle when the witch took off the cover. A moment was allowed for the first thrill to subside, then Hugo, the villain, stalked in with a clanking sword at his side, a slouching hat, black beard, mysterious cloak, and the boots. After pacing to and fro in much agitation, he struck his forehead, and burst out in a wild strain, singing of his hatred for Roderigo, his love for Zara, and his pleasing resolution to kill the one and win the other. The gruff tones of Hugo’s voice, with an occasional shout when his feelings overcame him, were very impressive, and the audience applauded the moment he paused for breath. Bowing with the air of one accustomed to public praise, he stole to the cavern and ordered Hagar to come forth with a commanding, "What ho, minion! I need thee!"
Out came Meg, with gray horsehair hanging about her face, a red and black robe, a staff, and cabalistic signs upon her cloak. Hugo demanded a potion to make Zara adore him, and one to destroy Roderigo. Hagar, in a fine dramatic melody, promised both, and proceeded to call up the spirit who would bring the love philter.

Hither, hither, from thy home, Airy sprite, I bid thee come!
Born of roses, fed on dew, Charms and potions canst thou brew?
Bring me here, with elfin speed, The fragrant philter which I need.
Make it sweet and swift and strong, Spirit, answer now my song!

A soft strain of music sounded, and then at the back of the cave appeared a little figure in cloudy white, with glittering wings, golden hair, and a garland of roses on its head. Waving a wand, it sang...

Hither I come, From my airy home, Afar in the silver moon. Take the magic spell, And use it well, Or its power will vanish soon!

And dropping a small, gilded bottle at the witch's feet, the spirit vanished. Another chant from Hagar produced another apparition, not a lovely one, for with a bang an ugly black imp appeared and, having croaked a reply, tossed a dark bottle at Hugo and disappeared with a mocking laugh. Having warbled his thanks and put the potions in his boots, Hugo departed, and Hagar informed the audience that as he had killed a few of her friends in times past, she had cursed him, and intends to thwart his plans, and be revenged on him. Then the curtain fell, and the audience reposed and ate candy while discussing the merits of the play.

A good deal of hammering went on before the curtain rose again, but when it became evident what a masterpiece of stage carpentry had been got up, no one murmured at the delay. It was truly superb. A tower rose to the ceiling, halfway up appeared a window with a lamp burning in it, and behind the white curtain appeared Zara in a lovely blue and silver dress, waiting for Roderigo. He came in gorgeous array, with plumed cap, red cloak, chestnut lovelocks, a guitar, and the boots, of course. Kneeling at the foot of the tower, he sang a serenade in melting tones. Zara replied and, after a musical dialogue, consented to fly. Then came the grand effect of the play. Roderigo produced a rope ladder, with five steps to it, threw up one end, and invited Zara to descend. Timidly she crept from her lattice, put her hand on Roderigo's shoulder, and was about to leap gracefully down when "Alas! Alas for Zara!" she forgot her train. It caught in the window, the tower tottered, leaned forward, fell with a crash, and buried the unhappy lovers in the ruins.

A universal shriek arose as the russet boots waved wildly from the wreck and a golden head emerged, exclaiming, "I told you so! I told you so!" With wonderful presence of mind, Don Pedro, the cruel sire, rushed in, dragged out his daughter, with a hasty aside...
"Don't laugh! Act as if it was all right!" and, ordering Roderigo up, banished him from the kingdom with wrath and scorn. Though decidedly shaken by the fall from the tower upon him, Roderigo defied the old gentleman and refused to stir. This dauntless example fired Zara. She also defied her sire, and he ordered them both to the deepest dungeons of the castle. A stout little retainer came in with chains and led them away, looking very much frightened and evidently forgetting the speech he ought to have made.

Act third was the castle hall, and here Hagar appeared, having come to free the lovers and finish Hugo. She hears him coming and hides, sees him put the potions into two cups of wine and bid the timid little servant, "Bear them to the captives in their cells, and tell them I shall come anon." The servant takes Hugo aside to tell him something, and Hagar changes the cups for two others which are harmless. Ferdinando, the 'minion', carries them away, and Hagar puts back the cup which holds the poison meant for Roderigo. Hugo, getting thirsty after a long warble, drinks it, loses his wits, and after a good deal of clutching and stamping, falls flat and dies, while Hagar informs him what she has done in a song of exquisite power and melody.

This was a truly thrilling scene, though some persons might have thought that the sudden tumbling down of a quantity of long red hair rather marred the effect of the villain's death. He was called before the curtain, and with great propriety appeared, leading Hagar, whose singing was considered more wonderful than all the rest of the performance put together.

Act fourth displayed the despairing Roderigo on the point of stabbing himself because he has been told that Zara has deserted him. Just as the dagger is at his heart, a lovely song is sung under his window, informing him that Zara is true but in danger, and he can save her if he will. A key is thrown in, which unlocks the door, and in a spasm of rapture he tears off his chains and rushes away to find and rescue his lady love.

Act fifth opened with a stormy scene between Zara and Don Pedro. He wishes her to go into a convent, but she won't hear of it, and after a touching appeal, is about to faint when Roderigo dashes in and demands her hand. Don Pedro refuses, because he is not rich. They shout and gesticulate tremendously but cannot agree, and Rodrigo is about to bear away the exhausted Zara, when the timid servant enters with a letter and a bag from Hagar, who has mysteriously disappeared. The latter informs the party that she bequeaths untold wealth to the young pair and an awful doom to Don Pedro, if he doesn't make them happy. The bag is opened, and several quarts of tin money shower down upon the stage till it is quite glorified with the glitter. This entirely softens the stern sire. He consents without a murmur, all join in a joyful chorus, and the curtain falls upon the lovers kneeling to receive Don Pedro's blessing in attitudes of the most romantic grace.

Tumultuous applause followed but received an unexpected check, for the cot bed, on which the dress circle was built, suddenly shut up and extinguished the enthusiastic audience. Roderigo and Don Pedro flew to the rescue, and all were taken out unhurt, though many were speechless with laughter. The excitement had hardly subsided when Hannah appeared, with "Mrs. March's compliments, and would the ladies walk down to supper."

This was a surprise even to the actors, and when they saw the table, they looked at one another in rapturous amazement. It was like Marmee to get up a little treat for them, but anything so fine as this was unheard of since the departed days of plenty. There was ice cream, actually two dishes of it, pink and white, and cake and fruit and distracting French bonbons and, in the middle of the table, four great bouquets of hot house flowers.
It quite took their breath away, and they stared first at the table and then at their mother, who looked as if she enjoyed it immensely.

"Is it fairies?" asked Amy.

"Santa Claus," said Beth.

"Mother did it." And Meg smiled her sweetest, in spite of her gray beard and white eyebrows.

"Aunt March had a good fit and sent the supper," cried Jo, with a sudden inspiration.

"All wrong. Old Mr. Laurence sent it," replied Mrs. March.

"The Laurence boy's grandfather! What in the world put such a thing into his head? We don't know him!" exclaimed Meg.

"Hannah told one of his servants about your breakfast party. He is an odd old gentleman, but that pleased him. He knew my father years ago, and he sent me a polite note this afternoon, saying he hoped I would allow him to express his friendly feeling toward my children by sending them a few trifles in honor of the day. I could not refuse, and so you have a little feast at night to make up for the bread-and-milk breakfast."

"That boy put it into his head, I know he did! He's a capital fellow, and I wish we could get acquainted. He looks as if he'd like to know us but he's bashful, and Meg is so prim she won't let me speak to him when we pass," said Jo, as the plates went round, and the ice began to melt out of sight, with ohs and ahs of satisfaction.

"You mean the people who live in the big house next door, don't you?" asked one of the girls. "My mother knows old Mr. Laurence, but says he's very proud and doesn't like to mix with his neighbors. He keeps his grandson shut up, when he isn't riding or walking with his tutor, and makes him study very hard. We invited him to our party, but he didn't come. Mother says he's very nice, though he never speaks to us girls."

"Our cat ran away once, and he brought her back, and we talked over the fence, and were getting on capitally, all about cricket, and so on, when he saw Meg coming, and walked off. I mean to know him some day, for he needs fun, I'm sure he does," said Jo decidedly.

"I like his manners, and he looks like a little gentleman, so I've no objection to your knowing him, if a proper opportunity comes. He brought the flowers himself, and I should have asked him in, if I had been sure what was going on upstairs. He looked so wistful as he went away, hearing the frolic and evidently having none of his own."

"It's a mercy you didn't, Mother!" laughed Jo, looking at her boots. "But we'll have another play sometime that he can see. Perhaps he'll help act. Wouldn't that be jolly?"

"I never had such a fine bouquet before! How pretty it is!" And Meg examined her flowers with great interest.
"They are lovely. But Beth’s roses are sweeter to me," said Mrs. March, smelling the half-dead posy in her belt.

Beth nestled up to her, and whispered softly, "I wish I could send my bunch to Father. I'm afraid he isn't having such a merry Christmas as we are."

CHAPTER THREE / THE LAURENCE BOY

"Jo! Jo! Where are you?" cried Meg at the foot of the garret stairs.

"Here!" answered a husky voice from above, and, running up, Meg found her sister eating apples and crying over the Heir of Redclyffe, wrapped up in a comforter on an old three-legged sofa by the sunny window. This was Jo's favorite refuge, and here she loved to retire with half a dozen russets and a nice book, to enjoy the quiet and the society of a pet rat who lived near by and didn't mind her a particle. As Meg appeared, Scrabble whisked into his hole. Jo shook the tears off her cheeks and waited to hear the news.

"Such fun! Only see! A regular note of invitation from Mrs. Gardiner for tomorrow night!" cried Meg, waving the precious paper and then proceeding to read it with girlish delight.

"'Mrs. Gardiner would be happy to see Miss March and Miss Josephine at a little dance on New Year's Eve.' Marmee is willing we should go, now what shall we wear?"

"What's the use of asking that, when you know we shall wear our poplins, because we haven't got anything else?" answered Jo with her mouth full.

"If I only had a silk!" sighed Meg. "Mother says I may when I'm eighteen perhaps, but two years is an everlasting time to wait."

"I'm sure our pops look like silk, and they are nice enough for us. Yours is as good as new, but I forgot the burn and the tear in mine. Whatever shall I do? The burn shows badly, and I can't take any out."

"You must sit still all you can and keep your back out of sight. The front is all right. I shall have a new ribbon for my hair, and Marmee will lend me her little pearl pin, and my new slippers are lovely, and my gloves will do, though they aren't as nice as I'd like."

"Mine are spoiled with lemonade, and I can't get any new ones, so I shall have to go without," said Jo, who never troubled herself much about dress.

"You must have gloves, or I won't go," cried Meg decidedly. "Gloves are more important than anything else. You can't dance without them, and if you don't I should be so mortified."
"Then I'll stay still. I don't care much for company dancing. It's no fun to go sailing round. I like to fly about and cut capers."

"You can't ask Mother for new ones, they are so expensive, and you are so careless. She said when you spoiled the others that she shouldn't get you any more this winter. Can't you make them do?"

"I can hold them crumpled up in my hand, so no one will know how stained they are. That's all I can do. No! I'll tell you how we can manage, each wear one good one and carry a bad one. Don't you see?"

"Your hands are bigger than mine, and you will stretch my glove dreadfully," began Meg, whose gloves were a tender point with her.

"Then I'll go without. I don't care what people say!" cried Jo, taking up her book.

"You may have it, you may! Only don't stain it, and do behave nicely. Don't put your hands behind you, or stare, or say 'Christopher Columbus!' will you?"

"Don't worry about me. I'll be as prim as I can and not get into any scrapes, if I can help it. Now go and answer your note, and let me finish this splendid story."

So Meg went away to 'accept with thanks', look over her dress, and sing blithely as she did up her one real lace frill, while Jo finished her story, her four apples, and had a game of romps with Scrabble.

On New Year's Eve the parlor was deserted, for the two younger girls played dressing maids and the two elder were absorbed in the all-important business of 'getting ready for the party'. Simple as the toilets were, there was a great deal of running up and down, laughing and talking, and at one time a strong smell of burned hair pervaded the house. Meg wanted a few curls about her face, and Jo undertook to pinch the papered locks with a pair of hot tongs.

"Ought they to smoke like that?" asked Beth from her perch on the bed.

"It's the dampness drying," replied Jo.

"What a queer smell! It's like burned feathers," observed Amy, smoothing her own pretty curls with a superior air.

"There, now I'll take off the papers and you'll see a cloud of little ringlets," said Jo, putting down the tongs.

She did take off the papers, but no cloud of ringlets appeared, for the hair came with the papers, and the horrified hairdresser laid a row of little scorched bundles on the bureau before her victim.

"Oh, oh, oh! What have you done? I'm spoiled! I can't go! My hair, oh, my hair!" wailed Meg looking with despair at the uneven frizzle on her forehead.
"Just my luck! You shouldn't have asked me to do it. I always spoil everything. I'm so sorry, but the tongs were too hot, and so I've made a mess," groaned poor Jo, regarding the little black pancakes with tears of regret.

"It isn't spoiled. Just frizzle it, and tie your ribbon so the ends come on your forehead a bit, and it will look like the last fashion. I've seen many girls do it so," said Amy consolingly.

"Serves me right for trying to be fine. I wish I'd let my hair alone," cried Meg petulantly.

"So do I, it was so smooth and pretty. But it will soon grow out again," said Beth, coming to kiss and comfort the shorn sheep.

After various lesser mishaps, Meg was finished at last, and by the united exertions of the entire family Jo's hair was got up and her dress on. They looked very well in their simple suits, Meg's in silvery drab, with a blue velvet snood, lace frills, and the pearl pin. Jo in maroon, with a stiff, gentlemanly linen collar, and a white chrysanthemum or two for her only ornament. Each put on one nice light glove, and carried one soiled one, and all pronounced the effect "quite easy and fine". Meg's high-heeled slippers were very tight and hurt her, though she would not own it, and Jo's nineteen hairpins all seemed stuck straight into her head, which was not exactly comfortable, but, dear me, let us be elegant or die.

"Have a good time, dearies!" said Mrs. March, as the sisters went daintily down the walk. "Don't eat much supper, and come away at eleven when I send Hannah for you." As the gate clashed behind them, a voice cried from a window...

"Girls, girls! Have you you both got nice pocket handkerchiefs?"

"Yes, yes, spandy nice, and Meg has cologne on hers," cried Jo, adding with a laugh as they went on, "I do believe Marmee would ask that if we were all running away from an earthquake."

"It is one of her aristocratic tastes, and quite proper, for a real lady is always known by neat boots, gloves, and handkerchief," replied Meg, who had a good many little 'aristocratic tastes' of her own.

"Now don't forget to keep the bad breadth out of sight, Jo. Is my sash right? And does my hair look very bad?" said Meg, as she turned from the glass in Mrs. Gardiner's dressing room after a prolonged prink.

"I know I shall forget. If you see me doing anything wrong, just remind me by a wink, will you?" returned Jo, giving her collar a twitch and her head a hasty brush.

"No, winking isn't ladylike. I'll lift my eyebrows if any thing is wrong, and nod if you are all right. Now hold your shoulder straight, and take short steps, and don't shake hands if you are introduced to anyone. It isn't the thing."

"How do you learn all the proper ways? I never can. Isn't that music gay?"

Down they went, feeling a trifle timid, for they seldom went to parties, and informal as this little gathering was, it was an event to them. Mrs. Gardiner, a stately old lady, greeted them kindly and
handed them over to the eldest of her six daughters. Meg knew Sallie and was at her ease very soon, but Jo, who didn't care much for girls or girlish gossip, stood about, with her back carefully against the wall, and felt as much out of place as a colt in a flower garden. Half a dozen jovial lads were talking about skates in another part of the room, and she longed to go and join them, for skating was one of the joys of her life. She telegraphed her wish to Meg, but the eyebrows went up so alarmingly that she dared not stir. No one came to talk to her, and one by one the group dwindled away till she was left alone. She could not roam about and amuse herself, for the burned breadth would show, so she stared at people rather forlornly till the dancing began. Meg was asked at once, and the tight slippers tripped about so briskly that none would have guessed the pain their wearer suffered smilingly. Jo saw a big red headed youth approaching her corner, and fearing he meant to engage her, she slipped into a curtained recess, intending to peep and enjoy herself in peace. Unfortunately, another bashful person had chosen the same refuge, for, as the curtain fell behind her, she found herself face to face with the 'Laurence boy'.

"Dear me, I didn't know anyone was here!" stammered Jo, preparing to back out as speedily as she had bounced in.

But the boy laughed and said pleasantly, though he looked a little startled, "Don't mind me, stay if you like."

"Shan't I disturb you?"

"Not a bit. I only came here because I don't know many people and felt rather strange at first, you know."

"So did I. Don't go away, please, unless you'd rather."

The boy sat down again and looked at his pumps, till Jo said, trying to be polite and easy, "I think I've had the pleasure of seeing you before. You live near us, don't you?"

"Next door." And he looked up and laughed outright, for Jo's prim manner was rather funny when he remembered how they had chatted about cricket when he brought the cat home.

That put Jo at her ease and she laughed too, as she said, in her heartiest way, "We did have such a good time over your nice Christmas present."

"Grandpa sent it."

"But you put it into his head, didn't you, now?"

"How is your cat, Miss March?" asked the boy, trying to look sober while his black eyes shone with fun.

"Nicely, thank you, Mr. Laurence. But I am not Miss March, I'm only Jo," returned the young lady.

"I'm not Mr. Laurence, I'm only Laurie."

"Laurie Laurence, what an odd name."
"My first name is Theodore, but I don't like it, for the fellows called me Dora, so I made them say Laurie instead."

"I hate my name, too, so sentimental! I wish every one would say Jo instead of Josephine. How did you make the boys stop calling you Dora?"

"I thrashed 'em."

"I can't thrash Aunt March, so I suppose I shall have to bear it." And Jo resigned herself with a sigh.

"Don't you like to dance, Miss Jo?" asked Laurie, looking as if he thought the name suited her.

"I like it well enough if there is plenty of room, and everyone is lively. In a place like this I'm sure to upset something, tread on people's toes, or do something dreadful, so I keep out of mischief and let Meg sail about. Don't you dance?"

"Sometimes. You see I've been abroad a good many years, and haven't been into company enough yet to know how you do things here."

"Abroad!" cried Jo. "Oh, tell me about it! I love dearly to hear people describe their travels."

Laurie didn't seem to know where to begin, but Jo's eager questions soon set him going, and he told her how he had been at school in Vevay, where the boys never wore hats and had a fleet of boats on the lake, and for holiday fun went on walking trips about Switzerland with their teachers.

"Don't I wish I'd been there!" cried Jo. "Did you go to Paris?"

"We spent last winter there."

"Can you talk French?"

"We were not allowed to speak anything else at Vevay."

"Do say some! I can read it, but can't pronounce."

"Quel nom a cette jeune demoiselle en les pantoufles jolis?"

"How nicely you do it! Let me see ... you said, 'Who is the young lady in the pretty slippers', didn't you?"

"Oui, mademoiselle."

"It's my sister Margaret, and you knew it was! Do you think she is pretty?"

"Yes, she makes me think of the German girls, she looks so fresh and quiet, and dances like a lady."
Jo quite glowed with pleasure at this boyish praise of her sister, and stored it up to repeat to Meg. Both peeped and criticized and chatted till they felt like old acquaintances. Laurie's bashfulness soon wore off, for Jo's gentlemanly demeanor amused and set him at his ease, and Jo was her merry self again, because her dress was forgotten and nobody lifted their eyebrows at her. She liked the 'Laurence boy' better than ever and took several good looks at him, so that she might describe him to the girls, for they had no brothers, very few male cousins, and boys were almost unknown creatures to them.

"Curly black hair, brown skin, big black eyes, handsome nose, fine teeth, small hands and feet, taller than I am, very polite, for a boy, and altogether jolly. Wonder how old he is?"

It was on the tip of Jo's tongue to ask, but she checked herself in time and, with unusual tact, tried to find out in a round-about way.

"I suppose you are going to college soon? I see you pegging away at your books, no, I mean studying hard." And Jo blushed at the dreadful 'pegging' which had escaped her.

Laurie smiled but didn't seem shocked, and answered with a shrug. "Not for a year or two. I won't go before seventeen, anyway."

"Aren't you but fifteen?" asked Jo, looking at the tall lad, whom she had imagined seventeen already.

"Sixteen, next month."

"How I wish I was going to college! You don't look as if you liked it."

"I hate it! Nothing but grinding or skylarking. And I don't like the way fellows do either, in this country."

"What do you like?"

"To live in Italy, and to enjoy myself in my own way."

Jo wanted very much to ask what his own way was, but his black brows looked rather threatening as he knit them, so she changed the subject by saying, as her foot kept time, "That's a splendid polka! Why don't you go and try it?"

"If you will come too," he answered, with a gallant little bow.

"I can't, for I told Meg I wouldn't, because..." There Jo stopped, and looked undecided whether to tell or to laugh.

"Because, what?"

"You won't tell?"

"Never!"
"Well, I have a bad trick of standing before the fire, and so I burn my frocks, and I scorched this one, and though it's nicely mended, it shows, and Meg told me to keep still so no one would see it. You may laugh, if you want to. It is funny, I know."

But Laurie didn't laugh. He only looked down a minute, and the expression of his face puzzled Jo when he said very gently, "Never mind that. I'll tell you how we can manage. There's a long hall out there, and we can dance grandly, and no one will see us. Please come."

Jo thanked him and gladly went, wishing she had two neat gloves when she saw the nice, pearl-colored ones her partner wore. The hall was empty, and they had a grand polka, for Laurie danced well, and taught her the German step, which delighted Jo, being full of swing and spring. When the music stopped, they sat down on the stairs to get their breath, and Laurie was in the midst of an account of a students' festival at Heidelberg when Meg appeared in search of her sister. She beckoned, and Jo reluctantly followed her into a side room, where she found her on a sofa, holding her foot, and looking pale.

"I've sprained my ankle. That stupid high heel turned and gave me a sad wrench. It aches so, I can hardly stand, and I don't know how I'm ever going to get home," she said, rocking to and fro in pain.

"I knew you'd hurt your feet with those silly shoes. I'm sorry. But I don't see what you can do, except get a carriage, or stay here all night," answered Jo, softly rubbing the poor ankle as she spoke.

"I can't have a carriage without its costing ever so much. I dare say I can't get one at all, for most people come in their own, and it's a long way to the stable, and no one to send."

"I'll go."

"No, indeed! It's past nine, and dark as Egypt. I can't stop here, for the house is full. Sallie has some girls staying with her. I'll rest till Hannah comes, and then do the best I can."

"I'll ask Laurie. He will go," said Jo, looking relieved as the idea occurred to her.

"Mercy, no! Don't ask or tell anyone. Get me my rubbers, and put these slippers with our things. I can't dance anymore, but as soon as supper is over, watch for Hannah and tell me the minute she comes."

"They are going out to supper now. I'll stay with you. I'd rather."

"No, dear, run along, and bring me some coffee. I'm so tired I can't stir."

So Meg reclined, with rubbers well hidden, and Jo went blundering away to the dining room, which she found after going into a china closet, and opening the door of a room where old Mr. Gardiner was taking a little private refreshment. Making a dart at the table, she secured the coffee, which she immediately spilled, thereby making the front of her dress as bad as the back.

"Oh, dear, what a blunderbuss I am!" exclaimed Jo, finishing Meg's glove by scrubbing her gown with it.
"Can I help you?" said a friendly voice. And there was Laurie, with a full cup in one hand and a plate of ice in the other.

"I was trying to get something for Meg, who is very tired, and someone shook me, and here I am in a nice state," answered Jo, glancing dismally from the stained skirt to the coffee-colored glove.

"Too bad! I was looking for someone to give this to. May I take it to your sister?"

"Oh, thank you! I'll show you where she is. I don't offer to take it myself, for I should only get into another scrape if I did."

Jo led the way, and as if used to waiting on ladies, Laurie drew up a little table, brought a second installment of coffee and ice for Jo, and was so obliging that even particular Meg pronounced him a 'nice boy'. They had a merry time over the bonbons and mottoes, and were in the midst of a quiet game of Buzz, with two or three other young people who had strayed in, when Hannah appeared. Meg forgot her foot and rose so quickly that she was forced to catch hold of Jo, with an exclamation of pain.

"Hush! Don't say anything," she whispered, adding aloud, "It's nothing. I turned my foot a little, that's all," and limped upstairs to put her things on.

Hannah scolded, Meg cried, and Jo was at her wits' end, till she decided to take things into her own hands. Slipping out, she ran down and, finding a servant, asked if he could get her a carriage. It happened to be a hired waiter who knew nothing about the neighborhood and Jo was looking round for help when Laurie, who had heard what she said, came up and offered his grandfather's carriage, which had just come for him, he said.

"It's so early! You can't mean to go yet?" began Jo, looking relieved but hesitating to accept the offer.

"I always go early, I do, truly! Please let me take you home. It's all on my way, you know, and it rains, they say."

That settled it, and telling him of Meg's mishap, Jo gratefully accepted and rushed up to bring down the rest of the party. Hannah hated rain as much as a cat does so she made no trouble, and they rolled away in the luxurious close carriage, feeling very festive and elegant. Laurie went on the box so Meg could keep her foot up, and the girls talked over their party in freedom.

"I had a capital time. Did you?" asked Jo, rumpling up her hair, and making herself comfortable.

"Yes, till I hurt myself. Sallie's friend, Annie Moffat, took a fancy to me, and asked me to come and spend a week with her when Sallie does. She is going in the spring when the opera comes, and it will be perfectly splendid, if Mother only lets me go," answered Meg, cheering up at the thought.

"I saw you dancing with the red headed man I ran away from. Was he nice?"

"Oh, very! His hair is auburn, not red, and he was very polite, and I had a delicious redowa with him."
"He looked like a grasshopper in a fit when he did the new step. Laurie and I couldn't help laughing. Did you hear us?"

"No, but it was very rude. What were you about all that time, hidden away there?"

Jo told her adventures, and by the time she had finished they were at home. With many thanks, they said good night and crept in, hoping to disturb no one, but the instant their door creaked, two little nightcaps bobbed up, and two sleepy but eager voices cried out...

"Tell about the party! Tell about the party!"

With what Meg called 'a great want of manners' Jo had saved some bonbons for the little girls, and they soon subsided, after hearing the most thrilling events of the evening.

"I declare, it really seems like being a fine young lady, to come home from the party in a carriage and sit in my dressing gown with a maid to wait on me," said Meg, as Jo bound up her foot with arnica and brushed her hair.

"I don't believe fine young ladies enjoy themselves a bit more than we do, in spite of our burned hair, old gowns, one glove apiece and tight slippers that sprain our ankles when we are silly enough to wear them." And I think Jo was quite right.

CHAPTER FOUR/BURDENS

"Oh, dear, how hard it does seem to take up our packs and go on," sighed Meg the morning after the party, for now the holidays were over, the week of merrymaking did not fit her for going on easily with the task she never liked.

"I wish it was Christmas or New Year's all the time. Wouldn't it be fun?" answered Jo, yawning dismally.

"We shouldn't enjoy ourselves half so much as we do now. But it does seem so nice to have little suppers and bouquets, and go to parties, and drive home, and read and rest, and not work. It's like other people, you know, and I always envy girls who do such things, I'm so fond of luxury," said Meg, trying to decide which of two shabby gowns was the least shabby.

"Well, we can't have it, so don't let us grumble but shoulder our bundles and trudge along as cheerfully as Marmee does. I'm sure Aunt March is a regular Old Man of the Sea to me, but I suppose when I've learned to carry her without complaining, she will tumble off, or get so light that I shan't mind her."

This idea tickled Jo's fancy and put her in good spirits, but Meg didn't brighten, for her burden, consisting of four spoiled children, seemed heavier than ever. She had not heart enough even to make
herself pretty as usual by putting on a blue neck ribbon and dressing her hair in the most becoming way.

"Where's the use of looking nice, when no one sees me but those cross midgets, and no one cares whether I'm pretty or not?" she muttered, shutting her drawer with a jerk. "I shall have to toil and moil all my days, with only little bits of fun now and then, and get old and ugly and sour, because I'm poor and can't enjoy my life as other girls do. It's a shame!"

So Meg went down, wearing an injured look, and wasn't at all agreeable at breakfast time. Everyone seemed rather out of sorts and inclined to croak.

Beth had a headache and lay on the sofa, trying to comfort herself with the cat and three kittens. Amy was fretting because her lessons were not learned, and she couldn't find her rubbers. Jo would whistle and make a great racket getting ready.

Mrs. March was very busy trying to finish a letter, which must go at once, and Hannah had the grumps, for being up late didn't suit her.

"There never was such a cross family!" cried Jo, losing her temper when she had upset an inkstand, broken both boot lacings, and sat down upon her hat.

"You're the crossest person in it!" returned Amy, washing out the sum that was all wrong with the tears that had fallen on her slate.

"Beth, if you don't keep these horrid cats down cellar I'll have them drowned," exclaimed Meg angrily as she tried to get rid of the kitten which had scrambled up her back and stuck like a burr just out of reach.

Jo laughed, Meg scolded, Beth implored, and Amy wailed because she couldn't remember how much nine times twelve was.

"Girls, girls, do be quiet one minute! I must get this off by the early mail, and you drive me distracted with your worry," cried Mrs. March, crossing out the third spoiled sentence in her letter.

There was a momentary lull, broken by Hannah, who stalked in, laid two hot turnovers on the table, and stalked out again. These turnovers were an institution, and the girls called them 'muffs', for they had no others and found the hot pies very comforting to their hands on cold mornings.

Hannah never forgot to make them, no matter how busy or grumpy she might be, for the walk was long and bleak. The poor things got no other lunch and were seldom home before two.

"Cuddle your cats and get over your headache, Bethy. Goodbye, Marmee. We are a set of rascals this morning, but we'll come home regular angels. Now then, Meg!" And Jo tramped away, feeling that the pilgrims were not setting out as they ought to do.

They always looked back before turning the corner, for their mother was always at the window to nod and smile, and wave her hand to them. Somehow it seemed as if they couldn't have got through the day without that, for whatever their mood might be, the last glimpse of that motherly face was sure to affect them like sunshine.
"If Marmee shook her fist instead of kissing her hand to us, it would serve us right, for more ungrateful wretches than we are were never seen," cried Jo, taking a remorseful satisfaction in the snowy walk and bitter wind.

"Don't use such dreadful expressions," replied Meg from the depths of the veil in which she had shrouded herself like a nun sick of the world.

"I like good strong words that mean something," replied Jo, catching her hat as it took a leap off her head preparatory to flying away altogether.

"Call yourself any names you like, but I am neither a rascal nor a wretch and I don't choose to be called so."

"You're a blighted being, and decidedly cross today because you can't sit in the lap of luxury all the time. Poor dear, just wait till I make my fortune, and you shall revel in carriages and ice cream and high-heeled slippers, and posies, and red-headed boys to dance with."

"How ridiculous you are, Jo!" But Meg laughed at the nonsense and felt better in spite of herself.

"Lucky for you I am, for if I put on crushed airs and tried to be dismal, as you do, we should be in a nice state. Thank goodness, I can always find something funny to keep me up. Don't croak any more, but come home jolly, there's a dear."

Jo gave her sister an encouraging pat on the shoulder as they parted for the day, each going a different way, each hugging her little warm turnover, and each trying to be cheerful in spite of wintry weather, hard work, and the unsatisfied desires of pleasure-loving youth.

When Mr. March lost his property in trying to help an unfortunate friend, the two oldest girls begged to be allowed to do something toward their own support, at least. Believing that they could not begin too early to cultivate energy, industry, and independence, their parents consented, and both fell to work with the hearty good will which in spite of all obstacles is sure to succeed at last.

Margaret found a place as nursery governess and felt rich with her small salary. As she said, she was 'fond of luxury', and her chief trouble was poverty. She found it harder to bear than the others because she could remember a time when home was beautiful, life full of ease and pleasure, and want of any kind unknown. She tried not to be envious or discontented, but it was very natural that the young girl should long for pretty things, gay friends, accomplishments, and a happy life. At the Kings' she daily saw all she wanted, for the children's older sisters were just out, and Meg caught frequent glimpses of dainty ball dresses and bouquets, heard lively gossip about theaters, concerts, sleighing parties, and merrymakings of all kinds, and saw money lavished on trifles which would have been so precious to her. Poor Meg seldom complained, but a sense of injustice made her feel bitter toward everyone sometimes, for she had not yet learned to know how rich she was in the blessings which alone can make life happy.

Jo happened to suit Aunt March, who was lame and needed an active person to wait upon her. The childless old lady had offered to adopt one of the girls when the troubles came, and was much offended because her offer was declined. Other friends told the Marches that they had lost all chance of being remembered in the rich old lady's will, but the unworldly Marches only said...
"We can't give up our girls for a dozen fortunes. Rich or poor, we will keep together and be happy in one another."

The old lady wouldn't speak to them for a time, but happening to meet Jo at a friend's, something in her comical face and blunt manners struck the old lady's fancy, and she proposed to take her for a companion. This did not suit Jo at all, but she accepted the place since nothing better appeared and, to every one's surprise, got on remarkably well with her irascible relative. There was an occasional tempest, and once Jo marched home, declaring she couldn't bear it longer, but Aunt March always cleared up quickly, and sent for her to come back again with such urgency that she could not refuse, for in her heart she rather liked the peppy old lady.

I suspect that the real attraction was a large library of fine books, which was left to dust and spiders since Uncle March died. Jo remembered the kind old gentleman, who used to let her build railroads and bridges with his big dictionaries, tell her stories about queer pictures in his Latin books, and buy her cards of gingerbread whenever he met her in the street. The dim, dusty room, with the busts staring down from the tall bookcases, the cozy chairs, the globes, and best of all, the wilderness of books in which she could wander where she liked, made the library a region of bliss to her.

The moment Aunt March took her nap, or was busy with company, Jo hurried to this quiet place, and curling herself up in the easy chair, devoured poetry, romance, history, travels, and pictures like a regular bookworm. But, like all happiness, it did not last long, for as sure as she had just reached the heart of the story, the sweetest verse of a song, or the most perilous adventure of her traveler, a shrill voice called, "Josy-phine! Josy-phine!" and she had to leave her paradise to wind yarn, wash the poodle, or read Belsham's Essays by the hour together.

Jo's ambition was to do something very splendid. What it was, she had no idea as yet, but left it for time to tell her, and meanwhile, found her greatest affliction in the fact that she couldn't read, run, and ride as much as she liked. A quick temper, sharp tongue, and restless spirit were always getting her into scrapes, and her life was a series of ups and downs, which were both comic and pathetic. But the training she received at Aunt March's was just what she needed, and the thought that she was doing something to support herself made her happy in spite of the perpetual "Josy-phine!"

Beth was too bashful to go to school. It had been tried, but she suffered so much that it was given up, and she did her lessons at home with her father. Even when he went away, and her mother was called to devote her skill and energy to Soldiers' Aid Societies, Beth went faithfully on by herself and did the best she could. She was a housewifely little creature, and helped Hannah keep home neat and comfortable for the workers, never thinking of any reward but to be loved. Long, quiet days she spent, not lonely nor idle, for her little world was peopled with imaginary friends, and she was by nature a busy bee. There were six dolls to be taken up and dressed every morning, for Beth was a child still and loved her pets as well as ever. Not one whole or handsome one among them, all were outcasts till Beth took them in, for when her sisters outgrew these idols, they passed to her because Amy would have nothing old or ugly. Beth cherished them all the more tenderly for that very reason, and set up a hospital for infirm dolls. No pins were ever stuck into their cotton vitals, no harsh words or blows were ever given them, no neglect ever saddened the heart of the most repulsive, but all were fed and clothed, nursed and caressed with an affection which never failed. One forlorn fragment of dollanity had belonged to Jo and, having led a tempestuous life, was left a wreck in the rag bag, from which dreary poorhouse it was rescued by Beth and taken to her refuge. Having no top to its head, she tied on a neat little cap, and as both arms and legs were gone, she hid these deficiencies by folding it in a blanket and devoting her best bed to this chronic invalid. If anyone had known the care lavished
on that dolly, I think it would have touched their hearts, even while they laughed. She brought it bits of bouquets, she read to it, took it out to breathe fresh air, hidden under her coat, she sang it lullabies and never went to bed without kissing its dirty face and whispering tenderly, "I hope you'll have a good night, my poor dear."

Beth had her troubles as well as the others, and not being an angel but a very human little girl, she often 'wept a little weep' as Jo said, because she couldn't take music lessons and have a fine piano. She loved music so dearly, tried so hard to learn, and practiced away so patiently at the jingling old instrument, that it did seem as if someone (not to hint Aunt March) ought to help her. Nobody did, however, and nobody saw Beth wipe the tears off the yellow keys, that wouldn't keep in tune, when she was all alone. She sang like a little lark about her work, never was too tired for Marmee and the girls, and day after day said hopefully to herself, "I know I'll get my music some time, if I'm good."

There are many Beths in the world, shy and quiet, sitting in corners till needed, and living for others so cheerfully that no one sees the sacrifices till the little cricket on the hearth stops chirping, and the sweet, sunshiny presence vanishes, leaving silence and shadow behind.

If anybody had asked Amy what the greatest trial of her life was, she would have answered at once, "My nose." When she was a baby, Jo had accidently dropped her into the coal hod, and Amy insisted that the fall had ruined her nose forever. It was not big nor red, like poor 'Petrea's', it was only rather flat, and all the pinching in the world could not give it an aristocratic point. No one minded it but herself, and it was doing its best to grow, but Amy felt deeply the want of a Grecian nose, and drew whole sheets of handsome ones to console herself.

"Little Raphael," as her sisters called her, had a decided talent for drawing, and was never so happy as when copying flowers, designing fairies, or illustrating stories with queer specimens of art. Her teachers complained that instead of doing her sums she covered her slate with animals, the blank pages of her atlas were used to copy maps on, and caricatures of the most ludicrous description came fluttering out of all her books at unlucky moments. She got through her lessons as well as she could, and managed to escape reprimands by being a model of deportment. She was a great favorite with her mates, being good-tempered and possessing the happy art of pleasing without effort. Her little airs and graces were much admired, so were her accomplishments, for besides her drawing, she could play twelve tunes, crochet, and read French without mispronouncing more than two-thirds of the words. She had a plaintive way of saying, "When Papa was rich we did so-and-so," which was very touching, and her long words were considered 'perfectly elegant' by the girls.

Amy was in a fair way to be spoiled, for everyone petted her, and her small vanities and selfishnesses were growing nicely. One thing, however, rather quenched the vanities. She had to wear her cousin's clothes. Now Florence's mama hadn't a particle of taste, and Amy suffered deeply at having to wear a red instead of a blue bonnet, unbecoming gowns, and fussy aprons that did not fit. Everything was good, well made, and little worn, but Amy's artistic eyes were much afflicted, especially this winter, when her school dress was a dull purple with yellow dots and no trimming.

"My only comfort," she said to Meg, with tears in her eyes, "is that Mother doesn't take tucks in my dresses whenever I'm naughty, as Maria Parks's mother does. My dear, it's really dreadful, for sometimes she is so bad her frock is up to her knees, and she can't come to school. When I think of this deggerredation, I feel that I can bear even my flat nose and purple gown with yellow sky-rockets on it."
Meg was Amy's confidant and monitor, and by some strange attraction of opposites Jo was gentle Beth’s. To Jo alone did the shy child tell her thoughts, and over her big harum-scarum sister Beth unconsciously exercised more influence than anyone in the family. The two older girls were a great deal to one another, but each took one of the younger sisters into her keeping and watched over her in her own way, 'playing mother' they called it, and put their sisters in the places of discarded dolls with the maternal instinct of little women.

"Has anybody got anything to tell? It's been such a dismal day I'm really dying for some amusement," said Meg, as they sat sewing together that evening.

"I had a queer time with Aunt today, and, as I got the best of it, I'll tell you about it," began Jo, who dearly loved to tell stories. "I was reading that everlasting Belsham, and droning away as I always do, for Aunt soon drops off, and then I take out some nice book, and read like fury till she wakes up. I actually made myself sleepy, and before she began to nod, I gave such a gape that she asked me what I meant by opening my mouth wide enough to take the whole book in at once."

"I wish I could, and be done with it," said I, trying not to be saucy.

"Then she gave me a long lecture on my sins, and told me to sit and think them over while she just 'lost' herself for a moment. She never finds herself very soon, so the minute her cap began to bob like a top-heavy dahlia, I whipped the Vicar of Wakefield out of my pocket, and read away, with one eye on him and one on Aunt. I'd just got to where they all tumbled into the water when I forgot and laughed out loud. Aunt woke up and, being more good-natured after her nap, told me to read a bit and show what frivolous work I preferred to the worthy and instructive Belsham. I did my very best, and she liked it, though she only said...

"'I don't understand what it's all about. Go back and begin it, child.'"

"Back I went, and made the Primroses as interesting as ever I could. Once I was wicked enough to stop in a thrilling place, and say meekly, 'I'm afraid it tires you, ma'am. Shan't I stop now?'

"She caught up her knitting, which had dropped out of her hands, gave me a sharp look through her specs, and said, in her short way, 'Finish the chapter, and don't be impertinent, miss'."

"Did she own she liked it?" asked Meg.

"Oh, bless you, no! But she let old Belsham rest, and when I ran back after my gloves this afternoon, there she was, so hard at the Vicar that she didn’t hear me laugh as I danced a jig in the hall because of the good time coming. What a pleasant life she might have if only she chose! I don’t envy her much, in spite of her money, for after all rich people have about as many worries as poor ones, I think," added Jo.

"That reminds me," said Meg, "that I've got something to tell. It isn't funny, like Jo's story, but I thought about it a good deal as I came home. At the Kings' today I found everybody in a flurry, and one of the children said that her oldest brother had done something dreadful, and Papa had sent him away. I heard Mrs. King crying and Mr. King talking very loud, and Grace and Ellen turned away their faces when they passed me, so I shouldn't see how red and swollen their eyes were. I didn't ask any questions, of course, but I felt so sorry for them and was rather glad I hadn't any wild brothers to do wicked things and disgrace the family."
"I think being disgraced in school is a great deal tryinger than anything bad boys can do," said Amy, shaking her head, as if her experience of life had been a deep one. "Susie Perkins came to school today with a lovely red carnelian ring. I wanted it dreadfully, and wished I was her with all my might. Well, she drew a picture of Mr. Davis, with a monstrous nose and a hump, and the words, 'Young ladies, my eye is upon you!' coming out of his mouth in a balloon thing. We were laughing over it when all of a sudden his eye was on us, and he ordered Susie to bring up her slate. She was parrylized with fright, but she went, and oh, what do you think he did? He took her by the ear—the ear! Just fancy how horrid!—and led her to the recitation platform, and made her stand there half an hour, holding the slate so everyone could see."

"Didn't the girls laugh at the picture?" asked Jo, who relished the scrape.

"Laugh? Not one! They sat still as mice, and Susie cried quarts, I know she did. I didn't envy her then, for I felt that millions of carnelian rings wouldn't have made me happy after that. I never, never should have got over such a agonizing mortification." And Amy went on with her work, in the proud consciousness of virtue and the successful utterance of two long words in a breath.

"I saw something I liked this morning, and I meant to tell it at dinner, but I forgot," said Beth, putting Jo's topsy-turvy basket in order as she talked. "When I went to get some oysters for Hannah, Mr. Laurence was in the fish shop, but he didn't see me, for I kept behind the fish barrel, and he was busy with Mr. Cutter the fish-man. A poor woman came in with a pail and a mop, and asked Mr. Cutter if he would let her do some scrubbing for a bit of fish, because she hadn't any dinner for her children, and had been disappointed of a day's work. Mr. Cutter was in a hurry and said 'No', rather crossly, so she was going away, looking hungry and sorry, when Mr. Laurence hooked up a big fish with the crooked end of his cane and held it out to her. She was so glad and surprised she took it right into her arms, and thanked him over and over. He told her to 'go along and cook it', and she hurried off, so happy! Wasn't it good of him? Oh, she did look so funny, hugging the big, slippery fish, and hoping Mr. Laurence's bed in heaven would be 'aisy'."

When they had laughed at Beth's story, they asked their mother for one, and after a moments thought, she said soberly, "As I sat cutting out blue flannel jackets today at the rooms, I felt very anxious about Father, and thought how lonely and helpless we should be, if anything happened to him. It was not a wise thing to do, but I kept on worrying till an old man came in with an order for some clothes. He sat down near me, and I began to talk to him, for he looked poor and tired and anxious.

"'Have you sons in the army?' I asked, for the note he brought was not to me."

"Yes, ma'am. I had four, but two were killed, one is a prisoner, and I'm going to the other, who is very sick in a Washington hospital.' he answered quietly.

"'You have done a great deal for your country, sir,' I said, feeling respect now, instead of pity."

"'Not a mite more than I ought, ma'am. I'd go myself, if I was any use. As I ain't, I give my boys, and give 'em free.'"

"He spoke so cheerfully, looked so sincere, and seemed so glad to give his all, that I was ashamed of myself. I'd given one man and thought it too much, while he gave four without grudging them. I had all my girls to comfort me at home, and his last son was waiting, miles away, to say good-by to
him, perhaps! I felt so rich, so happy thinking of my blessings, that I made him a nice bundle, gave him some money, and thanked him heartily for the lesson he had taught me."

"Tell another story, Mother, one with a moral to it, like this. I like to think about them afterward, if they are real and not too preachy," said Jo, after a minute's silence.

Mrs. March smiled and began at once, for she had told stories to this little audience for many years, and knew how to please them.

"Once upon a time, there were four girls, who had enough to eat and drink and wear, a good many comforts and pleasures, kind friends and parents who loved them dearly, and yet they were not contented." (Here the listeners stole sly looks at one another, and began to sew diligently.) "These girls were anxious to be good and made many excellent resolutions, but they did not keep them very well, and were constantly saying, 'If only we had this,' or 'If we could only do that,' quite forgetting how much they already had, and how many things they actually could do. So they asked an old woman what spell they could use to make them happy, and she said, 'When you feel discontented, think over your blessings, and be grateful.'" (Here Jo looked up quickly, as if about to speak, but changed her mind, seeing that the story was not done yet.)

"Being sensible girls, they decided to try her advice, and soon were surprised to see how well off they were. One discovered that money couldn't keep shame and sorrow out of rich people's houses, another that, though she was poor, she was a great deal happier, with her youth, health, and good spirits, than a certain fretful, feeble old lady who couldn't enjoy her comforts, a third that, disagreeable as it was to help get dinner, it was harder still to go begging for it and the fourth, that even carnelian rings were not so valuable as good behavior. So they agreed to stop complaining, to enjoy the blessings already possessed, and try to deserve them, lest they should be taken away entirely, instead of increased, and I believe they were never disappointed or sorry that they took the old woman's advice."

"Now, Marmee, that is very cunning of you to turn our own stories against us, and give us a sermon instead of a romance!" cried Meg.

"I like that kind of sermon. It's the sort Father used to tell us," said Beth thoughtfully, putting the needles straight on Jo's cushion.

"I don't complain near as much as the others do, and I shall be more careful than ever now, for I've had warning from Susie's downfall," said Amy morally.

"We needed that lesson, and we won't forget it. If we do so, you just say to us, as old Chloe did in Uncle Tom, 'Tink ob yer marcies, chillen!' 'Tink ob yer marcies!'" added Jo, who could not, for the life of her, help getting a morsel of fun out of the little sermon, though she took it to heart as much as any of them.
'Well—I suppose we must.'

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

Mr. Thornton had had some difficulty in working up his mother to the desired point of civility. She did not often make calls; and when she did, it was in heavy state that she went through her duties. Her son had given her a carriage; but she refused to let him keep horses for it; they were hired for the solemn occasions, when she paid morning or evening visits. She had had horses for three days, not a fortnight before, and had comfortably 'killed off' all her acquaintances, who might now put themselves to trouble and expense in their turn. Yet Crampton was too far off for her to walk; and she had repeatedly questioned her son as to whether his wish that she should call on the Hales was strong enough to bear the expense of cab-hire. She would have been thankful if it had not; for, as she said, 'she saw no use in making up friendships and intimacies with all the teachers and masters in Milton; why, he would be wanting her to call on Fanny's dancing-master's wife, the next thing!'

'And so I would, mother, if Mr. Mason and his wife were friendless in a strange place, like the Hales.'

'Oh! you need not speak so hastily. I am going to-morrow. I only wanted you exactly to understand about it.'

'If you are going to-morrow, I shall order horses.'

'Nonsense, John. One would think you were made of money.'

'Not quite, yet. But about the horses I'm determined. The last time you were out in a cab, you came home with a headache from the jolting.'

'I never complained of it, I'm sure.'

'No. My mother is not given to complaints;' said he, a little proudly. 'But so much the more I have to watch over you. Now as for Fanny there, a little hardship would do her good.'

'She is not made of the same stuff as you are, John. She could not bear it.' Mrs. Thornton was silent after this; for her last words bore relation to a subject which mortified her. She had an unconscious contempt for a weak character; and Fanny was weak in the very points in which her mother and brother were strong. Mrs. Thornton was not a woman much given to reasoning; her quick judgment and firm resolution served her in good stead of any long arguments and discussions with herself; she felt instinctively that nothing could strengthen Fanny to endure hardships patiently, or face difficulties bravely; and though she winced as she made this acknowledgment to herself about her daughter, it only gave her a kind of pitying tenderness of manner towards her; much of the same description of demeanour with which mothers are wont to treat their weak and sickly children. A stranger, a careless observer might have considered that Mrs. Thornton's manner to her children betokened far more love to Fanny than to John. But such a one would have been deeply mistaken. The very daringness with which mother and son spoke out unpalatable truths, the one to the other, showed a reliance on the firm centre of each other's souls, which the uneasy tenderness of Mrs. Thornton's manner to her daughter, the shame with which she thought to hide the poverty of her
child in all the grand qualities which she herself possessed unconsciously, and which she set so high a value upon in others—this shame, I say, betrayed the want of a secure resting-place for her affection. She never called her son by any name but John; 'love,' and 'dear,' and such like terms, were reserved for Fanny. But her heart gave thanks for him day and night; and she walked proudly among women for his sake.

'Fanny dear I shall have horses to the carriage to-day, to go and call on these Hales. Should not you go and see nurse? It's in the same direction, and she's always so glad to see you. You could go on there while I am at Mrs. Hale's.'

'Oh! mamma, it's such a long way, and I am so tired.'

'With what?' asked Mrs. Thornton, her brow slightly contracting.

'I don't know—the weather, I think. It is so relaxing. Couldn't you bring nurse here, mamma? The carriage could fetch her, and she could spend the rest of the day here, which I know she would like.'

Mrs. Thornton did not speak; but she laid her work on the table, and seemed to think.

'It will be a long way for her to walk back at night!' she remarked, at last.

'Oh, but I will send her home in a cab. I never thought of her walking.' At this point, Mr. Thornton came in, just before going to the mill.

'Mother! I need hardly say, that if there is any little thing that could serve Mrs. Hale as an invalid, you will offer it, I'm sure.'

'If I can find it out, I will. But I have never been ill myself, so I am not much up to invalids' fancies.'

'Well! here is Fanny then, who is seldom without an ailment. She will be able to suggest something, perhaps—won't you, Fan?'

'I have not always an ailment,' said Fanny, pettishly; 'and I am not going with mamma. I have a headache to-day, and I shan't go out.'

Mr. Thornton looked annoyed. His mother's eyes were bent on her work, at which she was now stitching away busily.

'Fanny! I wish you to go,' said he, authoritatively. 'It will do you good, instead of harm. You will oblige me by going, without my saying anything more about it.'

He went abruptly out of the room after saying this.

If he had staid a minute longer, Fanny would have cried at his tone of command, even when he used the words, 'You will oblige me.' As it was, she grumbled.

'John always speaks as if I fancied I was ill, and I am sure I never do fancy any such thing. Who are these Hales that he makes such a fuss about?'

'Fanny, don't speak so of your brother. He has good reasons of some kind or other, or he would not wish us to go. Make haste and put your things on.'

But the little altercation between her son and her daughter did not incline Mrs. Thornton more favourably towards 'these Hales.' Her jealous heart repeated her daughter's question, 'Who are they, that he is so anxious we should pay them all this attention?' It came up like a burden to a song, long after Fanny had forgotten all about it in the pleasant excitement of seeing the effect of a new bonnet in the looking-glass.

Mrs. Thornton was shy. It was only of late years that she had had leisure enough in her life to go into society; and as society she did not enjoy it. As dinner-giving, and as criticising other people's dinners, she took satisfaction in it. But this going to make acquaintance with strangers was a very different thing. She was ill at ease, and looked more than usually stern and forbidding as she entered the Hales' little drawing-room.
Margaret was busy embroidering a small piece of cambric for some little article of dress for Edith's expected baby—'Flimsy, useless work,' as Mrs. Thornton observed to herself. She liked Mrs. Hale's double knitting far better; that was sensible of its kind. The room altogether was full of knick-knacks, which must take a long time to dust; and time to people of limited income was money. She made all these reflections as she was talking in her stately way to Mrs. Hale, and uttering all the stereotyped commonplaces that most people can find to say with their senses blindfolded. Mrs. Hale was making rather more exertion in her answers, captivated by some real old lace which Mrs. Thornton wore; 'lace,' as she afterwards observed to Dixon, 'of that old English point which has not been made for this seventy years, and which cannot be bought. It must have been an heirloom, and shows that she had ancestors.' So the owner of the ancestral lace became worthy of something more than the languid exertion to be agreeable to a visitor, by which Mrs. Hale's efforts at conversation would have been otherwise bounded. And presently, Margaret, racking her brain to talk to Fanny, heard her mother and Mrs. Thornton plunge into the interminable subject of servants.

'I suppose you are not musical,' said Fanny, 'as I see no piano.'

'I am fond of hearing good music; I cannot play well myself; and papa and mamma don't care much about it; so we sold our old piano when we came here.'

'I wonder how you can exist without one. It almost seems to me a necessary of life.'

'Fifteen shillings a week, and three saved out of them!' thought Margaret to herself 'But she must have been very young. She probably has forgotten her own personal experience. But she must know of those days.' Margaret's manner had an extra tinge of coldness in it when she next spoke.

'You have good concerts here, I believe.'

'Oh, yes! Delicious! Too crowded, that is the worst. The directors admit so indiscriminately. But one is sure to hear the newest music there. I always have a large order to give to Johnson's, the day after a concert.'

'Do you like new music simply for its newness, then?'

'Oh; one knows it is the fashion in London, or else the singers would not bring it down here. You have been in London, of course.'

'Yes,' said Margaret, 'I have lived there for several years.'

'Oh! London and the Alhambra are the two places I long to see!'

'London and the Alhambra!'

'Yes! ever since I read the Tales of the Alhambra. Don't you know them?'

'I don't think I do. But surely, it is a very easy journey to London.'

'Yes; but somehow,' said Fanny, lowering her voice, 'mamma has never been to London herself, and can't understand my longing. She is very proud of Milton; dirty, smoky place, as I feel it to be. I believe she admires it the more for those very qualities.'

'If it has been Mrs. Thornton's home for some years, I can well understand her loving it,' said Margaret, in her clear bell-like voice.

'What are you saying about me, Miss Hale? May I inquire?'

Margaret had not the words ready for an answer to this question, which took her a little by surprise, so Miss Thornton replied:

'Oh, mamma! we are only trying to account for your being so fond of Milton.'

'Thank you,' said Mrs. Thornton. 'I do not feel that my very natural liking for the place where I was born and brought up,—and which has since been my residence for some years, requires any accounting for.'
Margaret was vexed. As Fanny had put it, it did seem as if they had been impertinently discussing Mrs. Thornton's feelings; but she also rose up against that lady's manner of showing that she was offended.

Mrs. Thornton went on after a moment's pause:
'Do you know anything of Milton, Miss Hale? Have you seen any of our factories? our magnificent warehouses?'

'No!' said Margaret. 'I have not seen anything of that description as yet.' Then she felt that, by concealing her utter indifference to all such places, she was hardly speaking with truth; so she went on:
'I dare say, papa would have taken me before now if I had cared. But I really do not find much pleasure in going over manufactories.'

'They are very curious places,' said Mrs. Hale, 'but there is so much noise and dirt always. I remember once going in a lilac silk to see candles made, and my gown was utterly ruined.'

'Very probably,' said Mrs. Thornton, in a short displeased manner. 'I merely thought, that as strangers newly come to reside in a town which has risen to eminence in the country, from the character and progress of its peculiar business, you might have cared to visit some of the places where it is carried on; places unique in the kingdom, I am informed. If Miss Hale changes her mind and condescends to be curious as to the manufactures of Milton, I can only say I shall be glad to procure her admission to print-works, or reed-making, or the more simple operations of spinning carried on in my son's mill. Every improvement of machinery is, I believe, to be seen there, in its highest perfection.'

'I am so glad you don't like mills and manufactories, and all those kind of things,' said Fanny, in a half-whisper, as she rose to accompany her mother, who was taking leave of Mrs. Hale with rustling dignity.

'I think I should like to know all about them, if I were you,' replied Margaret quietly.

'Fanny!' said her mother, as they drove away, 'we will be civil to these Hales: but don't form one of your hasty friendships with the daughter. She will do you no good, I see. The mother looks very ill, and seems a nice, quiet kind of person.'

'I don't want to form any friendship with Miss Hale, mamma,' said Fanny, pouting. 'I thought I was doing my duty by talking to her, and trying to amuse her.'

'Well! at any rate John must be satisfied now.'

CHAPTER XXXII—MISCHANCES

'What! remain to be
Denounced—dragged, it may be, in chains.'
WERNER.

All the next day they sate together—they three. Mr. Hale hardly ever spoke but when his children asked him questions, and forced him, as it were, into the present. Frederick's grief was no more to be seen or heard; the first paroxysm had passed over, and now he was ashamed of having been so battered down by emotion; and though his sorrow for the loss of his mother was a deep real
feeling, and would last out his life, it was never to be spoken of again. Margaret, not so passionate at first, was more suffering now. At times she cried a good deal; and her manner, even when speaking on indifferent things, had a mournful tenderness about it, which was deepened whenever her looks fell on Frederick, and she thought of his rapidly approaching departure. She was glad he was going, on her father's account, however much she might grieve over it on her own. The anxious terror in which Mr. Hale lived lest his son should be detected and captured, far out-weighed the pleasure he derived from his presence. The nervousness had increased since Mrs. Hale's death, probably because he dwelt upon it more exclusively. He started at every unusual sound; and was never comfortable unless Frederick sate out of the immediate view of any one entering the room. Towards evening he said:

'You will go with Frederick to the station, Margaret? I shall want to know he is safely off. You will bring me word that he is clear of Milton, at any rate?'

'Certainly,' said Margaret. 'I shall like it, if you won't be lonely without me, papa.'

'No, no! I should always be fancying some one had known him, and that he had been stopped, unless you could tell me you had seen him off. And go to the Outwood station. It is quite as near, and not so many people about. Take a cab there. There is less risk of his being seen. What time is your train, Fred?'

'Ten minutes past six; very nearly dark. So what will you do, Margaret?'

'Oh, I can manage. I am getting very brave and very hard. It is a well-lighted road all the way home, if it should be dark. But I was out last week much later.'

Margaret was thankful when the parting was over—the parting from the dead mother and the living father. She hurried Frederick into the cab, in order to shorten a scene which she saw was so bitterly painful to her father, who would accompany his son as he took his last look at his mother. Partly in consequence of this, and partly owing to one of the very common mistakes in the 'Railway Guide' as to the times when trains arrive at the smaller stations, they found, on reaching Outwood, that they had nearly twenty minutes to spare. The booking-office was not open, so they could not even take the ticket. They accordingly went down the flight of steps that led to the level of the ground below the railway. There was a broad cinder-path diagonally crossing a field which lay along-side of the carriage-road, and they went there to walk backwards and forwards for the few minutes they had to spare.

Margaret's hand lay in Frederick's arm. He took hold of it affectionately.

'Margaret! I am going to consult Mr. Lennox as to the chance of exculpating myself, so that I may return to England whenever I choose, more for your sake than for the sake of any one else. I can't bear to think of your lonely position if anything should happen to my father. He looks sadly changed—terribly shaken. I wish you could get him to think of the Cadiz plan, for many reasons. What could you do if he were taken away? You have no friend near. We are curiously bare of relations.'

Margaret could hardly keep from crying at the tender anxiety with which Frederick was bringing before her an event which she herself felt was not very improbable, so severely had the cares of the last few months told upon Mr. Hale. But she tried to rally as she said:

'There have been such strange unexpected changes in my life during these last two years, that I feel more than ever that it is not worth while to calculate too closely what I should do if any future event took place. I try to think only upon the present.' She paused; they were standing still for a moment, close on the field side of the stile leading into the road; the setting sun fell on their faces. Frederick held her hand in his, and looked with wistful anxiety into her face, reading there more care and trouble than she would betray by words. She went on:

'We shall write often to one another, and I will promise—for I see it will set your mind at ease—to tell you every worry I have. Papa is'—she started a little, a hardly visible start—but Frederick felt the sudden motion of the hand he held, and turned his full face to the road, along which a horseman
was slowly riding, just passing the very stile where they stood. Margaret bowed; her bow was stiffly returned.

'Who is that?' said Frederick, almost before he was out of hearing. Margaret was a little drooping, a little flushed, as she replied:

'Mr. Thornton; you saw him before, you know.'

'Only his back. He is an unprepossessing-looking fellow. What a scowl he has!'

'Something has happened to vex him,' said Margaret, apologetically. 'You would not have thought him unprepossessing if you had seen him with mamma.'

'I fancy it must be time to go and take my ticket. If I had known how dark it would be, we wouldn't have sent back the cab, Margaret.'

'Oh, don't fidget about that. I can take a cab here, if I like; or go back by the rail-road, when I should have shops and people and lamps all the way from the Milton station-house. Don't think of me; take care of yourself. I am sick with the thought that Leonards may be in the same train with you. Look well into the carriage before you get in.'

They went back to the station. Margaret insisted upon going into the full light of the flaring gas inside to take the ticket. Some idle-looking young men were lounging about with the stationmaster. Margaret thought she had seen the face of one of them before, and returned him a proud look of offended dignity for his somewhat impertinent stare of undisguised admiration. She went hastily to her brother, who was standing outside, and took hold of his arm. 'Have you got your bag? Let us walk about here on the platform,' said she, a little flurried at the idea of so soon being left alone, and her bravery oozing out rather faster than she liked to acknowledge even to herself. She heard a step following them along the flags; it stopped when they stopped, looking out along the line and hearing the whizz of the coming train. They did not speak; their hearts were too full. Another moment, and the train would be here; a minute more, and he would be gone. Margaret almost repented the urgency with which she had entreated him to go to London; it was throwing more chances of detection in his way. If he had sailed for Spain by Liverpool, he might have been off in two or three hours.

Frederick turned round, right facing the lamp, where the gas darted up in vivid anticipation of the train. A man in the dress of a railway porter started forward; a bad-looking man, who seemed to have drunk himself into a state of brutality, although his senses were in perfect order.

'By your leave, miss!' said he, pushing Margaret rudely on one side, and seizing Frederick by the collar.

'Your name is Hale, I believe?'

In an instant—how, Margaret did not see, for everything danced before her eyes—but by some sleight of wrestling, Frederick had tripped him up, and he fell from the height of three or four feet, which the platform was elevated above the space of soft ground, by the side of the railroad. There he lay.

'Run, run!' gasped Margaret. 'The train is here. It was Leonards, was it? oh, run! I will carry your bag.' And she took him by the arm to push him along with all her feeble force. A door was opened in a carriage—he jumped in; and as he learnt out to say, 'God bless you, Margaret!' the train rushed past her; an she was left standing alone. She was so terribly sick and faint that she was thankful to be able to turn into the ladies' waiting-room, and sit down for an instant. At first she could do nothing but gasp for breath. It was such a hurry; such a sickening alarm; such a near chance. If the train had not been there at the moment, the man would have jumped up again and called for assistance to arrest him. She wondered if the man had got up: she tried to remember if she had seen him move; she wondered if he could have been seriously hurt. She ventured out; the platform was all alight, but still quite deserted; she went to the end, and looked over, somewhat fearfully. No one was there; and then she was glad she had made herself go, and inspect, for otherwise terrible thoughts would have haunted her dreams. And even as it was, she was so trembling and affrighted that she felt she could
not walk home along the road, which did indeed seem lonely and dark, as she gazed down upon it from the blaze of the station. She would wait till the down train passed and take her seat in it. But what if Leonards recognised her as Frederick's companion! She peered about, before venturing into the booking-office to take her ticket. There were only some railway officials standing about, and talking loud to one another.

'So Leonards has been drinking again!' said one, seemingly in authority. 'He'll need all his boasted influence to keep his place this time.'

'Where is he?' asked another, while Margaret, her back towards them, was counting her change with trembling fingers, not daring to turn round until she heard the answer to this question.

'I don't know. He came in not five minutes ago, with some long story or other about a fall he'd had, swearing awfully; and wanted to borrow some money from me to go to London by the next up-train. He made all sorts of tipsy promises, but I'd something else to do than listen to him; I told him to go about his business; and he went off at the front door.'

'He's at the nearest vaults, I'll be bound,' said the first speaker. 'Your money would have gone there too, if you'd been such a fool as to lend it.'

'Catch me! I knew better what his London meant. Why, he has never paid me off that five shillings'—and so they went on.

And now all Margaret's anxiety was for the train to come. She hid herself once more in the ladies' waiting-room, and fancied every noise was Leonards' step—every loud and boisterous voice was his. But no one came near her until the train drew up; when she was civilly helped into a carriage by a porter, into whose face she durst not look till they were in motion, and then she saw that it was not Leonards'.

CHAPTER XXXV—EXPIATION

'There's nought so finely spun
But it cometh to the sun.'

Mr. Thornton sate on and on. He felt that his company gave pleasure to Mr. Hale; and was touched by the half-spoken wishful entreaty that he would remain a little longer—the plaintive 'Don't go yet,' which his poor friend put forth from time to time. He wondered Margaret did not return; but it was with no view of seeing her that he lingered. For the hour—and in the presence of one who was so thoroughly feeling the nothingness of earth—he was reasonable and self-controlled. He was deeply interested in all her father said,

'Of death, and of the heavy lull,
And of the brain that has grown dull.'

It was curious how the presence of Mr. Thornton had power over Mr. Hale to make him unlock the secret thoughts which he kept shut up even from Margaret. Whether it was that her sympathy would be so keen, and show itself in so lively a manner, that he was afraid of the reaction upon himself, or whether it was that to his speculative mind all kinds of doubts presented themselves at such a time, pleading and crying aloud to be resolved into certainties, and that he knew she would
have shrunk from the expression of any such doubts—nay, from him himself as capable of conceiving them—whatever was the reason, he could unburden himself better to Mr. Thornton than to her of all the thoughts and fancies and fears that had been frost-bound in his brain till now. Mr. Thornton said very little; but every sentence he uttered added to Mr. Hale’s reliance and regard for him. Was it that he paused in the expression of some remembered agony, Mr. Thornton’s two or three words would complete the sentence, and show how deeply its meaning was entered into. Was it a doubt—a fear—a wandering uncertainty seeking rest, but finding none—so tear-blinded were its eyes—Mr. Thornton, instead of being shocked, seemed to have passed through that very stage of thought himself, and could suggest where the exact ray of light was to be found, which should make the dark places plain. Man of action as he was, busy in the world’s great battle, there was a deeper religion binding him to God in his heart, in spite of his strong wilfulness, through all his mistakes, than Mr. Hale had ever dreamed. They never spoke of such things again, as it happened; but this one conversation made them peculiar people to each other; knit them together, in a way which no loose indiscriminate talking about sacred things can ever accomplish. When all are admitted, how can there be a Holy of Holies?

And all this while, Margaret lay as still and white as death on the study floor! She had sunk under her burden. It had been heavy in weight and long carried; and she had been very meek and patient, till all at once her faith had given way, and she had groped in vain for help! There was a pitiful contraction of suffering upon her beautiful brows, although there was no other sign of consciousness remaining. The mouth—a little while ago, so sullenly projected in defiance—was relaxed and livid.

'E par che de la sua labbia si mova
Uno spirito soave e pien d'amore,
Chi va dicendo a l'anima: sospira!'

The first symptom of returning life was a quivering about the lips—a little mute soundless attempt at speech; but the eyes were still closed; and the quivering sank into stillness. Then, feebly leaning on her arms for an instant to steady herself, Margaret gathered herself up, and rose. Her comb had fallen out of her hair; and with an intuitive desire to efface the traces of weakness, and bring herself into order again, she sought for it, although from time to time, in the course of the search, she had to sit down and recover strength. Her head drooped forwards—her hands meekly laid one upon the other—she tried to recall the force of her temptation, by endeavouring to remember the details which had thrown her into such deadly fright; but she could not. She only understood two facts—that Frederick had been in danger of being pursued and detected in London, as not only guilty of manslaughter, but as the more unpardonable leader of the mutiny, and that she had lied to save him. There was one comfort; her lie had saved him, if only by gaining some additional time. If the inspector came again to-morrow, after she had received the letter she longed for to assure her of her brother's safety, she would brave shame, and stand in her bitter penance—she, the lofty Margaret—acknowledging before a crowded justice-room, if need were, that she had been as 'a dog, and done this thing.' But if he came before she heard from Frederick; if he returned, as he had half threatened, in a few hours, why! she would tell that lie again; though how the words would come out, after all this terrible pause for reflection and self-reproach, without betraying her falsehood, she did not know, she could not tell. But her repetition of it would gain time—time for Frederick.

She was roused by Dixon’s entrance into the room; she had just been letting out Mr. Thornton.

He had hardly gone ten steps in the street, before a passing omnibus stopped close by him, and a man got down, and came up to him, touching his hat as he did so. It was the police-inspector.

Mr. Thornton had obtained for him his first situation in the police, and had heard from time to time of the progress of his protege, but they had not often met, and at first Mr. Thornton did not remember him.

'My name is Watson—George Watson, sir, that you got—- '
'Ah, yes! I recollect. Why you are getting on famously, I hear.'

'Yes, sir. I ought to thank you, sir. But it is on a little matter of business I made so bold as to speak to you now. I believe you were the magistrate who attended to take down the deposition of a poor man who died in the Infirmary last night.'

'Yes,' replied Mr. Thornton. 'I went and heard some kind of a rambling statement, which the clerk said was of no great use. I'm afraid he was but a drunken fellow, though there is no doubt he came to his death by violence at last. One of my mother's servants was engaged to him, I believe, and she is in great distress to-day. What about him?'

'Why, sir, his death is oddly mixed up with somebody in the house I saw you coming out of just now; it was a Mr. Hale's, I believe.'

'Yes!' said Mr. Thornton, turning sharp round and looking into the inspector's face with sudden interest. 'What about it?'

'Why, sir, it seems to me that I have got a pretty distinct chain of evidence, inculpating a gentleman who was walking with Miss Hale that night at the Outwood station, as the man who struck or pushed Leonards off the platform and so caused his death. But the young lady denies that she was there at the time.'

'Miss Hale denies she was there!' repeated Mr. Thornton, in an altered voice. 'Tell me, what evening was it? What time?'

'About six o'clock, on the evening of Thursday, the twenty-sixth.'

They walked on, side by side, in silence for a minute or two. The inspector was the first to speak.

'You see, sir, there is like to be a coroner's inquest; and I've got a young man who is pretty positive,—at least he was at first;—since he has heard of the young lady's denial, he says he should not like to swear; but still he's pretty positive that he saw Miss Hale at the station, walking about with a gentleman, not five minutes before the time, when one of the porters saw a scuffle, which he set down to some of Leonards' impudence—but which led to the fall which caused his death. And seeing you come out of the very house, sir, I thought I might make bold to ask if—you see, it's always awkward having to do with cases of disputed identity, and one doesn't like to doubt the word of a respectable young woman unless one has strong proof to the contrary.'

'And she denied having been at the station that evening!' repeated Mr. Thornton, in a low, brooding tone.

'Yes, sir, twice over, as distinct as could be. I told her I should call again, but seeing you just as I was on my way back from questioning the young man who said it was her, I thought I would ask your advice, both as the magistrate who saw Leonards on his death-bed, and as the gentleman who got me my berth in the force.'

'You were quite right,' said Mr. Thornton. 'Don't take any steps till you have seen me again.'

'The young lady will expect me to call, from what I said.'

'I only want to delay you an hour. It's now three. Come to my warehouse at four.'

'Very well, sir!'

And they parted company. Mr. Thornton hurried to his warehouse, and, sternly forbidding his clerks to allow any one to interrupt him, he went his way to his own private room, and locked the door. Then he indulged himself in the torture of thinking it all over, and realising every detail. How could he have lulled himself into the unsuspicious calm in which her tearful image had mirrored itself not two hours before, till he had weakly pitied her and yearned towards her, and forgotten the savage, distrustful jealousy with which the sight of her—and that unknown to him—at such an hour—in such a place—had inspired him! How could one so pure have stooped from her decorous and noble manner of bearing! But was it decorous—was it? He hated himself for the idea that forced itself upon him, just for an instant—no more—and yet, while it was present, thrilled him with its old potency of
attraction towards her image. And then this falsehood—how terrible must be some dread of shame to be revealed—for, after all, the provocation given by such a man as Leonards was, when excited by drinking, might, in all probability, be more than enough to justify any one who came forward to state the circumstances openly and without reserve! How creeping and deadly that fear which could bow down the truthful Margaret to falsehood! He could almost pity her. What would be the end of it? She could not have considered all she was entering upon; if there was an inquest and the young man came forward. Suddenly he started up. There should be no inquest. He would save Margaret. He would take the responsibility of preventing the inquest, the issue of which, from the uncertainty of the medical testimony (which he had vaguely heard the night before, from the surgeon in attendance), could be but doubtful; the doctors had discovered an internal disease far advanced, and sure to prove fatal; they had stated that death might have been accelerated by the fall, or by the subsequent drinking and exposure to cold. If he had but known how Margaret would have become involved in the affair—if he had but foreseen that she would have stained her whiteness by a falsehood, he could have saved her by a word; for the question, of inquest or no inquest, had hung trembling in the balance only the night before. Miss Hale might love another—was indifferent and contemptuous to him—but he would yet do her faithful acts of service of which she should never know. He might despise her, but the woman whom he had once loved should be kept from shame; and shame it would be to pledge herself to a lie in a public court, or otherwise to stand and acknowledge her reason for desiring darkness rather than light.

Very gray and stern did Mr. Thornton look, as he passed out through his wondering clerks. He was away about half an hour; and scarcely less stern did he look when he returned, although his errand had been successful.

He wrote two lines on a slip of paper, put it in an envelope, and sealed it up. This he gave to one of the clerks, saying:

'I appointed Watson—he who was a packer in the warehouse, and who went into the police—to call on me at four o'clock. I have just met with a gentleman from Liverpool who wishes to see me before he leaves town. Take care to give this note to Watson when he calls.'

The note contained these words:

'There will be no inquest. Medical evidence not sufficient to justify it. Take no further steps. I have not seen the coroner; but I will take the responsibility.'

'Well,' thought Watson, 'it relieves me from an awkward job. None of my witnesses seemed certain of anything except the young woman. She was clear and distinct enough; the porter at the rail-road had seen a scuffle; or when he found it was likely to bring him in as a witness, then it might not have been a scuffle, only a little larking, and Leonards might have jumped off the platform himself;—he would not stick firm to anything. And Jennings, the grocer's shopman,—well, he was not quite so bad, but I doubt if I could have got him up to an oath after he heard that Miss Hale flatly denied it. It would have been a troublesome job and no satisfaction. And now I must go and tell them they won't be wanted.'

He accordingly presented himself again at Mr. Hale's that evening. Her father and Dixon would fain have persuaded Margaret to go to bed; but they, neither of them, knew the reason for her low continued refusals to do so. Dixon had learnt part of the truth—but only part. Margaret would not tell any human being of what she had said, and she did not reveal the fatal termination to Leonards' fall from the platform. So Dixon curiosity combined with her allegiance to urge Margaret to go to rest, which her appearance, as she lay on the sofa, showed but too clearly that she required. She did not speak except when spoken to; she tried to smile back in reply to her father's anxious looks and words of tender enquiry; but, instead of a smile, the wan lips resolved themselves into a sigh. He was so miserably uneasy that, at last, she consented to go into her own room, and prepare for going to bed.
She was indeed inclined to give up the idea that the inspector would call again that night, as it was already past nine o’clock.

She stood by her father, holding on to the back of his chair.

‘You will go to bed soon, papa, won’t you? Don’t sit up alone!’

What his answer was she did not hear; the words were lost in the far smaller point of sound that magnified itself to her fears, and filled her brain. There was a low ring at the door-bell.

She kissed her father and glided down stairs, with a rapidity of motion of which no one would have thought her capable, who had seen her the minute before. She put aside Dixon.

‘Don’t come; I will open the door. I know it is him—I can—I must manage it all myself.’

‘As you please, miss!’ said Dixon testily; but in a moment afterwards, she added, ‘But you’re not fit for it. You are more dead than alive.’

‘Am I?’ said Margaret, turning round and showing her eyes all aglow with strange fire, her cheeks flushed, though her lips were baked and livid still.

She opened the door to the Inspector, and preceded him into the study. She placed the candle on the table, and snuffed it carefully, before she turned round and faced him.

‘You are late!’ said she. ‘Well?’ She held her breath for the answer.

‘I’m sorry to have given any unnecessary trouble, ma’am; for, after all, they’ve given up all thoughts of holding an inquest. I have had other work to do and other people to see, or I should have been here before now.’

‘Then it is ended,’ said Margaret. ‘There is to be no further enquiry.’

‘I believe I’ve got Mr. Thornton’s note about me,’ said the Inspector, fumbling in his pocket-book.

‘Mr. Thornton’s!’ said Margaret.

‘Yes! he’s a magistrate—ah! here it is.’ She could not see to read it—no, not although she was close to the candle. The words swam before her. But she held it in her hand, and looked at it as if she were intently studying it.

‘I’m sure, ma’am, it’s a great weight off my mind; for the evidence was so uncertain, you see, that the man had received any blow at all,—and if any question of identity came in, it so complicated the case, as I told Mr. Thornton—’

‘Mr. Thornton!’ said Margaret, again.

‘I met him this morning, just as he was coming out of this house, and, as he’s an old friend of mine, besides being the magistrate who saw Leonards last night, I made bold to tell him of my difficulty.’

Margaret sighed deeply. She did not want to hear any more; she was afraid alike of what she had heard, and of what she might hear. She wished that the man would go. She forced herself to speak.

‘Thank you for calling. It is very late. I dare say it is past ten o’clock. Oh! here is the note!’ she continued, suddenly interpreting the meaning of the hand held out to receive it. He was putting it up, when she said, ‘I think it is a cramped, dazzling sort of writing. I could not read it; will you just read it to me?’

He read it aloud to her.

‘Thank you. You told Mr. Thornton that I was not there?’

‘Oh, of course, ma’am. I’m sorry now that I acted upon information, which seems to have been so erroneous. At first the young man was so positive; and now he says that he doubted all along, and hopes that his mistake won’t have occasioned you such annoyance as to lose their shop your custom. Good night, ma’am.’
'Good night.' She rang the bell for Dixon to show him out. As Dixon returned up the passage Margaret passed her swiftly.

'It is all right!' said she, without looking at Dixon; and before the woman could follow her with further questions she had sped up-stairs, and entered her bed-chamber, and bolted her door.

She threw herself, dressed as she was, upon her bed. She was too much exhausted to think. Half an hour or more elapsed before the cramped nature of her position, and the chilliness, supervening upon great fatigue, had the power to rouse her numbed faculties. Then she began to recall, to combine, to wonder. The first idea that presented itself to her was, that all this sickening alarm on Frederick’s behalf was over; that the strain was past. The next was a wish to remember every word of the Inspector’s which related to Mr. Thornton. When had he seen him? What had he said? What had Mr. Thornton done? What were the exact words of his note? And until she could recollect, even to the placing or omitting an article, the very expressions which he had used in the note, her mind refused to go on with its progress. But the next conviction she came to was clear enough;—Mr. Thornton had seen her close to Outwood station on the fatal Thursday night, and had been told of her denial that she was there. She stood as a liar in his eyes. She was a liar. But she had no thought of penitence before God; nothing but chaos and night surrounded the one lurid fact that, in Mr. Thornton’s eyes, she was degraded. She cared not to think, even to herself, of how much of excuse she might plead. That had nothing to do with Mr. Thornton; she never dreamed that he, or any one else, could find cause for suspicion in what was so natural as her accompanying her brother; but what was really false and wrong was known to him, and he had a right to judge her. 'Oh, Frederick! Frederick!' she cried, 'what have I not sacrificed for you!' Even when she fell asleep her thoughts were compelled to travel the same circle, only with exaggerated and monstrous circumstances of pain.

When she awoke a new idea flashed upon her with all the brightness of the morning. Mr. Thornton had learnt her falsehood before he went to the coroner; that suggested the thought, that he had possibly been influenced so to do with a view of sparing her the repetition of her denial. But she pushed this notion on one side with the sick wilfulness of a child. If it were so, she felt no gratitude to him, as it only showed how keenly he must have seen that she was disgraced already, before he took such unwonted pains to spare her any further trial of truthfulness, which had already failed so signally. She would have gone through the whole—she would have perjured herself to save Frederick, rather—far rather—than Mr. Thornton should have had the knowledge that prompted him to interfere to save her. What ill-fate brought him in contact with the Inspector? What made him be the very magistrate sent for to receive Leonards’ deposition? What had Leonards said? How much of it was intelligible to Mr. Thornton, who might already, for aught she knew, be aware of the old accusation against Frederick, through their mutual friend, Mr. Bell? If so, he had striven to save the son, who came in defiance of the law to attend his mother’s death-bed. And under this idea she could feel grateful—not yet, if ever she should, if his interference had been prompted by contempt. Oh! had any one such just cause to feel contempt for her? Mr. Thornton, above all people, on whom she had looked down from her imaginary heights till now! She suddenly found herself at his feet, and was strangely distressed at her fall. She shrank from following out the premises to their conclusion, and so acknowledging to herself how much she valued his respect and good opinion. Whenever this idea presented itself to her at the end of a long avenue of thoughts, she turned away from following that path—she would not believe in it.

It was later than she fancied, for in the agitation of the previous night, she had forgotten to wind up her watch; and Mr. Hale had given special orders that she was not to be disturbed by the usual awakening. By and by the door opened cautiously, and Dixon put her head in. Perceiving that Margaret was awake, she came forwards with a letter.

'Here’s something to do you good, miss. A letter from Master Frederick.'

'Thank you, Dixon. How late it is!'
She spoke very languidly, and suffered Dixon to lay it on the counterpane before her, without putting out a hand to take it.

'You want your breakfast, I'm sure. I will bring it you in a minute. Master has got the tray all ready, I know.'

Margaret did not reply; she let her go; she felt that she must be alone before she could open that letter. She opened it at last. The first thing that caught her eye was the date two days earlier than she received it. He had then written when he had promised, and their alarm might have been spared. But she would read the letter and see. It was hasty enough, but perfectly satisfactory. He had seen Henry Lennox, who knew enough of the case to shake his head over it, in the first instance, and tell him he had done a very daring thing in returning to England, with such an accusation, backed by such powerful influence, hanging over him. But when they had come to talk it over, Mr. Lennox had acknowledged that there might be some chance of his acquittal, if he could but prove his statements by credible witnesses—that in such case it might be worth while to stand his trial, otherwise it would be a great risk. He would examine—he would take every pains. 'It struck me' said Frederick, 'that your introduction, little sister of mine, went a long way. Is it so? He made many inquiries, I can assure you. He seemed a sharp, intelligent fellow, and in good practice too, to judge from the signs of business and the number of clerks about him. But these may be only lawyer's dodges. I have just caught a packet on the point of sailing—I am off in five minutes. I may have to come back to England again on this business, so keep my visit secret. I shall send my father some rare old sherry, such as you cannot buy in England,—(such stuff as I've got in the bottle before me)! He needs something of the kind—my dear love to him—God bless him. I'm sure—here's my cab. P.S.—What an escape that was! Take care you don't breathe of my having been—not even to the Shaws.'

Margaret turned to the envelope; it was marked 'Too late.' The letter had probably been trusted to some careless waiter, who had forgotten to post it. Oh! what slight cobwebs of chances stand between us and Temptation! Frederick had been safe, and out of England twenty, nay, thirty hours ago; and it was only about seventeen hours since she had told a falsehood to baffle pursuit, which even then would have been vain. How faithless she had been! Where now was her proud motto, 'Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra?' If she had but dared to bravely tell the truth as regarded herself, defying them to find out what she refused to tell concerning another, how light of heart she would now have felt! Not humbled before God, as having failed in trust towards Him; not degraded and abased in Mr. Thornton's sight. She caught herself up at this with a miserable tremor; here was she classing his low opinion of her alongside with the displeasure of God. How was it that he haunted her imagination so persistently? What could it be? Why did she tremble, and hide her face in the pillow? What strong feeling had overtaken her at last?

She sprang out of bed and prayed long and earnestly. It soothed and comforted her so to open her heart. But as soon as she reviewed her position she found the sting was still there; that she was not good enough, nor pure enough to be indifferent to the lowered opinion of a fellow creature; that the thought of how he must be looking upon her with contempt, stood between her and her sense of wrong-doing. She took her letter in to her father as soon as she was drest. There was so slight an allusion to their alarm at the rail-road station, that Mr. Hale passed over it without paying any attention to it. Indeed, beyond the mere fact of Frederick having sailed undiscovered and unsuspected, he did not gather much from the letter at the time, he was so uneasy about Margaret's pallid looks. She seemed continually on the point of weeping.

'You are sadly overdone, Margaret. It is no wonder. But you must let me nurse you now.'

He made her lie down on the sofa, and went for a shawl to cover her with. His tenderness released her tears; and she cried bitterly.
'Poor child!—poor child!' said he, looking fondly at her, as she lay with her face to the wall, shaking with her sobs. After a while they ceased, and she began to wonder whether she durst give herself the relief of telling her father of all her trouble. But there were more reasons against it than for it. The only one for it was the relief to herself; and against it was the thought that it would add materially to her father’s nervousness, if it were indeed necessary for Frederick to come to England again; that he would dwell on the circumstance of his son’s having caused the death of a man, however unwittingly and unwillingly; that this knowledge would perpetually recur to trouble him, in various shapes of exaggeration and distortion from the simple truth. And about her own great fault—he would be distressed beyond measure at her want of courage and faith, yet perpetually troubled to make excuses for her. Formerly Margaret would have come to him as priest as well as father, to tell him of her temptation and her sin; but latterly they had not spoken much on such subjects; and she knew not how, in his change of opinions, he would reply if the depth of her soul called unto his. No; she would keep her secret, and bear the burden alone. Alone she would go before God, and cry for His absolution. Alone she would endure her disgraced position in the opinion of Mr. Thornton. She was unspeakably touched by the tender efforts of her father to think of cheerful subjects on which to talk, and so to take her thoughts away from dwelling on all that had happened of late. It was some months since he had been so talkative as he was this day. He would not let her sit up, and offended Dixon desperately by insisting on waiting upon her himself.

At last she smiled; a poor, weak little smile; but it gave him the truest pleasure.

'It seems strange to think, that what gives us most hope for the future should be called Dolores,' said Margaret. The remark was more in character with her father than with her usual self; but to-day they seemed to have changed natures.

'Her mother was a Spaniard, I believe: that accounts for her religion. Her father was a stiff Presbyterian when I knew him. But it is a very soft and pretty name.'

'How young she is!—younger by fourteen months than I am. Just the age that Edith was when she was engaged to Captain Lennox. Papa, we will go and see them in Spain.'

He shook his head. But he said, 'If you wish it, Margaret. Only let us come back here. It would seem unfair—unkind to your mother, who always, I’m afraid, disliked Milton so much, if we left it now she is lying here, and cannot go with us. No, dear; you shall go and see them, and bring me back a report of my Spanish daughter.'

'No, papa, I won’t go without you. Who is to take care of you when I am gone?'

'I should like to know which of us is taking care of the other. But if you went, I should persuade Mr. Thornton to let me give him double lessons. We would work up the classics famously. That would be a perpetual interest. You might go on, and see Edith at Corfu, if you liked.'

Margaret did not speak all at once. Then she said rather gravely: 'Thank you, papa. But I don’t want to go. We will hope that Mr. Lennox will manage so well, that Frederick may bring Dolores to see us when they are married. And as for Edith, the regiment won’t remain much longer in Corfu. Perhaps we shall see both of them here before another year is out.'

Mr. Hale’s cheerful subjects had come to an end. Some painful recollection had stolen across his mind, and driven him into silence. By-and-by Margaret said:

'Papa—did you see Nicholas Higgins at the funeral? He was there, and Mary too. Poor fellow! it was his way of showing sympathy. He has a good warm heart under his bluff abrupt ways.'

'I am sure of it,' replied Mr. Hale. 'I saw it all along, even while you tried to persuade me that he was all sorts of bad things. We will go and see them to-morrow, if you are strong enough to walk so far.'

'Oh yes. I want to see them. We did not pay Mary—or rather she refused to take it, Dixon says. We will go so as to catch him just after his dinner, and before he goes to his work.'
Towards evening Mr. Hale said:

'I half expected Mr. Thornton would have called. He spoke of a book yesterday which he had, and which I wanted to see. He said he would try and bring it to-day.'

Margaret sighed. She knew he would not come. He would be too delicate to run the chance of meeting her, while her shame must be so fresh in his memory. The very mention of his name renewed her trouble, and produced a relapse into the feeling of depressed, pre-occupied exhaustion. She gave way to listless languor. Suddenly it struck her that this was a strange manner to show her patience, or to reward her father for his watchful care of her all through the day. She sate up and offered to read aloud. His eyes were failing, and he gladly accepted her proposal. She read well: she gave the due emphasis; but had any one asked her, when she had ended, the meaning of what she had been reading, she could not have told. She was smitten with a feeling of ingratitude to Mr. Thornton, inasmuch as, in the morning, she had refused to accept the kindness he had shown her in making further inquiry from the medical men, so as to obviate any inquest being held. Oh! she was grateful! She had been cowardly and false, and had shown her cowardliness and falsehood in action that could not be recalled; but she was not ungrateful. It sent a glow to her heart, to know how she could feel towards one who had reason to despise her. His cause for contempt was so just, that she should have respected him less if she had thought he did not feel contempt. It was a pleasure to feel how thoroughly she respected him. He could not prevent her doing that; it was the one comfort in all this misery.

Late in the evening, the expected book arrived, 'with Mr. Thornton's kind regards, and wishes to know how Mr. Hale is.'

'Say that I am much better, Dixon, but that Miss Hale—'

'No, papa,' said Margaret, eagerly—'don't say anything about me. He does not ask.'

'My dear child, how you are shivering!' said her father, a few minutes afterwards. 'You must go to bed directly. You have turned quite pale!'

Margaret did not refuse to go, though she was loth to leave her father alone. She needed the relief of solitude after a day of busy thinking, and busier repenting.

But she seemed much as usual the next day; the lingering gravity and sadness, and the occasional absence of mind, were not unnatural symptoms in the early days of grief. And almost in proportion to her re-establishment in health, was her father's relapse into his abstracted musing upon the wife he had lost, and the past era in his life that was closed to him for ever.

CHAPTER XXXVI—UNION NOT ALWAYS STRENGTH

'The steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,  
The sobs of the mourners, deep and low.'
SHELLEY.

At the time arranged the previous day, they set out on their walk to see Nicholas Higgins and his daughter. They both were reminded of their recent loss, by a strange kind of shyness in their new habiliments, and in the fact that it was the first time, for many weeks, that they had deliberately gone out together. They drew very close to each other in unspoken sympathy.
Nicholas was sitting by the fire-side in his accustomed corner: but he had not his accustomed pipe. He was leaning his head upon his hand, his arm resting on his knee. He did not get up when he saw them, though Margaret could read the welcome in his eye.

'Sit ye down, sit ye down. Fire's welly out,' said he, giving it a vigorous poke, as if to turn attention away from himself. He was rather disorderly, to be sure, with a black unshaven beard of several days' growth, making his pale face look yet paler, and a jacket which would have been all the better for patching.

'We thought we should have a good chance of finding you, just after dinner-time,' said Margaret.

'We have had our sorrow too, since we saw you,' said Mr. Hale.

'Ay, ay. Sorrows is more plentiful than dinners just now; I reckon, my dinner hour stretches all o'er the day; yo're pretty sure of finding me.'

'Are you out of work?' asked Margaret.

'Ay,' he replied shortly. Then, after a moment's silence, he added, looking up for the first time: 'I'm not wanting brass. Dunno yo' think it. Bess, poor lass, had a little stock under her pillow, ready to slip into my hand, last moment, and Mary is fusian-cutting. But I'm out o' work a' the same.'

'We owe Mary some money,' said Mr. Hale, before Margaret's sharp pressure on his arm could arrest the words.

'If hoo takes it, I'll turn her out o' doors. I'll bide inside these fou' walls, and she'll bide out. That's a.'

'But we owe her many thanks for her kind service,' began Mr. Hale again.

'I ne'er thanked yo'r daughter theer for her deeds o' love to my poor wench. I ne'er could find th' words. I se have to begin and try now, if yo' start making an ado about what little Mary could sarve yo'.

'Is it because of the strike you're out of work?' asked Margaret gently.

'Strike's ended. It's o'er for this time. I'm out o' work because I ne'er asked for it. And I ne'er asked for it, because good words is scarce, and bad words is plentiful.'

He was in a mood to take a surly pleasure in giving answers that were like riddles. But Margaret saw that he would like to be asked for the explanation.

'And good words are—?'

'Asking for work. I reckon them's almost the best words that men can say. "Gi' me work" means "and I'll do it like a man." Them's good words.'

'And bad words are refusing you work when you ask for it.'

'Ay. Bad words is saying "Aha, my fine chap! Yo've been true to yo'r order, and I'll be true to mine. Yo' did the best yo' could for them as wanted help; that's yo'r way of being true to yo'r kind; and I'll be true to mine. Yo've been a poor fool, as knowed no better nor be a true faithful fool. So go and be d—— d to yo'. There's no work for yo' here." Them's bad words. I'm not a fool; and if I was, folk ought to ha' taught me how to be wise after their fashion. I could mappen ha' learnt, if any one had tried to teach me.'

'Would it not be worth while,' said Mr. Hale, 'to ask your old master if he would take you back again? It might be a poor chance, but it would be a chance.'

He looked up again, with a sharp glance at the questioner; and then tittered a low and bitter laugh.

'Measter! if it's no offence, I'll ask yo' a question or two in my turn.'

'You're quite welcome,' said Mr. Hale.

'I reckon yo'n some way of earning your bread. Folk seldom lives i' Milton just for pleasure, if they can live anywhere else.'
'You are quite right. I have some independent property, but my intention in settling in Milton was to become a private tutor.'

'To teach folk. Well! I reckon they pay yo' for teaching them, dunnot they?'

'Yes,' replied Mr. Hale, smiling. 'I teach in order to get paid.'

'And them that pays yo', dun they tell yo' whatten to do, or whatten not to do wi' the money they gives you in just payment for your pains—in fair exchange like?'

'No; to be sure not!'

'They dunnot say, "Yo' may have a brother, or a friend as dear as a brother, who wants this here brass for a purpose both yo' and he think right; but yo' mun promise not give it to him. Yo' may see a good use, as yo' think, to put yo'r money to; but we don't think it good, and so if yo' spend it a-thatens we'll just leave off dealing with yo'." They dunnot say that, dun they?'

'No: to be sure not!'

'Would yo' stand it if they did?'

'It would be some very hard pressure that would make me even think of submitting to such dictation.'

'There's not the pressure on all the broad earth that would make me, said Nicholas Higgins. 'Now yo've got it. Yo've hit the bull's eye. Hamper's—that's where I worked—makes their men pledge 'emselves they'll not give a penny to help th' Union or keep turnouts fro' clemming. They may pledge and make pledge,' continued he, scornfully; 'they nobbut make liars and hypocrites. And that's a less sin, to my mind, to making men's hearts so hard that they'll not do a kindness to them as needs it, or help on the right and just cause, though it goes again the strong hand. But I'll ne'er forswear mysel' for a' the work the king could gi'e me. I'm a member o' the Union; and I think it's the only thing to do the workman any good. And I've been a turn-out, and known what it were to clem; so if I get a shilling, sixpence shall go to them if they axe it from me. Consequence is, I dunnot see where I'm to get a shilling.'

'Is that rule about not contributing to the Union in force at all the mills?' asked Margaret.

'I cannot say. It's a new regulation at ourn; and I reckon they'll find that they cannot stick to it. But it's in force now. By-and-by they'll find out, tyrants makes liars.'

There was a little pause. Margaret was hesitating whether she should say what was in her mind; she was unwilling to irritate one who was already gloomy and despondent enough. At last out it came. But in her soft tones, and with her reluctant manner, showing that she was unwilling to say anything unpleasant, it did not seem to annoy Higgins, only to perplex him.

'Do you remember poor Boucher saying that the Union was a tyrant? I think he said it was the worst tyrant of all. And I remember at the time I agreed with him.'

'It was a long while before he spoke. He was resting his head on his two hands, and looking down into the fire, so she could not read the expression on his face.

'I'll not deny but what th' Union finds it necessary to force a man into his own good. I'll speak truth. A man leads a dree life who's not i' th' Union. But once i' the' Union, his interests are taken care on better nor he could do it for himsel', or by himsel', for that matter. It's the only way working men can get their rights, by all joining together. More the members, more chance for each one separate man having justice done him. Government takes care o' fools and madmen; and if any man is inclined to do himsel' or his neighbour a hurt, it puts a bit of a check on him, whether he likes it or no. That's all we do i' th' Union. We can't clap folk into prison; but we can make a man's life so heavy to be borne, that he's obliged to come in, and be wise and helpful in spite of himself. Boucher were a fool all along, and ne'er a worse fool than at th' last.'

'He did you harm?' asked Margaret.
'Ay, that did he. We had public opinion on our side, till he and his sort began rioting and breaking laws. It were all o'er wi' the strike then.'

'Then would it not have been far better to have left him alone, and not forced him to join the Union? He did you no good; and you drove him mad.'

'Margaret,' said her father, in a low and warning tone, for he saw the cloud gathering on Higgins's face.

'I like her,' said Higgins, suddenly. 'Hoo speaks plain out what's in her mind. Hoo doesn't comprehend th' Union for all that. It's a great power: it's our only power. I ha' read a bit o' poetry about a plough going o'er a daisy, as made tears come into my eyes, afore I'd other cause for crying. But the chap ne'er stopped driving the plough, I'se warrant, for all he were pitiful about the daisy. He'd too much mother-wit for that. Th' Union's the plough, making ready the land for harvest-time. Such as Boucher—'twould be settin' him up too much to liken him to a daisy; he's liker a weed lounging over the ground—mun just make up their mind to be put out o' the way. I'm sore vexed wi' him just now. So, mappen, I dunnot speak him fair. I could go o'er him wi' a plough mysel', wi' a' the pleasure in life.'

'Why? What has he been doing? Anything fresh?'

'Ay, to be sure. He's ne'er out o' mischief, that man. First of a' he must go raging like a mad fool, and kick up yon riot. Then he'd to go into hiding, where he'd a been yet, if Thornton had followed him out as I'd hoped he would ha' done. But Thornton, having got his own purpose, didn't care to go on wi' the prosecution for the riot. So Boucher slunk back again to his house. He ne'er showed himself abroad for a day or two. He had that grace. And then, where think ye that he went? Why, to Hamper's. Damn him! He went wi' his mealy-mouthed face, that turns me sick to look at, a-asking for work, though he knowed well enough the new rule, o' pledging themselves to give nought to th' Unions; nought to help the starving turn-out! Why he'd a clemmed to death, if th' Union had na helped him in his pinch. There he went, ossing to promise aught, and pledge himsel' to aught—to tell a' he know'd on our proceedings, the good-for-nothing Judas! But I'll say this for Hamper, and thank him for it at my dying day, he drove Boucher away, and would na listen to him—ne'er a word—though folk standing by, says the traitor cried like a babby!'

'Oh! how shocking! how pitiful!' exclaimed Margaret. 'Higgins, I don't know you to-day. Don't you see how you've made Boucher what he is, by driving him into the Union against his will—without his heart going with it. You have made him what he is!'

Made him what he is! What was he?

Gathering, gathering along the narrow street, came a hollow, measured sound; now forcing itself on their attention. Many voices were hushed and low: many steps were heard not moving onwards, at least not with any rapidity or steadiness of motion, but as if circling round one spot. Yes, there was one distinct, slow tramp of feet, which made itself a clear path through the air, and reached their ears; the measured laboured walk of men carrying a heavy burden. They were all drawn towards the house-door by some irresistible impulse; impelled thither—not by a poor curiosity, but as if by some solemn blast.

Six men walked in the middle of the road, three of them being policemen. They carried a door, taken off its hinges, upon their shoulders, on which lay some dead human creature; and from each side of the door there were constant droppings. All the street turned out to see, and, seeing, to accompany the procession, each one questioning the bearers, who answered almost reluctantly at last, so often had they told the tale.

'We found him i' th' brook in the field beyond there.'

'Th' brook!—why there's not water enough to drown him!'

'He was a determined chap. He lay with his face downwards. He was sick enough o' living, choose what cause he had for it.'
Higgins crept up to Margaret's side, and said in a weak piping kind of voice: 'It's not John Boucher? He had na spunk enough. Sure! It's not John Boucher! Why, they are a' looking this way! Listen! I've a singing in my head, and I cannot hear.'

They put the door down carefully upon the stones, and all might see the poor drowned wretch—his glassy eyes, one half-open, staring right upwards to the sky. Owing to the position in which he had been found lying, his face was swollen and discoloured besides, his skin was stained by the water in the brook, which had been used for dyeing purposes. The fore part of his head was bald; but the hair grew thin and long behind, and every separate lock was a conduit for water. Through all these disfigurements, Margaret recognised John Boucher. It seemed to her so sacrilegious to be peering into that poor distorted, agonised face, that, by a flash of instinct, she went forwards and softly covered the dead man's countenance with her handkerchief. The eyes that saw her do this followed her, as she turned away from her pious office, and were thus led to the place where Nicholas Higgins stood, like one rooted to the spot. The men spoke together, and then one of them came up to Higgins, who would have fain shrunk back into his house.

'Higgins, thou knowed him! Thou mun go tell the wife. Do it gently, man, but do it quick, for we canna leave him here long.'

'I canna go,' said Higgins. 'Dunnot ask me. I canna face her.'

'Thou knows her best,' said the man. 'We'n done a deal in bringing him here—thou take thy share.'

'I canna do it,' said Higgins. 'I'm welly felled wi' seeing him. We wasn't friends; and now he's dead.'

'Well, if thou wunnot thou wunnot. Some one mun, though. It's a dree task; but it's a chance, every minute, as she doesn't hear on it in some rougher way nor a person going to make her let on by degrees, as it were.'

'Papa, do you go,' said Margaret, in a low voice.

'If I could—if I had time to think of what I had better say; but all at once——' Margaret saw that her father was indeed unable. He was trembling from head to foot.

'I will go,' said she.

'Bless yo', miss, it will be a kind act; for she's been but a sickly sort of body, I hear, and few hereabouts know much on her.'

Margaret knocked at the closed door; but there was such a noise, as of many little ill-ordered children, that she could hear no reply; indeed, she doubted if she was heard, and as every moment of delay made her recoil from her task more and more, she opened the door and went in, shutting it after her, and even, unseen to the woman, fastening the bolt.

Mrs. Boucher was sitting in a rocking-chair, on the other side of the ill-redd-up fireplace; it looked as if the house had been untouched for days by any effort at cleanliness.

Margaret said something, she hardly knew what, her throat and mouth were so dry, and the children's noise completely prevented her from being heard. She tried again.

'How are you, Mrs. Boucher? But very poorly, I'm afraid.'

'I've no chance o' being well,' said she querulously. 'I'm left alone to manage these childer, and nought for to give 'em for to keep 'em quiet. John should na ha' left me, and me so poorly.'

'How long is it since he went away?'

'Four days sin'. No one would give him work here, and he'd to go on tramp toward Greenfield. But he might ha' been back afore this, or sent me some word if he'd getten work. He might——'

'Oh, don't blame him,' said Margaret. 'He felt it deeply, I'm sure——'
'Wilto' hold thy din, and let me hear the lady speak!' addressing herself, in no very gentle voice, to a little urchin of about a year old. She apologetically continued to Margaret, 'He's always mithering me for "daddy" and "butty;" and I ha' no butties to give him, and daddy's away, and forgotten us a', I think. He's his father's darling, he is,' said she, with a sudden turn of mood, and, dragging the child up to her knee, she began kissing it fondly.

Margaret laid her hand on the woman's arm to arrest her attention. Their eyes met.

'Poor little fellow!' said Margaret, slowly; 'he was his father's darling.'

'He is his father's darling,' said the woman, rising hastily, and standing face to face with Margaret. Neither of them spoke for a moment or two. Then Mrs. Boucher began in a low, growling tone, gathering in wildness as she went on: 'He is his father's darling, I say. Poor folk can love their childer as well as rich. Why dunno yo' speak? Why dun yo' stare at me wi' your great pitiful eyes? Where's John?' Weak as she was, she shook Margaret to force out an answer. 'Oh, my God!' said she, understanding the meaning of that tearful look. She sank back into the chair. Margaret took up the child and put him into her arms.

'He loved him,' said she.

'Ay,' said the woman, shaking her head, 'he loved us a'. We had some one to love us once. It's a long time ago; but when he were in life and with us, he did love us, he did. He loved this babby mappen the best on us; but he loved me and I loved him, though I was calling him five minutes agone. Are yo' sure he's dead?' said she, trying to get up. 'If it's only that he's ill and like to die, they may bring him round yet. I'm but an ailing creature mysel— I've been ailing this long time.'

'But he is dead—he is drowned!'

'Folk are brought round after they're dead-drowned. Whatten was I thinking of, to sit still when I should be stirring mysel'? Here, whisth thee, child—whisth thee! tak' this, tak' aught to play wi', but dunnot cry while my heart's breaking! Oh, where is my strength gone to? Oh, John—husband!'

Margaret saved her from falling by catching her in her arms. She sate down in the rocking chair, and held the woman upon her knees, her head lying on Margaret's shoulder. The other children, clustered together in affright, began to understand the mystery of the scene; but the ideas came slowly, for their brains were dull and languid of perception. They set up such a cry of despair as they guessed the truth, that Margaret knew not how to bear it. Johnny's cry was loudest of them all, though he knew not why he cried, poor little fellow.

The mother quivered as she lay in Margaret's arms. Margaret heard a noise at the door.

'Open it. Open it quick,' said she to the eldest child. 'It's bolted; make no noise—be very still. Oh, papa, let them go upstairs very softly and carefully, and perhaps she will not hear them. She has fainted—that's all.'

'It's as well for her, poor creature,' said a woman following in the wake of the bearers of the dead. 'But yo' re not fit to hold her. Stay, I'll run fetch a pillow and we'll let her down easy on the floor.'

This helpful neighbour was a great relief to Margaret; she was evidently a stranger to the house, a new-comer in the district, indeed; but she was so kind and thoughtful that Margaret felt she was no longer needed; and that it would be better, perhaps, to set an example of clearing the house, which was filled with idle, if sympathising gazers.

She looked round for Nicholas Higgins. He was not there. So she spoke to the woman who had taken the lead in placing Mrs. Boucher on the floor.

'Can you give all these people a hint that they had better leave in quietness? So that when she comes round, she should only find one or two that she knows about her. Papa, will you speak to the men, and get them to go away? She cannot breathe, poor thing, with this crowd about her.'
Margaret was kneeling down by Mrs. Boucher and bathing her face with vinegar; but in a few minutes she was surprised at the gush of fresh air. She looked round, and saw a smile pass between her father and the woman.

'What is it?' asked she.

'Only our good friend here,‛ replied her father, 'hit on a capital expedient for clearing the place.'

'I bid 'em begone, and each take a child with 'em, and to mind that they were orphans, and their mother a widow. It was who could do most, and the childer are sure of a bellyful to-day, and of kindness too. Does hoo know how he died?'

'No,' said Margaret; 'I could not tell her all at once.'

'Hoo mun be told because of th' Inquest. See! Hoo's coming round; shall you or I do it? or mappen your father would be best?'

'No; you, you,' said Margaret.

They awaited her perfect recovery in silence. Then the neighbour woman sat down on the floor, and took Mrs. Boucher's head and shoulders on her lap.

'Neighbour,' said she, 'your man is dead. Guess yo' how he died?'

'He were drowned,' said Mrs. Boucher, feebly, beginning to cry for the first time, at this rough probing of her sorrows.

'He were found drowned. He were coming home very hopeless o' aught on earth. He thought God could na be harder than men; mappen not so hard; mappen as tender as a mother; mappen tenderer. I'm not saying he did right, and I'm not saying he did wrong. All I say is, may neither me nor mine ever have his sore heart, or we may do like things.'

'He has left me alone wi' a' these children!' moaned the widow, less distressed at the manner of the death than Margaret expected; but it was of a piece with her helpless character to feel his loss as principally affecting herself and her children.

'Not alone,' said Mr. Hale, solemnly. 'Who is with you? Who will take up your cause?' The widow opened her eyes wide, and looked at the new speaker, of whose presence she had not been aware till then.

'Who has promised to be a father to the fatherless?' continued he.

'But I've getten six children, sir; and the eldest not eight years of age. I'm not meaning for to doubt His power, sir,—only it needs a deal o' trust;' and she began to cry afresh.

'Hoo'll be better able to talk to-morrow, sir,' said the neighbour. 'Best comfort now would be the feel of a child at her heart. I'm sorry they took the babby.'

'I'll go for it,' said Margaret. And in a few minutes she returned, carrying Johnnie, his face all smeared with eating, and his hands loaded with treasures in the shape of shells, and bits of crystal, and the head of a plaster figure. She placed him in his mother's arms.

'There!' said the woman, 'now you go. They'll cry together, and comfort together, better nor any one but a child can do. I'll stop with her as long as I'm needed, and if yo' come to-morrow, yo' can have a deal o' wise talk with her, that she's not up to to-day.'

As Margaret and her father went slowly up the street, she paused at Higgins's closed door.

'Shall we go in?' asked her father. 'I was thinking of him too.'

They knocked. There was no answer, so they tried the door. It was bolted, but they thought they heard him moving within.

'Nicholas!' said Margaret. There was no answer, and they might have gone away, believing the house to be empty, if there had not been some accidental fall, as of a book, within.

'Nicholas!' said Margaret again. 'It is only us. Won't you let us come in?'
'No,' said he. 'I spoke as plain as I could, 'bout using words, when I bolted th' door. Let me be, this day.'

Mr. Hale would have urged their desire, but Margaret placed her finger on his lips.

'I don't wonder at it,' said she. 'I myself long to be alone. It seems the only thing to do one good after a day like this.'

CHAPTER L—CHANGES AT MILTON

'Here we go up, up, up;
And here we go down, down, downee!'
NURSERY SONG.

Meanwhile, at Milton the chimneys smoked, the ceaseless roar and mighty beat, and dizzying whirl of machinery, struggled and strove perpetually. Senseless and purposeless were wood and iron and steam in their endless labours; but the persistence of their monotonous work was rivalled in tireless endurance by the strong crowds, who, with sense and with purpose, were busy and restless in seeking after—What? In the streets there were few loiterers,—none walking for mere pleasure; every man's face was set in lines of eagerness or anxiety; news was sought for with fierce avidity; and men jostled each other aside in the Mart and in the Exchange, as they did in life, in the deep selfishness of competition. There was gloom over the town. Few came to buy, and those who did were looked at suspiciously by the sellers; for credit was insecure, and the most stable might have their fortunes affected by the sweep in the great neighbouring port among the shipping houses. Hitherto there had been no failures in Milton; but, from the immense speculations that had come to light in making a bad end in America, and yet nearer home, it was known that some Milton houses of business must suffer so severely that every day men's faces asked, if their tongues did not, 'What news? Who is gone? How will it affect me?' And if two or three spoke together, they dwelt rather on the names of those who were safe than dared to hint at those likely, in their opinion, to go; for idle breath may, at such times, cause the downfall of some who might otherwise weather the storm; and one going down drags many after. 'Thornton is safe,' say they. 'His business is large—extending every year; but such a head as he has, and so prudent with all his daring!' Then one man draws another aside, and walks a little apart, and, with head inclined into his neighbour's ear, he says, 'Thornton's business is large; but he has spent his profits in extending it; he has no capital laid by; his machinery is new within these two years, and has cost him—we won't say what!—a word to the wise!' But that Mr. Harrison was a croaker,—a man who had succeeded to his father's trade-made fortune, which he had feared to lose by altering his mode of business to any having a larger scope; yet he grudged every penny made by others more daring and far-sighted.

But the truth was, Mr. Thornton was hard pressed. He felt it acutely in his vulnerable point—his pride in the commercial character which he had established for himself. Architect of his own fortunes, he attributed this to no special merit or qualities of his own, but to the power, which he believed that commerce gave to every brave, honest, and persevering man, to raise himself to a level from which he might see and read the great game of worldly success, and honestly, by such far-sightedness, command more power and influence than in any other mode of life. Far away, in the East and in the West, where his person would never be known, his name was to be regarded, and his
wishes to be fulfilled, and his word pass like gold. That was the idea of merchant-life with which Mr. Thornton had started. 'Her merchants be like princes,' said his mother, reading the text aloud, as if it were a trumpet-call to invite her boy to the struggle. He was but like many others—men, women, and children—alive to distant, and dead to near things. He sought to possess the influence of a name in foreign countries and far-away seas,—to become the head of a firm that should be known for generations; and it had taken him long silent years to come even to a glimmering of what he might be now, to-day, here in his own town, his own factory, among his own people. He and they had led parallel lives—very close, but never touching—till the accident (or so it seemed) of his acquaintance with Higgins. Once brought face to face, man to man, with an individual of the masses around him, and (take notice) out of the character of master and workman, in the first instance, they had each begun to recognise that 'we have all of us one human heart.' It was the fine point of the wedge; and until now, when the apprehension of losing his connection with two or three of the workmen whom he had so lately begun to know as men,—of having a plan or two, which were experiments lying very close to his heart, roughly nipped off without trial,—gave a new poignancy to the subtle fear that came over him from time to time; until now, he had never recognised how much and how deep was the interest he had grown of late to feel in his position as manufacturer, simply because it led him into such close contact, and gave him the opportunity of so much power, among a race of people strange, shrewd, ignorant; but, above all, full of character and strong human feeling.

He reviewed his position as a Milton manufacturer. The strike a year and a half ago,—or more, for it was now untimely wintry weather, in a late spring,—that strike, when he was young, and he now was old,—had prevented his completing some of the large orders he had then on hand. He had locked up a good deal of his capital in new and expensive machinery, and he had also bought cotton largely, for the fulfilment of these orders, taken under contract. That he had not been able to complete them, was owing in some degree to the utter want of skill on the part of the Irish hands whom he had imported; much of their work was damaged and unfit to be sent forth by a house which prided itself on turning out nothing but first-rate articles. For many months, the embarrassment caused by the strike had been an obstacle in Mr. Thornton's way; and often, when his eye fell on Higgins, he could have spoken angrily to him without any present cause, just from feeling how serious was the injury that had arisen from this affair in which he was implicated. But when he became conscious of this sudden, quick resentment, he resolved to curb it. It would not satisfy him to avoid Higgins; he must convince himself that he was master over his own anger, by being particularly careful to allow Higgins access to him, whenever the strict rules of business, or Mr. Thornton's leisure permitted. And by-and-bye, he lost all sense of resentment in wonder how it was, or could be, that two men like himself and Higgins, living by the same trade, working in their different ways at the same object, could look upon each other's position and duties in so strangely different a way. And thence arose that intercourse, which though it might not have the effect of preventing all future clash of opinion and action, when the occasion arose, would, at any rate, enable both master and man to look upon each other with far more charity and sympathy, and bear with each other more patiently and kindly. Besides this improvement of feeling, both Mr. Thornton and his workmen found out their ignorance as to positive matters of fact, known heretofore to one side, but not to the other.

But now had come one of those periods of bad trade, when the market falling brought down the value of all large stocks; Mr. Thornton's fell to nearly half. No orders were coming in; so he lost the interest of the capital he had locked up in machinery; indeed, it was difficult to get payment for the orders completed; yet there was the constant drain of expenses for working the business. Then the bills became due for the cotton he had purchased; and money being scarce, he could only borrow at exorbitant interest, and yet he could not realise any of his property. But he did not despair; he exerted himself day and night to foresee and to provide for all emergencies; he was as calm and gentle to the women in his home as ever; to the workmen in his mill he spoke not many words, but they knew him by this time; and many a curt, decided answer was received by them rather with sympathy for the
care they saw pressing upon him, than with the suppressed antagonism which had formerly been 
smouldering, and ready for hard words and hard judgments on all occasions. 'Th' measter's a deal to 
potter him,' said Higgins, one day, as he heard Mr. Thornton's short, sharp inquiry, why such a 
command had not been obeyed; and caught the sound of the suppressed sigh which he heaved in 
going past the room where some of the men were working. Higgins and another man stopped over-
hours that night, unknown to any one, to get the neglected piece of work done; and Mr. Thornton 
ever knew but that the overlooker, to whom he had given the command in the first instance, had 
done it himself.

'Eh! I reckon I know who'd ha' been sorry for to see our measter sitting so like a piece o' grey 
calico! Th' ou'd parson would ha' fretted his woman's heart out, if he'd seen the woeful looks I have 
seen on our measter's face,' thought Higgins, one day, as he was approaching Mr. Thornton in 
Marlborough Street.

'Measter,' said he, stopping his employer in his quick resolved walk, and causing that gentleman 
to look up with a sudden annoyed start, as if his thoughts had been far away.

'Have yo' heerd aught of Miss Marget lately?'

'Miss—who?' replied Mr. Thornton.

'Miss Marget—Miss Hale—th' oud parson's daughter—yo known who I mean well enough, if 
yo'll only think a bit—' (there was nothing disrespectful in the tone in which this was said).

'Oh yes!' and suddenly, the wintry frost-bound look of care had left Mr. Thornton's face, as if 
some soft summer gale had blown all anxiety away from his mind; and though his mouth was as much 
compressed as before, his eyes smiled out benignly on his questioner.

'She's my landlord now, you know, Higgins. I hear of her through her agent here, every now and 
then. She's well and among friends—thank you, Higgins.' That 'thank you' that lingered after the 
other words, and yet came with so much warmth of feeling, let in a new light to the acute Higgins 
.It might be but a will-o'-th'-wisp, but he thought he would follow it and ascertain whither it would lead 
him.

'And she's not getten married, measter?'

'Not yet.' The face was cloudy once more. 'There is some talk of it, as I understand, with a 
connection of the family.'

'Then she'll not be for coming to Milton again, I reckon.'

'No!'

'Stop a minute, measter.' Then going up confidentially close, he said, 'Is th' young gentleman 
cleared?' He enforced the depth of his intelligence by a wink of the eye, whic 

'h' young gentleman, I mean—Master Frederick, they ca'ad him—her brother as was over here, 
yo' known.'

'Over here.'

'Ay, to be sure, at th' missus's death. Yo' need na be feared of my telling; for Mary and me, we 
knowed it all along, only we held our peace, for we got it through Mary working in th' house.'

'And he was over. It was her brother!''

'Sure enough, and I reckoned yo' knowed it or I'd never ha' let on. Yo' knowed she had a 
brother?'

'Yes, I know all about him. And he was over at Mrs. Hale's death?'

'Nay! I'm not going for to tell more. I've maybe getten them into mischief already, for they kept 
it very close. I nobbut wanted to know if they'd getten him cleared?'}
'Not that I know of. I know nothing. I only hear of Miss Hale, now, as my landlord, and through her lawyer.'

He broke off from Higgins, to follow the business on which he had been bent when the latter first accosted him; leaving Higgins baffled in his endeavour.

'It was her brother,' said Mr. Thornton to himself. 'I am glad. I may never see her again; but it is a comfort—a relief—to know that much. I knew she could not be unmaidenly; and yet I yearned for conviction. Now I am glad!'

It was a little golden thread running through the dark web of his present fortunes; which were growing ever gloomier and more gloomy. His agent had largely trusted a house in the American trade, which went down, along with several others, just at this time, like a pack of cards, the fall of one compelling other failures. What were Mr. Thornton's engagements? Could he stand?

Night after night he took books and papers into his own private room, and sate up there long after the family were gone to bed. He thought that no one knew of this occupation of the hours he should have spent in sleep. One morning, when daylight was stealing in through the crevices of his shutters, and he had never been in bed, and, in hopeless indifference of mind, was thinking that he could do without the hour or two of rest, which was all that he should be able to take before the stir of daily labour began again, the door of his room opened, and his mother stood there, dressed as she had been the day before. She had never laid herself down to slumber any more than he. Their eyes met. Their faces were cold and rigid, and wan, from long watching.

'Mother! why are not you in bed?'

'Son John,' said she, 'do you think I can sleep with an easy mind, while you keep awake full of care? You have not told me what your trouble is; but sore trouble you have had these many days past.'

'Trade is bad.'

'And you dread—'

'I dread nothing,' replied he, drawing up his head, and holding it erect. 'I know now that no man will suffer by me. That was my anxiety.'

'But how do you stand? Shall you—will it be a failure?' her steady voice trembling in an unwonted manner.

'Not a failure. I must give up business, but I pay all men. I might redeem myself—I am sorely tempted—'

'How? Oh, John! keep up your name—try all risks for that. How redeem it?'

'By a speculation offered to me, full of risk; but, if successful, placing me high above water-mark, so that no one need ever know the strait I am in. Still, if it fails—'

'And if it fails,' said she, advancing, and laying her hand on his arm, her eyes full of eager light. She held her breath to hear the end of his speech.

'Honest men are ruined by a rogue,' said he gloomily. 'As I stand now, my creditors, money is safe—every farthing of it; but I don't know where to find my own—it may be all gone, and I penniless at this moment. Therefore, it is my creditors' money that I should risk.'

'But if it succeeded, they need never know. Is it so desperate a speculation? I am sure it is not, or you would never have thought of it. If it succeeded—'

'I should be a rich man, and my peace of conscience would be gone!'

'Why! You would have injured no one.'

'No; but I should have run the risk of ruining many for my own paltry aggrandisement. Mother, I have decided! You won't much grieve over our leaving this house, shall you, dear mother?'

'No! but to have you other than what you are will break my heart. What can you do?'
'Be always the same John Thornton in whatever circumstances; endeavouring to do right, and making great blunders; and then trying to be brave in setting to afresh. But it is hard, mother. I have so worked and planned. I have discovered new powers in my situation too late—and now all is over. I am too old to begin again with the same heart. It is hard, mother.'

He turned away from her, and covered his face with his hands.

'I can't think,' said she, with gloomy defiance in her tone, 'how it comes about. Here is my boy—good son, just man, tender heart—and he fails in all he sets his mind upon: he finds a woman to love, and she cares no more for his affection than if he had been any common man; he labours, and his labour comes to nought. Other people prosper and grow rich, and hold their paltry names high and dry above shame.'

'Shame never touched me,' said he, in a low tone: but she went on.

'I sometimes have wondered where justice was gone to, and now I don't believe there is such a thing in the world,—now you are come to this; you, my own John Thornton, though you and I may be beggars together—my own dear son!'

She fell upon his neck, and kissed him through her tears.

'Mother!' said he, holding her gently in his arms, 'who has sent me my lot in life, both of good and of evil?'

She shook her head. She would have nothing to do with religion just then.

'Mother,' he went on, seeing that she would not speak, 'I, too, have been rebellious; but I am striving to be so no longer. Help me, as you helped me when I was a child. Then you said many good words—when my father died, and we were sometimes sorely short of comforts—which we shall never be now; you said brave, noble, trustful words then, mother, which I have never forgotten, though they may have lain dormant. Speak to me again in the old way, mother. Do not let us have to think that the world has too much hardened our hearts. If you would say the old good words, it would make me feel something of the pious simplicity of my childhood. I say them to myself, but they would come differently from you, remembering all the cares and trials you have had to bear.'

'I have had a many,' said she, sobbing, 'but none so sore as this. To see you cast down from your rightful place! I could say it for myself, John, but not for you. Not for you! God has seen fit to be very hard on you, very.'

She shook with the sobs that come so convulsively when an old person weeps. The silence around her struck her at last; and she quieted herself to listen. No sound. She looked. Her son sate by the table, his arms thrown half across it, his head bent face downwards.

'Oh, John!' she said, and she lifted his face up. Such a strange, pallid look of gloom was on it, that for a moment it struck her that this look was the forerunner of death; but, as the rigidity melted out of the countenance and the natural colour returned, and she saw that he was himself once again, all worldly mortification sank to nothing before the consciousnes of the great blessing that he himself by his simple existence was to her. She thanked God for this, and this alone, with a fervour that swept away all rebellious feelings from her mind.

He did not speak readily; but he went and opened the shutters, and let the ruddy light of dawn flood the room. But the wind was in the east; the weather was piercing cold, as it had been for weeks; there would be no demand for light summer goods this year. That hope for the revival of trade must utterly be given up.

It was a great comfort to have had this conversation with his mother; and to feel sure that, however they might henceforward keep silence on all these anxieties, they yet understood each other's feelings, and were, if not in harmony, at least not in discord with each other, in their way of viewing them. Fanny's husband was vexed at Thornton's refusal to take any share in the speculation
which he had offered to him, and withdrew from any possibility of being supposed able to assist him with the ready money, which indeed the speculator needed for his own venture.

There was nothing for it at last, but that which Mr. Thornton had dreaded for many weeks; he had to give up the business in which he had been so long engaged with so much honour and success; and look out for a subordinate situation. Marlborough Mills and the adjacent dwelling were held under a long lease; they must, if possible, be relet. There was an immediate choice of situations offered to Mr. Thornton. Mr. Hamper would have been only too glad to have secured him as a steady and experienced partner for his son, whom he was setting up with a large capital in a neighbouring town; but the young man was half-educated as regarded information, and wholly uneducated as regarded any other responsibility than that of getting money, and brutalised both as to his pleasures and his pains. Mr. Thornton declined having any share in a partnership, which would frustrate what few plans he had that survived the wreck of his fortunes. He would sooner consent to be only a manager, where he could have a certain degree of power beyond the mere money-getting part, than have to fall in with the tyrannical humours of a moneyed partner with whom he felt sure that he should quarrel in a few months.

So he waited, and stood on one side with profound humility, as the news swept through the Exchange, of the enormous fortune which his brother-in-law had made by his daring speculation. It was a nine days’ wonder. Success brought with it its worldly consequence of extreme admiration. No one was considered so wise and far-seeing as Mr. Watson.

CHAPTER LI—MEETING AGAIN

'Bear up, brave heart! we will be calm and strong;
Sure, we can master eyes, or cheek, or tongue,
Nor let the smallest tell-tale sign appear
She ever was, and is, and will be dear.'

RHYMING PLAY.

It was a hot summer’s evening. Edith came into Margaret’s bedroom, the first time in her habit, the second ready dressed for dinner. No one was there at first; the next time Edith found Dixon laying out Margaret’s dress on the bed; but no Margaret. Edith remained to fidget about.

'Oh, Dixon! not those horrid blue flowers to that dead gold-coloured gown. What taste! Wait a minute, and I will bring you some pomegranate blossoms.'

'It’s not a dead gold-colour, ma’am. It’s a straw-colour. And blue always goes with straw-colour.’ But Edith had brought the brilliant scarlet flowers before Dixon had got half through her remonstrance.

'Where is Miss Hale?’ asked Edith, as soon as she had tried the effect of the garniture. ‘I can’t think,’ she went on, pettishly, 'how my aunt allowed her to get into such rambling habits in Milton! I’m sure I’m always expecting to hear of her having met with something horrible among all those wretched places she pokes herself into. I should never dare to go down some of those streets without a servant. They’re not fit for ladies.’

Dixon was still huffed about her despised taste; so she replied, rather shortly:
'It's no wonder to my mind, when I hear ladies talk such a deal about being ladies—and when they're such fearful, delicate, dainty ladies too—I say it's no wonder to me that there are no longer any saints on earth—'

'Oh, Margaret! here you are! I have been so wanting you. But how your cheeks are flushed with the heat, poor child! But only think what that tiresome Henry has done; really, he exceeds brother-in-law's limits. Just when my party was made up so beautifully—fitted in so precisely for Mr. Colthurst—there has Henry come, with an apology it is true, and making use of your name for an excuse, and asked me if he may bring that Mr. Thornton of Milton—your tenant, you know—who is in London about some law business. It will spoil my number, quite.'

'I don't mind dinner. I don't want any,' said Margaret, in a low voice. 'Dixon can get me a cup of tea here, and I will be in the drawing-room by the time you come up. I shall really be glad to lie down.'

'No, no! that will never do. You do look wretchedly white, to be sure; but that is just the heat, and we can't do without you possibly. (Those flowers a little lower, Dixon. They look glorious flames, Margaret, in your black hair.) You know we planned you to talk about Milton to Mr. Colthurst. Oh! to be sure! and this man comes from Milton. I believe it will be capital, after all. Mr. Colthurst can pump him well on all the subjects in which he is interested, and it will be great fun to trace out your experiences, and this Mr. Thornton's wisdom, in Mr. Colthurst's next speech in the House. Really, I think it is a happy hit of Henry's. I asked him if he was a man one would be ashamed of; and he replied, "Not if you've any sense in you, my little sister." So I suppose he is able to sound his h's, which is not a common Darkshire accomplishment—eh, Margaret?'

'Mr. Lennox did not say why Mr. Thornton was come up to town? Was it law business connected with the property?' asked Margaret, in a constrained voice.

'Oh! he's failed, or something of the kind, that Henry told you of that day you had such a headache,—what was it? (There, that's capital, Dixon. Miss Hale does us credit, does she not?) I wish I was as tall as a queen, and as brown as a gipsy, Margaret.'

'But about Mr. Thornton?'

'Oh I really have such a terrible head for law business. Henry will like nothing better than to tell you all about it. I know the impression he made upon me was, that Mr. Thornton is very badly off, and a very respectable man, and that I'm to be very civil to him; and as I did not know how, I came to you to ask you to help me. And now come down with me, and rest on the sofa for a quarter of an hour.'

The privileged brother-in-law came early and Margaret reddening as she spoke, began to ask him the questions she wanted to hear answered about Mr. Thornton.

'He came up about this sub-letting the property—Marlborough Mills, and the house and premises adjoining, I mean. He is unable to keep it on; and there are deeds and leases to be looked over, and agreements to be drawn up. I hope Edith will receive him properly; but she was rather put out, as I could see, by the liberty I had taken in begging for an invitation for him. But I thought you would like to have some attention shown him: and one would be particularly scrupulous in paying every respect to a man who is going down in the world.' He had dropped his voice to speak to Margaret, by whom he was sitting; but as he ended he sprang up, and introduced Mr. Thornton, who had that moment entered, to Edith and Captain Lennox.

Margaret looked with an anxious eye at Mr. Thornton while he was thus occupied. It was considerably more than a year since she had seen him; and events had occurred to change him much in that time. His fine figure yet bore him above the common height of men; and gave him a distinguished appearance, from the ease of motion which arose out of it, and was natural to him; but his face looked older and care-worn; yet a noble composure sate upon it, which impressed those who had just been hearing of his changed position, with a sense of inherent dignity and manly strength. He was aware, from the first glance he had given round the room, that Margaret was there; he had seen her intent look of occupation as she listened to Mr. Henry Lennox; and he came up to her with
the perfectly regulated manner of an old friend. With his first calm words a vivid colour flashed into her cheeks, which never left them again during the evening. She did not seem to have much to say to him. She disappointed him by the quiet way in which she asked what seemed to him to be the merely necessary questions respecting her old acquaintances, in Milton; but others came in—more intimate in the house than he—and he fell into the background, where he and Mr. Lennox talked together from time to time.

'You think Miss Hale looking well,' said Mr. Lennox, 'don't you? Milton didn't agree with her, I imagine; for when she first came to London, I thought I had never seen any one so much changed. Tonight she is looking radiant. But she is much stronger. Last autumn she was fatigued with a walk of a couple of miles. On Friday evening we walked up to Hampstead and back. Yet on Saturday she looked as well as she does now.

'We!' Who? They two alone?

Mr. Colthurst was a very clever man, and a rising member of parliament. He had a quick eye at discerning character, and was struck by a remark which Mr. Thornton made at dinner-time. He enquired from Edith who that gentleman was; and, rather to her surprise, she found, from the tone of his 'Indeed!' that Mr. Thornton of Milton was not such an unknown name to him as she had imagined it would be. Her dinner was going off well. Henry was in good humour, and brought out his dry caustic wit admirably. Mr. Thornton and Mr. Colthurst found one or two mutual subjects of interest, which they could only touch upon then, reserving them for more private after-dinner talk. Margaret looked beautiful in the pomegranate flowers; and if she did lean back in her chair and speak but little, Edith was not annoyed, for the conversation flowed on smoothly without her. Margaret was watching Mr. Thornton's face. He never looked at her; so she might study him unobserved, and note the changes which even this short time had wrought in him. Only at some unexpected mot of Mr. Lennox's, his face flashed out into the old look of intense enjoyment; the merry brightness returned to his eyes, the lips just parted to suggest the brilliant smile of former days; and for an instant, his glance instinctively sought hers, as if he wanted her sympathy. But when their eyes met, his whole countenance changed; he was grave and anxious once more; and he resolutely avoided even looking near her again during dinner.

There were only two ladies besides their own party, and as these were occupied in conversation by her aunt and Edith, when they went up into the drawing-room, Margaret languidly employed herself about some work. Presently the gentlemen came up, Mr. Colthurst and Mr. Thornton in close conversation. Mr. Lennox drew near to Margaret, and said in a low voice:

'I really think Edith owes me thanks for my contribution to her party. You've no idea what an agreeable, sensible fellow this tenant of yours is. He has been the very man to give Colthurst all the facts he wanted coaching in. I can't conceive how he contrived to mismanage his affairs.'

'With his powers and opportunities you would have succeeded,' said Margaret. He did not quite relish the tone in which she spoke, although the words but expressed a thought which had passed through his own mind. As he was silent, they caught a swell in the sound of conversation going on near the fire-place between Mr. Colthurst and Mr. Thornton.

'I assure you, I heard it spoken of with great interest—curiosity as to its result, perhaps I should rather say. I heard your name frequently mentioned during my short stay in the neighbourhood.' Then they lost some words; and when next they could hear Mr. Thornton was speaking.

'I have not the elements for popularity—if they spoke of me in that way, they were mistaken. I fall slowly into new projects; and I find it difficult to let myself be known, even by those whom I desire to know, and with whom I would fain have no reserve. Yet, even with all these drawbacks, I felt that I was on the right path, and that, starting from a kind of friendship with one, I was becoming acquainted with many. The advantages were mutual: we were both unconsciously and consciously teaching each other.'
'You say "were." I trust you are intending to pursue the same course?'

'I must stop Colthurst,' said Henry Lennox, hastily. And by an abrupt, yet apropos question, he turned the current of the conversation, so as not to give Mr. Thornton the mortification of acknowledging his want of success and consequent change of position. But as soon as the newly-started subject had come to a close, Mr. Thornton resumed the conversation just where it had been interrupted, and gave Mr. Colthurst the reply to his inquiry.

'I have been unsuccessful in business, and have had to give up my position as a master. I am on the look out for a situation in Milton, where I may meet with employment under some one who will be willing to let me go along my own way in such matters as these. I can depend upon myself for having no go-ahead theories that I would rashly bring into practice. My only wish is to have the opportunity of cultivating some intercourse with the hands beyond the mere "cash nexus." But it might be the point Archimedes sought from which to move the earth, to judge from the importance attached to it by some of our manufacturers, who shake their heads and look grave as soon as I name the one or two experiments that I should like to try.'

'You call them "experiments" I notice,' said Mr. Colthurst, with a delicate increase of respect in his manner.

'Because I believe them to be such. I am not sure of the consequences that may result from them. But I am sure they ought to be tried. I have arrived at the conviction that no mere institutions, however wise, and however much thought may have been required to organise and arrange them, can attach class to class as they should be attached, unless the working out of such institutions bring the individuals of the different classes into actual personal contact. Such intercourse is the very breath of life. A working man can hardly be made to feel and know how much his employer may have laboured in his study at plans for the benefit of his workpeople. A complete plan emerges like a piece of machinery, apparently fitted for every emergency. But the hands accept it as they do machinery, without understanding the intense mental labour and forethought required to bring it to such perfection. But I would take an idea, the working out of which would necessitate personal intercourse; it might not go well at first, but at every hitch interest would be felt by an increasing number of men, and at last its success in working come to be desired by all, as all had borne a part in the formation of the plan; and even then I am sure that it would lose its vitality, cease to be living, as soon as it was no longer carried on by that sort of common interest which invariably makes people find means and ways of seeing each other, and becoming acquainted with each others' characters and persons, and even tricks of temper and modes of speech. We should understand each other better, and I'll venture to say we should like each other more.'

'And you think they may prevent the recurrence of strikes?'

'Not at all. My utmost expectation only goes so far as this—that they may render strikes not the bitter, venomous sources of hatred they have hitherto been. A more hopeful man might imagine that a closer and more genial intercourse between classes might do away with strikes. But I am not a hopeful man.'

Suddenly, as if a new idea had struck him, he crossed over to where Margaret was sitting, and began, without preface, as if he knew she had been listening to all that had passed:

'Miss Hale, I had a round-robin from some of my men—I suspect in Higgins' handwriting—stating their wish to work for me, if ever I was in a position to employ men again on my own behalf. That was good, wasn't it?'

'Yes. Just right. I am glad of it,' said Margaret, looking up straight into his face with her speaking eyes, and then dropping them under his eloquent glance. He gazed back at her for a minute, as if he did not know exactly what he was about. Then sighed; and saying, 'I knew you would like it,' he turned away, and never spoke to her again until he bid her a formal 'good night.'
As Mr. Lennox took his departure, Margaret said, with a blush that she could not repress, and with some hesitation,

'Can I speak to you to-morrow? I want your help about—something.'

'Certainly. I will come at whatever time you name. You cannot give me a greater pleasure than by making me of any use. At eleven? Very well.'

His eye brightened with exultation. How she was learning to depend upon him! It seemed as if any day now might give him the certainty, without having which he had determined never to offer to her again.

CHAPTER LII—'PACK CLOUDS AWAY'

'For joy or grief, for hope or fear,
For all hereafter, as for here,
In peace or strife, in storm or shine.'

ANON.

Edith went about on tip-toe, and checked Sholto in all loud speaking that next morning, as if any sudden noise would interrupt the conference that was taking place in the drawing-room. Two o'clock came; and they still sate there with closed doors. Then there was a man's footstep running down stairs; and Edith peeped out of the drawing-room.

'Well, Henry?' said she, with a look of interrogation.

'Well!' said he, rather shortly.

'Come in to lunch!'

'No, thank you, I can't. I've lost too much time here already.'

'Then it's not all settled,' said Edith despondingly.

'No! not at all. It never will be settled, if the "it" is what I conjecture you mean. That will never be, Edith, so give up thinking about it.'

'But it would be so nice for us all,' pleaded Edith. 'I should always feel comfortable about the children, if I had Margaret settled down near me. As it is, I am always afraid of her going off to Cadiz.'

'I will try, when I marry, to look out for a young lady who has a knowledge of the management of children. That is all I can do. Miss Hale would not have me. And I shall not ask her.'

'Then, what have you been talking about?'

'A thousand things you would not understand: investments, and leases, and value of land.'

'Oh, go away if that's all. You and she will be unbearably stupid, if you've been talking all this time about such weary things.'

'Very well. I'm coming again to-morrow, and bringing Mr. Thornton with me, to have some more talk with Miss Hale.'

'Mr. Thornton! What has he to do with it?'

'He is Miss Hale's tenant,' said Mr. Lennox, turning away. 'And he wishes to give up his lease.'

'Oh! very well. I can't understand details, so don't give them me.'
'The only detail I want you to understand is, to let us have the back drawing-room undisturbed, as it was to-day. In general, the children and servants are so in and out, that I can never get any business satisfactorily explained; and the arrangements we have to make to-morrow are of importance.'

No one ever knew why Mr. Lennox did not keep to his appointment on the following day. Mr. Thornton came true to his time; and, after keeping him waiting for nearly an hour, Margaret came in looking very white and anxious.

She began hurriedly:

'I am so sorry Mr. Lennox is not here,—he could have done it so much better than I can. He is my adviser in this'——

'I am sorry that I came, if it troubles you. Shall I go to Mr. Lennox's chambers and try and find him?'

'No, thank you. I wanted to tell you, how grieved I was to find that I am to lose you as a tenant. But, Mr. Lennox says, things are sure to brighten——

'Mr. Lennox knows little about it,' said Mr. Thornton quietly. 'Happy and fortunate in all a man cares for, he does not understand what it is to find oneself no longer young—yet thrown back to the starting-point which requires the hopeful energy of youth—to feel one half of life gone, and nothing done—nothing remaining of wasted opportunity, but the bitter recollection that it has been. Miss Hale, I would rather not hear Mr. Lennox's opinion of my affairs. Those who are happy and successful themselves are too apt to make light of the misfortunes of others.'

'You are unjust,' said Margaret, gently. 'Mr. Lennox has only spoken of the great probability which he believes there to be of your redeeming—your more than redeeming what you have lost—don't speak till I have ended—pray don't!' And collecting herself once more, she went on rapidly turning over some law papers, and statements of accounts in a trembling hurried manner. 'Oh! here it is! and—' he drew me out a proposal—I wish he was here to explain it—showing that if you would take some money of mine, eighteen thousand and fifty-seven pounds, lying just at this moment unused in the bank, and bringing me in only two and a half per cent.—you could pay me much better interest, and might go on working Marlborough Mills.' Her voice had cleared itself and become more steady. Mr. Thornton did not speak, and she went on looking for some paper on which were written down the proposals for security; for she was most anxious to have it all looked upon in the light of a mere business arrangement, in which the principal advantage would be on her side. While she sought for this paper, her very heart-pulse was arrested by the tone in which Mr. Thornton spoke. His voice was hoarse, and trembling with tender passion, as he said:

'Margaret!'

For an instant she looked up; and then sought to veil her luminous eyes by dropping her forehead on her hands. Again, stepping nearer, he besought her with another tremulous eager call upon her name.

'Margaret!'

Still lower went the head; more closely hidden was the face, almost resting on the table before her. He came close to her. He knelt by her side, to bring his face to a level with her ear; and whispered-panted out the words:

'Take care.—If you do not speak—I shall claim you as my own in some strange presumptuous way.—Send me away at once, if I must go;—Margaret!—'

At that third call she turned her face, still covered with her small white hands, towards him, and laid it on his shoulder, hiding it even there; and it was too delicious to feel her soft cheek against his, for him to wish to see either deep blushes or loving eyes. He clasped her close. But they both kept silence. At length she murmured in a broken voice:
'Oh, Mr. Thornton, I am not good enough!'
'Not good enough! Don't mock my own deep feeling of unworthiness.'

After a minute or two, he gently disengaged her hands from her face, and laid her arms as they had once before been placed to protect him from the rioters.

'Do you remember, love?' he murmured. 'And how I requited you with my insolence the next day?'
'I remember how wrongly I spoke to you,—that is all.'
'Look here! Lift up your head. I have something to show you!' She slowly faced him, glowing with beautiful shame.

'Do you know these roses?' he said, drawing out his pocket-book, in which were treasured up some dead flowers.
'No!' she replied, with innocent curiosity. 'Did I give them to you?'
'No! Vanity; you did not. You may have worn sister roses very probably.'

She looked at them, wondering for a minute, then she smiled a little as she said—
'They are from Helstone, are they not? I know the deep indentations round the leaves. Oh! have you been there? When were you there?'
'I wanted to see the place where Margaret grew to what she is, even at the worst time of all, when I had no hope of ever calling her mine. I went there on my return from Havre.'

'You must give them to me,' she said, trying to take them out of his hand with gentle violence.
'Very well. Only you must pay me for them!'

'How shall I ever tell Aunt Shaw?' she whispered, after some time of delicious silence.

'Let me speak to her.'
'Oh, no! I owe to her,—but what will she say?'
'I can guess. Her first exclamation will be, "That man!"
'Hush!' said Margaret, 'or I shall try and show you your mother's indignant tones as she says, "That woman!"'
THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT

Book the First.

A RESPECTABLE YOUNG MAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE GOOD SCHOOLMASTER.

I don’t suppose it rained harder in the good town of Slopperton-on-the-Sloshy than it rained anywhere else. But it did rain. There was scarcely an umbrella in Slopperton that could hold its own against the rain that came pouring down that November afternoon, between the hours of four and five. Every gutter in High Street, Slopperton; every gutter in Broad Street (which was of course the narrowest street); in New Street (which by the same rule was the oldest street); in East Street, West Street, Blue Dragon Street, and Windmill Street; every gutter in every one of these thoroughfares was a little Niagara, with a maelstrom at the corner, down which such small craft as bits of orange-peel, old boots and shoes, scraps of paper, and fragments of rag were absorbed—as better ships have been in the great northern whirlpool. That dingy stream, the Sloshy, was swollen into a kind of dirty Mississippi, and the graceful coal-barge which adorned its bosom were stripped of the clothes-lines and fluttering linen which usually were to be seen on their decks.

A bad, determined, black-minded November day. A day on which the fog shaped itself into a demon, and lurked behind men’s shoulders, whispering into their ears, “Cut your throat!”—you know you’ve got a razor, and can’t shave with it, because you’ve been drinking and your hand shakes; one little gash under the left ear, and the business is done. It’s the best thing you can do. It is, really.” A day on which the rain, the monotonous ceaseless persevering rain, has a voice as it comes...
The Trail of the Serpent.

down, and says, "Don't you think you could go melancholy mad? Look at me; be good enough to watch me for a couple of hours or so, and think, while you watch me, of the girl who jilted you ten years ago; and of what a much better man you would be to-day if she had only loved you truly. Oh, I think, if you'll only be so good as watch me, you might really contrive to go mad." Then again the wind. What does the wind say, as it comes cutting through the dark passage, and stabbing you, like a coward as it is, in the back, just between the shoulders—what does it say? Why, it whistles in your ear a reminder of the little bottle of laudanum you've got upstairs, which you had for your toothache last week, and never used. A foggy wet windy November day. A bad day—a dangerous day. Keep us from bad thoughts to-day, and keep us out of the Police Reports next week. Give us a glass of something hot and strong, and a bit of something nice for supper, and bear with us a little this day; for if the strings of yonder piano—an instrument fashioned on mechanical principles by mortal hands—if they are depressed and slackened by the influence of damp and fog, how do we know that there may not be some string in this more critical instrument, the human mind, not made on mechanical principles or by mortal hands, a little out of order on this bad November day?

But of course bad influences can only come to bad men; and of course he must be a very bad man whose spirits go up and down with every fluctuation of the weather-glass. Virtuous people no doubt are virtuous always; and by no chance, or change, or trial, or temptation, can they ever become other than virtuous. Therefore why should a wet day or a dark day depress them? No; they look out of the windows at houseless men and women and fatherless and motherless children wet through to the skin, and thank Heaven that they are not as other men: like good Christians, punctual rate-payers, and unflinching church-goers as they are.

Thus it was with Mr. Jabez North, assistant and usher at the academy of Dr. Tappenden. He was not in anywise affected by fog, rain, or wind. There was a fire at one end of the schoolroom, and Allecompain Major had been fined sixpence, and condemned to a page of Latin grammar, for surreptitiously warming his worst chilblain at the bars thereof. But Jabez North did not want to go near the fire, though in his official capacity he might have done so; ay, even might have warmed his hands in moderation. He was not cold, or if he was cold, he didn't mind being cold. He was sitting at his desk, mending pens and hearing six red-nosed boys conjugate the verb Amare, "to love"—while the aforesaid boys were giving practical illus-
The Good Schoolmaster.

trations of the active verb “to shiver,”—and the passive ditto, “to be puzzled.” He was not only a good young man, this Jabez North (and he must have been a very good young man, for his goodness was in almost every mouth in Sloperton—indeed, he was looked upon by many excellent old ladies as an incarnation of the adjective “pious”—but he was rather a handsome young man also. He had delicate features, a pale fair complexion, and, as young women said, very beautiful blue eyes; only it was unfortunate that these eyes, being, according to report, such a very beautiful colour, had a shifting way with them, and never looked at you long enough for you to find out their exact hue, or their exact expression either. He had also what was called a very fine head of fair curly hair, and what some people considered a very fine head—though it was a pity it shaved off on either side in the locality where prejudiced people place the organ of conscientiousness. A professor of phrenology, lecturing at Sloperton, had declared Jabez North to be singularly wanting in that small virtue; and had even gone so far as to hint that he had never met with a parallel case of deficiency in the entire moral region, except in the skull of a very distinguished criminal, who invited a friend to dinner and murdered him on the kitchen stairs while the first course was being dished. But of course the Slopertonians pronounced this professor to be an impostor, and his art a piece of charlatanism, as they were only too happy to pronounce any professor or any art that came in their way.

Sloperton believed in Jabez North. Partly because Sloperton had in a manner created, clothed, and fed him, set him on his feet, patted him on his head, and reared him under the shadow of Slopertonian wings, to be the good and worthy individual he was.

The story was in this wise. Nineteen years before this sad November day, a little baby had been dragged, to all appearance drowned, out of the muddy waters of the Sloshy. Fortunately or unfortunately, as the case may be, he turned out to be less drowned than dirty, and after being subjected to very sharp treatment—such as being held head downwards, and scrubbed raw with a jack-towel, by the Slopertonian Humane Society, founded by a very excellent gentleman, somewhat renowned for maltreating his wife and turning his eldest son out of doors—this helpless infant set up a feeble squall, and evinced other signs of a return to life. He was found in a Sloperton river by a Sloperton bargeman, resuscitated by a Sloperton society, and taken by the Sloperton beadle to the Sloperton workhouse; he therefore belonged to Sloperton. Sloperton found him a species of barnacle rather difficult to shake off.
The wisest thing, therefore, for Slopperton to do, was to put the best face on a bad matter, and, out of its abundance, rear this unwelcome little stranger. And truly virtue has its reward; for, from the workhouse brat to the Sunday-school teacher; from the Sunday-school teacher to the scrub at Dr. Tappenden's academy; from scrub to usher of the fourth form; and from fourth form usher to first assistant, pet toady, and factotum, were so many steps in the ladder of fortune which Jabez mounted, as in seven-league boots.

As to his name, Jabez North, it is not to be supposed that when some wretched drab (mad with what madness, or wretched to what intensity of wretchedness, who shall guess?) throws her hapless and sickly offspring into the river—it is not, I say, to be supposed that she puts his card-case in his pocket, with his name and address inscribed in neat copper-plate upon enamelled cards therein. No, the foundling of Slopperton was called by the board of the workhouse Jabez; first, because Jabez was a scriptural name; secondly, perhaps, because it was an ugly one, and agreed better with the cut of his clothes and the fashion of his appointments than Reginald, Conrad, or Augustus might have done. The gentlemen of the board further bestowed upon him the surname of North because he was found on the north bank of the Sloshy, and because North was an unobtrusive and commonplace cognomen, appropriate to a pauper: like whose impudence it would indeed be to write himself down Montmorency or Fitz-Harding.

Now there are many natures (God-created though they be) of so black and vile a tendency as to be soured and embittered by workhouse treatment; by constant keeping down; by days and days which grow into years and years, in which to hear a kind word is to hear a strange language—a language so strange as to bring a choking sensation into the throat, and not unbidden tears into the eyes. Natures there are, so innately wicked, as not to be improved by tyranny; by the dominion, the mockery, and the insult of little boys, who are wise enough to despise poverty, but not charitable enough to respect misfortune. And fourth-form ushers in a second-rate academy have to endure this sort of thing now and then. Some natures too may be so weak and sentimental as to sicken at a life without one human tie; a boyhood without father or mother; a youth without sister or brother. Not such the excellent nature of Jabez North. Tyranny found him meek; it is true, but it left him much meeker. Insult found him mild, but it left him lamb-like. Scornful speeches glanced away from him; cruel words seemed drops of water on marble, so powerless were they to strike or wound. He would take an insult from a boy whom with his powerful right hand he
The Good Schoolmaster.

He could have strangled her he would smile at the insolence of a brat whom he could have thrown from the window with one uplifting of his strong arm almost as easily as he threw away a bad pen. But he was a good young man; a benevolent young man; giving in secret, and generally getting his reward openly. His left hand scarcely knew what his right hand did; but Slopperton always knew it before long. So every citizen of the borough praised and applauded this model young man, and many were prophesies of the day when the pauper boy should be one of the greatest men in that greatest of all towns, the town of Slopperton.

The bad November lay merged into a bad November night. Dark night at five o'clock, when candles, few and far between, flickering in Dr. Tappenden's schoolroom, and long rows of half-pint mugs—splendid institutions for little boys to warm their hands at, being full of a boiling and semi-opaque liquid, par excellence milk-and-water—ornamented the schoolroom table. Darker night still, when the half-pint mugs have been collected by a red maid-servant, with nose, elbows, and knuckles picked out in purple; when all traces of the evening meal are removed; when the six red-nosed first-form boys have sat down to Virgil—for whom they entertain a deadly hatred, feeling convinced that he wrote with special view to their being tagged from inability to construe him. Of course, if he hadn't been a spiteful beast he would have written in English, and then he wouldn't have had so be construed. Darker night still at eight o'clock, when the boys have gone to bed, and perhaps would have gone to sleep, if Allcompain Major had not a supper-party in his room, with Banbury cakes, pigs' trotters, periwinkles, acid rook, and ginger-box powders, laid on upon the boilers. Not so dark by the head assistant's desk, at which Jabez sits, his face infamously calm, examining a pile of exercises. Look at his face by that one candle; look at the eyes, which are steady now, for he does not dream that any one is watching him—steady and luminous with a subdued fire, which might blaze out some day into a deadly flame. Look at the face, the determined mouth, the thin lips, which form almost an arch—and say, is that the face of a man to be content with a life of dreary and obscure monotony? A somewhat intellectual face; but not the face of a man with an intellect seeking no better employment than the correcting of French and Latin exercises. If we could look into his heart, we might find the answers to these questions. He raises the lid of his desk; a deep desk that holds many things—paper, pens, letters; and what?—a thick coil of rope. A strange object in the assistant's desk, this coil of rope! He looks at it as if to assure himself that it is safe; shuts his desk
quickly, locks it, puts the key in his waistcoat-pocket; and when at half-past nine he goes up into his little bedroom at the top of the house, he will carry the desk under his arm.

CHAPTER II.

GOOD FOR NOTHING.

The November night is darkest, foggiest, wettest, and windiest out on the open road that leads into Slopperton. A dreary road at the best of times, this Slopperton road, and drearier than all in one spot about a mile and a half out of the town. Upon this spot stands a solitary house, known as the Black Mill. It was once the cottage of a miller, and the mill still stands, though in disuse.

The cottage had been altered and improved within the last few years, and made into a tolerable-sized house; a dreary, rambling, tumble-down place, it is true, but still with some pretension about it. It was occupied at this time by a widow lady, a Mrs. Marwood, once the owner of a large fortune, which had nearly all been squandered by the dissipation of her only son. This son had long left Slopperton. His mother had not heard of him for years. Some said he had gone abroad. She tried to hope this, but sometimes she mourned him as dead. She lived in modest style, with one old female servant, who had been with her since her marriage, and had been faithful through every change of fortune—as these common and unlearned creatures, strange to say, sometimes are. It happened that at this very time Mrs. Marwood had just received the visit of a brother, who had returned from the East Indies with a large fortune. This brother, Mr. Montague Harding, had on his land at Ealing in Slopperton had been a nine days' wonder for the good citizens of Slopperton. He brought with him only one servant, a half-caste; his visit was to be a short one, as he was about buying an estate in the south of England, on which he intended to reside with his widowed sister.

Slopperton had a great deal to say about Mr. Harding. Slopperton gave him credit for the possession of uncounted and uncountable lacs of rupees; but Slopperton wouldn't give him credit for the possession of the hundredth part of an ounce of liver. Slopperton left cards at the Black Mill, and had serious thoughts of getting up a deputation to invite the rich East Indian to represent its inhabitants at the great congress of Westminster. But both Mr. Harding and Mrs. Marwood knew...
aloof from Sloperton, and were set down accordingly as mysterious, not to say dark-minded individuals, forthwith.

The brother and sister are seated in the little, warm, lamp-lit drawing-room at the Black Mill this dark November night. She is a woman who has once been handsome, but whose beauty has been fretted away by anxieties and suspicions, which wear out the strongest hope, as water wears away the hardest rock. The Anglo-Indian very much resembles her; but though his face is that of an invalid, it is not care-worn. It is the face of a good man, who has a hope so strong that neither fear nor trouble can disquiet him.

He is speaking—"And you have not heard from your son?"

"For nearly seven years. Seven years of cruel suspense; seven years, during which every knock at yonder door seems to have beaten a blow upon my heart—every footstep on yonder garden-walk seems to have trodden down a hope."

"And you do not think him dead?"

"I hope and pray not. Not dead, impenitent; not dead, without my blessing; not gone away from me for ever, without one pressure of the hand, one prayer for my forgiveness, one whisper of regret for all he has made me suffer."

"He was very wild, then, very dissipated?"

"He was a reprobate and a gambler. He squandered his money like water. He had bad companions, I know; but was not himself wicked at heart. The very night he ran away, the night I saw him for the last time, I'm sure he was sorry for his bad courses. He said something to that effect; said his road was a dark one, but that it had only one end, and he must go on to the end."

"And you made no remonstrance?"

"I was tired of remonstrance, tired of prayer, and had wearied out my soul with hope deferred."

"My dear Agnes! And this poor boy, this wretched misguided boy, Heaven have pity upon him and restore him! Heaven have pity upon every wanderer, this dismal and pitiless night!"

Heaven, indeed, have pity upon that wanderer, out on the bleak highroad to Sloperton; out on the shelterless Sloperton road, a mile away from the Black Mill! The wanderer is a young man, whose garments, of the shabby-genteel order, are worst of all fitted to keep out the cruel weather; a handsome young man, or a man who has once been handsome, but on whom riotous days and nights, drunkenness, recklessness, and folly, have had their dire effects. He is struggling to keep a sad cigar alight, and when it goes out, which is about twice in
The Trail of the Serpent.

five minutes, he utters expressions which in Slopperton are thought very wicked, and consigns that good city, with its virtuous citizens, to a very bad neighbourhood.

He talks to himself between his struggles with the cigar. "Foot-sore and weary, hungry and thirsty, cold and ill; it is not a very hopeful way for the only son of a rich man to come back to his native place after seven years' absence. I wonder what star presides over my vagabond existence; if I knew, I'd shake my fist at it," he muttered, as he looked up at two or three feeble luminaries glimmering through the rain and fog. "Another mile to the Black Mill—and then what will she say to me? What can she say to me but to curse me? What have I earned by such a life as mine except a mother's curse?" His cigar chose this very moment of all others to go out. If the bad three-halfpenny Havannah had been a sentient thing with reasoning powers, it might have known better. He threw it aside into a ditch with an oath. He slouched his hat over his eyes, thrust one hand into the breast of his coat—(he had a stick cut from some hedgerow in the other)—and walked with a determined though a weary air onward through slash and mire towards the Black Mill, from which already the lighted windows shone through the darkness like so many beacons.

On through slash and mire, with a weary and slouching step.

No matter. It is the step for which his mother has waited for seven long years; it is the step whose ghostly echo on the garden-walk has smitten so often on her heart and trodden out the light of hope. But surely the step comes on now—full surely, and for good or ill. Whether for good or ill comes this long-watched-for step, this bad November night, who shall say?

In a quarter of an hour the wanderer stands in the little garden of the Black Mill. He has not courage to knock at the door; it might be opened by a stranger; he might hear something he dare not whisper to his own heart—he might hear something which would strike him down dead upon the threshold.

He sees the light in the drawing-room windows. He approaches, and hears his mother's voice.

It is a long time since he has uttered a prayer; but he falls on his knees by the long French window and breathes a thanksgiving.

That voice is not still!

What shall he do? What can he hope from his mother, so cruelly abandoned?

At this moment Mr. Harding opens the window to look out at the dismal night. As he does so, the young man falls fainting, exhausted, into the room.
Good for Nothing.

Draw a curtain over the agitation and the bewilderment of that scene. The almost broken-hearted mother's joy is too sacred for words. And the passionate tears of the prodigal son—who shall measure the remorseful agony of a man whose life has been one long career of recklessness, and who sees his sin written in his mother's face?

The mother and son sit together, talking gravely, hand in hand, for two hours. He tells her, not of all his follies, but of all his regrets—his punishment, his anguish, his penitence, and his resolutions for the future.

Surely it is for good, and good alone, that he has come over a long and dreary road, through toil and suffering, to kneel here at his mother's feet and build up fair schemes for the future.

The old servant, who has known Richard from a baby, shares in his mother's joy. After the slight supper which the weary wanderer is induced to eat, her brother and her son persuade Mrs. Marwood to retire to rest; and left tête-à-tête, the uncle and nephew sit down to discuss a bottle of old madeira by the sea-coal fire.

"My dear Richard"—the young man's name is Richard—("Daredevil Dick" he has been called by his wild companions)—"My dear Richard," says Mr. Harding very gravely, "I am about to say something to you, which I trust you will take in good part."

"I am not so used to kind words from good men that I am likely to take anything you can say amiss."

"You will not, then, doubt the joy I feel in your return this night, if I ask you what are your plans for the future?"

The young man shook his head. Poor Richard! he had never in his life had any definite plan for the future, or he might not have been what he was that night.

"My poor boy, I believe you have a noble heart, but you have led a wasted life. This must be repaired."

Richard shook his head again. He was very hopeless of himself.

"I am good for nothing," he said; "I am a bad lot. I wonder they don't hang such men as me."

"I wonder they don't hang such men." He uttered this reckless speech in his own reckless way, as if it would be rather a good joke to be hung up out of the way and done for.

"My dear boy, thank Heaven you have returned to us. Now I have a plan to make a man of you yet."

Richard looked up this time with a hopeful light in his dark eyes. He was hopeless at five minutes past ten; he was radiant when the minute hand had moved on to the next figure on the
The Trail of the Serpent.

... He was one of those men whose bad and good angels have a sharp fight and a constant struggle, but whom we all hope to see saved at last.

"I have a plan which has occurred to me since your unexpected arrival this evening," continued his uncle. "Now, if you stay here, your mother, who has a trick (as all loving mothers have) of fancying you are still a little boy in a pinafore and frock—your mother will be for having you loiter about from morning till night with nothing to do and nothing to care for; you will fall in again with all your old Slopperton companions, and all those companions' bad habits. This isn't the way to make a man of you, Richard."

Richard, very radiant by this time, thinks not.

"My plan is, that you start off-morrow morning before your mother is up, with a letter of introduction which I will give you to an old friend of mine, a merchant in the town of Gardenford, forty miles from here. At my request, he will give you a berth in his office, and will treat you as if you were his own son. You can come over here to see your mother as often as you like; and if you choose to work hard as a merchant's clerk, so as to make your own fortune, I know an old fellow just returned from the East Indies, with not enough liver to keep him alive many years, who will leave you another fortune to add to it. What do you say, Richard? Is it a bargain?"

"My dear generous uncle!" Richard cries, shaking the old man by the hand.

Was it a bargain? Of course it was. A merchant's office—the very thing for Richard. He would work hard, work night and day to repair the past, and to show the world there was stuff in him to make a man, and a good man yet.

Poor Richard, half an hour ago wishing to be hung and put out of the way, now full of rancour and hope, while the good angel has the best of it!

"You must not begin your new life without money, Richard: I shall, therefore, give you all I have in the house. I think I cannot better show my confidence in you, and my certainty that you will not return to your old habits, than by giving you this money." Richard looks—he cannot speak his gratitude.

The old man conducts his nephew up stairs to his bedroom, an old-fashioned apartment, in one window of which is a handsome cabinet, half desk, half bureau. He unlocks this, and takes from it a pocket-book containing one hundred and thirty odd pounds in small notes and gold, and two bills for one hundred pounds each on an Anglo-Indian bank in the city.

"Take this, Richard. Use the broken cash as you require it for present purposes—in purchasing such an outfit as becomes..."
my nephew; and on your arrival in Gardenford, place the bills in the bank for future exigencies. And as I wish your mother to know nothing of our little plan until you are gone, the best thing you can do is to start before any one is up—to-morrow morning.

"I will start at day-break. I can leave a note for my mother."

"No, no," said the uncle, "I will tell her all. You can write directly you reach your destination. Now, you will think it cruel of me to ask you to leave your home on the very night of your return to it; but it is quite as well, my dear boy, to strike while the iron's hot. If you remain here your good resolutions may be vanquished by old influences; for the best resolution, Richard, is but a seed, and if it doesn't bear the fruit of a good action, it is less than worthless, for it is a lie, and promises what it doesn't perform. I've a higher opinion of you than to think that you brought no better fruit of your penitence home to your loving mother than empty resolutions. I believe you have a steady determination to reform."

"You only do me justice in that belief, sir. I ask nothing better than the opportunity of showing that I am in earnest."

Mr. Harding is quite satisfied, and once more suggests that Richard should depart very early the next day.

"I will leave this house at five in the morning," said the nephew; "a train starts for Gardenford about six. I shall creep out quietly, and not disturb any one. I know the way out of the dear old house—I can get out of the drawing-room window, and need not unlock the hall-door; for I know that good stupid old woman Martha sleeps with the key under her pillow."

"Ah, by the bye, where does Martha mean to put you tonight?"

"In the little back parlour, I think she said; the room under this."

The uncle and nephew went down to this little parlour, where they found old Martha making up a bed on the sofa.

"You will sleep very comfortably here for to-night, Master Richard," said the old woman; "but if my mistress doesn't have this ceiling mended before long there'll be an accident some day."

They all looked up at the ceiling. The plaster had fallen in several places, and there were one or two cracks of considerable size.

"If it was daylight," grumbled the old woman, "you could see through into Mister Harding's bedroom, for his worship won't have a carpet."
The Trail of the Serpent.

His worship said he had not been used to carpets in India, and liked the sight of Mrs. Martha's snow-white boards.

"And it's hard to keep them white, sir, I can tell you; for when I sweep the floor of that room the water runs through and spoils the furniture down here."

But Daredevil Dick didn't seem to care much for the dilapidated ceiling. The madeira, his brightened prospects, and the excitement he had gone through, all combined to make him thoroughly wearied out. He shook his uncle's hand with a brief but energetic expression of gratitude, and then flung himself half dressed upon the bed.

"There is an alaram clock in my room," said the old man, "which I will set for five o'clock. I always sleep with my door open; so you will be sure to hear it go down. It won't disturb your mother, for she sleeps at the other end of the house. And now good night, and God bless you, my boy!"

He is gone, and the returned prodigal is asleep. His handsome face has lost half its look of dissipation and care, in the renewed light of hope; his black hair is tossed off his broad forehead, and it is a fine candid countenance, with a sweet smile playing round the mouth. Oh, there is stuff in him to make a man yet, though he says they should hang such fellows as he!

His uncle has retired to his room, where his half-caste servant assists at his toilette for the night. This servant, who is a Lascar, and cannot speak one word of English (his master converses with him in Hindostanee), and is thought to be as faithful as a dog, sleeps in a little bed in the dressing-room adjoining his master's apartment.

So, on this bad November night, with the wind howling round the walls as if it were an angry unadmitted guest that clamoured to come in; with the rain beating on the roof, as if it had a special purpose and was bent on flooding the old house; there is peace and happiness, and a returned and penitent wanderer at the desolate old Black Mill.

The wind this night seems to howl with a peculiar significance, but nobody has the key to its strange language; and if, in every shrill dissonant shriek, it tries to tell a ghastly secret or to give a timely warning, it tries in vain, for no one heed or understands.
The Usher Washes his Hands.

CHAPTER III.

THE Usher WASHES HIS HANDS.

Mr. Jabez North had not his little room quite to himself at Dr. Tappenden's. There are some penalties attendant even on being a good young man, and our friend Jabez sometimes found his very virtues rather inconvenient. It happened that Allecom- pain Junior was ill of a fever—sometimes delirious; and as the usher was such an excellent young person, beloved by the pupils and trusted implicitly by the master, the sick little boy was put under his especial care, and a bed was made up for him in Jabez' room.

This very November night, when the usher comes up stairs, his great desk under one arm (he is very strong, this usher), and a little feeble tallow candle in his left hand, he finds the boy very ill indeed. He does not know Jabez, for he is talking of a boat-race—a race that took place in the bright summer gone by. He is sitting up on the pillow, waving his little thin hand, and crying out at the top of his feeble voice, "Bravo, red! Red wins! Three cheers for red! Go it—go it, red! Blue's beat—I say blue's beat! George Harris has won the day. I've backed George Harris. I've bet six-pennorth of toffey on George Harris! Go it, red!"

"We're worse to-night, then," said the usher; "so much the better. We're off our head, and we're not likely to take much notice; so much the better;" and this benevolent young man began to undress. To undress, but not to go to bed; for from a small trunk he takes out a dark smock-frock, a pair of leather gaiters, a black scratch wig, and a countryman's slouched hat. He dresses himself in these things, and sits down at a little table with his desk before him.

The boy rambles on. He is out nutting in the woods with his little sister in the glorious autumn months gone by.

"Shake the tree, Harriet, shake the tree; they'll fall if you only shake hard enough. Look at the hazel-nuts! so thick you can't count 'em. Shake away, Harriet; and take care of your head, for they'll come down like a shower of rain!"

The usher takes the coil of rope from his desk, and begins to unwind it; he has another coil in his little trunk, another hidden away under the mattress of his bed. He joins the three together, and they form a rope of considerable length. He looks round the room; holds the light over the boy's face, but sees no consciousness of passing events in those bright feverish eyes.

He opens the window of his room; it is on the second story, and looks out into the playground—a large space shut in from the lane in which the school stands by a wall of crenelated
The Trail of the Serpent.

night. About half the height of this room are some posts erected for gymnastics; they are about ten feet from the wall of the house, and the usher looks at them dubiously. He lowers the rope out of the window and attaches one end of it to an iron hook in the wall—a very convenient hook, and very secure apparently, for it looks as if it had been only driven in that very day.

The surveyor the distance beneath him, takes another dubious look at the posts in the playground, and is about to step out of the window, when a feeble voice from the little bed cries out—not in any delirious ramblings this time—"What are you doing with that rope? Who are you? What are you doing with that rope?"

Jabez looks round, and although a good young man, mutters something very much resembling an oath.

"Silly boy, don't you know me? I'm Jabez, your old friend—"

"Ah, kind old Jabez; you won't send me back in Virgil, because I've been ill; eh, Mr. North?"

"No, no! See, you want to know what I am doing with this rope; why, making a swing, to be sure."

"A swing? Oh, that's capital. Such a jolly thick rope too! When shall I be well enough to swing, I wonder? It's so dull up here. I'll try and go to sleep; but I dream such bad dreams."

"There, there, go to sleep," says the usher, in a soothing voice. This time, before he goes to the window, he puts out his tallow candle; the rushlight on the hearth he extinguishes also; feels for something in his bosom, clutches this something tightly; takes a firm grasp of the rope, and gets out of the window.

A curious way to make a swing! He lets himself down foot by foot, with wonderful caution and wonderful courage. When he gets on a level with the posts of the gymnasium he gives himself a sudden jerk, and swinging over against them, catches hold of the highest post, and his descent is then an easy one for the post is notched for the purpose of climbing, and Jabez, always good at gymnastics, descends it almost as easily as another man would an ordinary staircase. He leaves the rope still hanging from his bedroom window, scales the playground wall, and when the Slopperton clocks strike twelve is out upon the highroad. He skirts the town of Slopperton by a circuitous route, and in another half hour is on the other side of it, bearing towards the Black Mill. A curious manner of making a swing this midnight ramble. Altogether a curious ramble for this good young usher; but even good men have sometimes strange fancies, and this may be one of them.
The Usher Washes his Hands.

One o'clock from the Slopperton steeples: two o'clock: three o'clock. The sick little boy does not go to sleep, but wanders, oh, how wearily, through past scenes in his young life. Midsummer rambles, Christmas holidays, and merry games; the pretty speeches of the little sister who died three years ago; unfinished tasks and puzzling exercises, all pass through his wandering mind; and when the clocks chime the quarter after three, he is still talking, still rambling on in feeble accents, still tossing wearily on his pillow.

As the clocks chime the quarter, the rope is at work again, and five minutes afterwards the usher clambers into the room.

Not very good to look upon, either in costume or countenance; bad to look upon, with his clothes mud-besprayed and torn; wet to the skin; his hair in matted locks streaming over his forehead; worse to look upon, with his light blue eyes, bright with a dangerous and wicked fire—the eyes of a wild beast baulked of his prey; dreadful to look upon, with his hands clenched in fury, and his tongue busy with half-suppressed but terrible imprecations.

"All for nothing!" he mutters. "All the toil, the scheming, and the danger for nothing—all the work of the brain and the hands wasted—nothing gained, nothing gained!"

He hides away the rope in his trunk, and begins to unbutton his mud-stained gaiters. The little boy cries out in a feeble voice for his medicine.

The usher pours a tablespoonful of the mixture into a wine-glass with a steady hand, and carries it to the bedside.

The boy is about to take it from him, when he utters a sudden cry.

"What's the matter?" asks Jabez, angrily.

"Your hand!—your hand! What's that upon your hand?"

A dark stain scarcely dry—a dark stain, at the sight of which the boy trembles from head to foot.

"Nothing, nothing!" answers the tutor. "Take your medicine, and go to sleep."

No, the boy cries hysterically, he won't take his medicine; he will never take anything again from that dreadful hand. "I know what that horrid stain is. What have you been doing? Why did you climb out of the window with a rope? It wasn't to make a swing; it must have been for something dreadful! Why did you stay away three hours in the middle of the night? I counted the hours by the church clocks. Why have you got those strange clothes on? What does it all mean? I'll ask the Doctor to take me out of this room! I'll go to him this moment, for I'm afraid of you."

The boy tries to get out of bed as he speaks; but the usher
The Trail of the Serpent.

holds him down with one powerful hand, which he places upon the boy's mouth, at the same time keeping him from stirring and preventing him from crying out.

With his free right hand he searches among the bottles on the table by the bedside.

He throws the medicine out of the glass, and pours from another bottle a few spoonfuls of a dark liquid labelled, "Opium—Poison!"

"Now, sir, take your medicine, or I'll report you to the principal to-morrow morning."

The boy tries to remonstrate, but in vain; the powerful hand throws back his head, and Jabez pours the liquid down his throat.

For a little time the boy, quite delirious now, goes on talking of the summer rambles and the Christmas games, and then falls into a deep slumber.

Then Jabez North sets to work to wash his hands. A curious young man, with curious fashions for doing things—above all, a curious fashion of washing his hands.

He washes them very carefully in a small quantity of water, and when they are quite clean, and the water has become a dark and ghastly colour, he drinks it, and doesn't make even one wry face at the horrible draught.

"Well, well," he mutters, "if nothing is gained by to-night's work, I have at least tried my strength, and I now know what I'm made of."

Very strange stuff he must have been made of—very strange and perhaps not very good stuff, to be able to look at the bed on which the innocent and helpless boy lay in a deep slumber, and say,—

"At any rate, he will tell no tales."

No! he will tell no tales, nor ever talk again of summer rambles, or of Christmas holidays, or of his dead sister's pretty words. Perhaps he will join that wept-for little sister in a better world, where there are no such good young men as Jabez North.

That worthy gentleman goes down aghast, with a white face, next morning, to tell Dr. Tappenden that his poor little charge is dead, and that perhaps he had better break the news to Allecompain Major, who is sick after that supper, which, in his boyish thoughtlessness, and his certainty of his little brother's recovery, he had given last night.

"Do, yes, by all means, break the sad news to the poor boy; for I know, North, you'll do it tenderly."
CHAPTER IV.

RICHARD MARWOOD LIGHTS HIS PIPE.

DAREDEVIL Dick hears the alarm at five o'clock, and leaves his couch very cautiously. He would like, before he leaves the house, to go to his mother's door, if it were only to breathe a prayer upon the threshold. He would like to go to his uncle's bedside, to give one farewell look at the kind face; but he has promised to be very cautious, and to awaken no one; so he steals quietly out through the drawing-room window—the same window by which he entered so strangely the preceding evening—into the chill morning, dark as night yet. He pauses in the little garden-walk for a minute while he lights his pipe, and looks up at the shrouded windows of the familiar house. "God bless her!" he mutters; "and God reward that good old man, for giving a scamp like me the chance of redeeming his honour!"

There is a thick fog, but no rain. Daredevil Dick knows his way so well, that neither fog nor darkness are any hindrance to him, and he trudges on with a cheery step, and his pipe in his mouth, towards the Slopperton railway station. The station is half an hour's walk out of the town, and when he reaches it the clocks are striking six. Learning that the train will not start for half an hour, he walks up and down the platform, looking, with his handsome face and shabby dress, rather conspicuous. Two or three trains for different destinations start while he is waiting on the platform, and several people stare at him, as he strides up and down, his hands in his pockets, and his weather-beaten hat slouched over his eyes—for he does not want to be known by any Slopperton people yet awhile, till his position is better—and when one man, with whom he had been intimate before he left the town, seemed to recognize him, and approached as if to speak to him, Richard turned abruptly on his heel and crossed to the other side of the station.

If he had known that such a little incident as that could have a dark and dreadful influence on his life, surely he would have thought himself foreverd and set apart for a cruel destiny.

He strolled into the refreshment-room, took a cup of coffee, changed a sovereign in paying for his ticket, bought a newspaper, seated himself in a second-class carriage, and in a few minutes was out of Slopperton.

There was only one other passenger in the carriage—a commercial traveller; and Richard and he smoked their pipes in defiance of the guards at the stations they passed. When did ever Daredevil Dick quail before any authorities? He had faced all
Women Writers – Novels - 358

Bow Street, chaffed Marlborough Street out of countenance, and had kept the station-house awake all night singing, “We won’t go home till morning.”

It is rather a dull journey at the best of times from Sloperton to Gardenford, and on this dark foggy November morning, of course, duller than usual. It was still dark at half-past six. The station was lighted with gas, and there was a little lamp in the railway carriage, but for which the two travellers would not have seen each other’s faces. Richard looked out of the window for a few minutes, got up a little conversation with his fellow traveller, which soon flagged (for the young man was rather out of spirits at leaving his mother directly after their reconciliation), and then, being sadly at a loss to amuse himself, took out his uncle’s letter to the Gardenford merchant, and looked at the superscription. The letter was not sealed, but he did not take it from the envelope. “If he said any good of me, it’s a great deal more than I deserve,” said Richard to himself; “but I’m young yet, and there’s plenty of time to redeem the past.”

Time to redeem the past! O poor Richard!

He twisted the letter about in his hands, lighted another pipe, and smoked till the train arrived at the Gardenford station. Another foggy November day had set in.

If Richard Marwood had been a close observer of men and manners, he might have been rather puzzled by the conduct of a short, thick-set man, shabbily dressed, who was standing on the platform when he descended from the carriage. The man was evidently waiting for some one to arrive by this train: and as surely that some one had arrived, for the man looked perfectly satisfied when he had scanned, with a glance marvellously rapid, the face of every passenger who alighted. But who this some one was, for whom the man was waiting, it was rather difficult to discover. He did not speak to any one, nor approach any one, nor did he appear to have any particular purpose in being there after that one rapid glance at all the travellers. A very minute observer might certainly have detected in him a slight interest in the movements of Richard Marwood; and when that individual left the station the stranger strolled out after him, and walked a few paces behind him down the back street that led from the station to the town. Presently he came up closer to him, and a few minutes afterwards suddenly and unceremoniously hooked his arm into that of Richard.

“Mr. Richard Marwood, I think,” he said.

“I’m not ashamed of my name,” replied Daredevil Dick, “and that is my name. Perhaps you’ll oblige me with yours, since you’re so uncommonly friendly.” And the young man tried to withdraw his arm from that of the stranger; but the
stranger was of an affectionate turn of mind, and kept his arm tightly locked in his.

"Oh, never mind my name," he said; "you'll learn my name fast enough, I dare say. But," he continued, as he caught a threatening look in Richard's eye, "if you want to call me anything, why, call me Jinks."

"Very well then, Mr. Jinks, since I didn't come to Gardenford to make your acquaintance, and as now, having made your acquaintance, I can't say I much care about cultivating it further, why I wish you a very good morning!" As he said this, Richard wrenched his arm from that of the stranger, and strode two or three paces forward.

Not more than two or three paces though, for the affectionate Mr. Jinks caught him again by the arm, and a friend of Mr. Jinks, who had also been lurking outside the station when the train arrived, happened to cross over from the other side of the street at this very moment, caught hold of his other arm, and poor Daredevil Dick, firmly pinioned by these two new-found friends, looked with a puzzled expression from one to the other.

"Come, come," said Mr. Jinks, in a soothing tone, "the best thing you can do is to take it quietly, and come along with me."

"Oh, I see," said Richard. "Here's a spoke in the wheel of my reform; it's those cursed Jews, I suppose, have got wind of my coming down here. Show me your writ, Mr. Jinks, and tell us at whose suit it is, and for what amount? I've got a considerable sum about me, and can settle it on the spot."

"Oh, you have, have you?" Mr. Jinks was so surprised by this last speech of Richard's that he was obliged to take off his hat, and rub his hand through his hair before he could recover himself. "Oh!" he continued staring at Richard, "Oh! you've got a considerable sum of money about you, have you? Well, my friend, you're either very green, or you're very cheeky; and all I can say is, take care how you commit yourself. I'm not a sheriff's officer. If you'd done me the honour to reckon up my nose you might have knowed it" (Mr. Jinks's olfactory organ was a decided nub); "and I ain't going to arrest you for debt."

"Oh, very well then," said Dick; "perhaps you and your affectionate friend, who both seem to be afflicted with rather an over-large allowance of the organ of adhesiveness, will be so very obliging as to let me go. I'll leave you a lock of my hair, as you've taken such a wonderful fancy to me." And with a powerful effort he shook the two strangers off him; but Mr. Jinks caught him again by the arm, and Mr. Jinks's friend, producing a pair of handcuffs, locked them on Richard's wrists with railroad rapidity.
"Now, don't you try it on," said Mr. Jinks. "I didn't want to use these, you know, if you'd have come quietly. I've heard you belong to a respectable family, so I thought I wouldn't pummel you with these here objects of bigotry" (it is to be presumed Mr. Jinks means bijouterie); "but it seems there's no help for it, so come along to the station; we shall catch the eight-thirty train, and be in Sloperton before ten. The inquest won't come on till to-morrow."

Richard looked at his wrists, from his wrists to the faces of the two men, with an utterly hopeless expression of wonder.

"Am I mad," he said, "or drunk, or dreaming? What have you put these cursed things upon me for? Why do you want to take me back to Sloperton? What inquest? Who's dead?"

Mr. Jinks put his head on one side, and contemplated the prisoner with the eye of a connoisseur.

"Don't he come the innocent doddle stunnin'?" he said, rather to himself than to his companion, who, by the bye, throughout the affair had never once spoken. "Don't he do it beautiful? Wouldn't he be a first-rate actor up at the Victoria Theatre in London? Wouldn't he be prime in the 'Suspected One,' or 'Gonsalvo the Guiltless'? Vy," said Mr. Jinks, with intense admiration, "he'd be worth his two-pound-ten a week and a clear half benefit every month to any manager as is."

As Mr. Jinks made these complimentary remarks, he and his friend walked on. Richard, puzzled, bewildered, and unresisting, walked between them towards the railway station; but presently Mr. Jinks condescended to reply to his prisoner's questions, in this wise:

"You want to know what inquest? Well, a inquest on a gentleman what's been barbarously murdered. You want to know who's dead? Why, your uncle is the gent as has been murdered. You want to know why we are going to take you back to Sloperton? Well, because we've got a warrant to arrest you on suspicion of having committed the murder."

"My uncle murdered!" cried Richard, with a face that now for the first time since his arrest betrayed anxiety and horror; for throughout his interview with Mr. Jinks he had never once seemed frightened. His manner had expressed only utter bewilderment of mind.

"Yes, murdered; his throat cut from ear to ear."

"It cannot be," said Richard. "There must be some horrid mistake here. My uncle, Montague Harding, murdered! I bade him good-by at twelve last night in perfect health."

"And this morning he was found murdered in his bed; with
Richard Marwood lights his Pipe.

The cabinet in his room broken open, and rifled of a pocket-book known to contain upwards of three hundred pounds.

"Why, he gave me that pocket-book last night. He gave it to me. I have it here in my breast-pocket."

"You'd better keep that story for the coroner," said Mr. Jinks. "Perhaps he'll believe it."

"I must be mad, I must be mad," said Richard.

They had by this time reached the station, and Mr. Jinks having glanced into two or three carriages of the train about to start, selected one of the second-class, and ushered Richard into it. He seated himself by the young man's side, while his silent and unobtrusive friend took his place opposite. The guard locked the door, and the train started.

Mr. Jinks's quiet friend was exactly one of those people adapted to pass in a crowd. He might have passed in a hundred crowds, and no one of the hundreds of people in any of those hundred crowds would have glanced aside to look at him.

You could only describe him by negatives. He was neither very tall nor very short, he was neither very stout nor very thin, neither dark nor fair, neither ugly nor handsome; but just such a medium between the two extremities of each as to be utterly commonplace and unnoticeable.

If you looked at his face for three hours together, you would in those three hours find only one thing in that face that was any way out of the common—that one thing was the expression of the mouth.

It was a compressed mouth with thin lips, which tightened and drew themselves rigidly together when the man thought—and the man was almost always thinking; and this was not all, for when he thought most deeply the mouth shifted in a palpable degree to the left side of his face. This was the only thing remarkable about the man, except, indeed, that he was dumb but not deaf, having lost the use of his speech during a terrible illness which he had suffered in his youth.

Throughout Richard's arrest he had watched the proceedings with unswerving intensity, and he now sat opposite the prisoner, thinking deeply, with his compressed lips drawn on one side.

The dumb man was a mere scrub, one of the very lowest of the police-force, a sort of outsider and employé of Mr. Jinks, the Gardenford detective; but he was useful, quiet, and steady, and above all, as his patrons said, he was to be relied on, because he could not talk.

He could talk though, in his own way, and he began to talk presently in his own way to Mr. Jinks; he began to talk with his fingers with a rapidity which seemed marvellous. The
fingers were more active than clean, and made rather a dirty alphabet.

"Oh, hang it," said Mr. Jinks, after watching him for a moment, "you must do it a little slower, if you want me to understand. I am not an electric telegraph."

The scrub nodded, and began again with his fingers, very slowly.

This time Richard too watched him; for Richard knew this dumb alphabet. He had talked whole reams of nonsense with it, in days gone by, to a pretty girl at a boarding-school, between whom and himself there had existed a platonic attachment, to say nothing of a high wall and broken glass bottles.

Richard watched the dirty alphabet.

First, two grimy fingers laid flat upon the dirty palm, N. Next, the tip of the grimy forefinger of the right hand upon the tip of the grimy third finger of the left hand, O; the next letter is T, and the man snaps his fingers—the word is finished, NOT. Not what? Richard found himself wondering with an intense eagerness, which, even in the bewildered state of his mind, surprised him.

The dumb man began another word—

G—U—I—L—

Mr. Jinks cut him short.

"Not guilty? Not fiddlesticks! What do you know about it, I should like to know? Where did you get your experience? Where did you get your sharp practice? What school have you been formed in, I wonder, that you can come out so positive with your opinion; and what's the value you put your opinion at, I wonder? I should be glad to hear what you'd take for your opinion."

Mr. Jinks uttered the whole of this speech with the most intense sarcasm; for Mr. Jinks was a distinguished detective, and prided himself highly on his acumen; and was therefore very indignant that his sub and scrub should dare to express an opinion.

"My uncle murdered!" said Richard; "my good, kind, generous-hearted uncle! Murdered in cold blood! Oh, it is too horrible!"

The scrub's mouth was very much on one side as Richard muttered this, half to himself.

"And I am suspected of the murder?"

"Well, you see," said Mr. Jinks, "there's two or three things tell pretty strong against you. Why were you in such a hurry this morning to cut and run to Gardenford?"

"My uncle had recommended me to a merchant's office in that town: see, here is the letter of introduction—read it."
Richard Marwood lights his Pipe.

"No, it ain't my place," said Mr. Jinks. "The letter's not sealed, I see, but I mustn't read it, or if I do, I stand the chance of gettin' snubbed and lectured for goin' beyond my dooty: how'sumdever, you can show it to the coroner. I'm sure I should be very glad to see you clear yourself, for I've heard you belong to one of our good old county families, and it ain't quite the thing to hang such as you."

Poor Richard! His reckless words of the night before came back to him: "I wonder they don't hang such fellows as I am."

"And now," says Jinks, "as I should like to make all things comfortable, if you're willing to come along quietly with me and my friend here, why, I'll move those bracelets, because they are not quite so ornamental as they're sometimes useful; and as I'm going to light my pipe, why, if you like to blow a cloud, too, you can."

With this Mr. Jinks unlocked and removed the handcuffs, ar, I produced his pipe and tobacco. Richard did the same, and took from his pocket a match-box in which there was only one match.

"That's awkward," said Jinks, "for I haven't a light about me."

They filled the two pipes, and lighted the one match.

Now, all this time Richard had held his uncle's letter of introduction in his hand, and when there was some little difficulty in lighting the tobacco from the expiring lucifer, he, without a moment's thought, held the letter over the flickering flame, and from the burning paper lighted his pipe.

In a moment he remembered what he had done.

The letter of introduction! the one piece of evidence in his favour! He threw the blazing paper on the ground and stamped on it, but in vain. In spite of all his efforts a few black ashes alone remained.

"The devil must have possessed me," he exclaimed. "I have burnt my uncle's letter."

"Well," says Mr. Jinks, "I've seen many dodges in my time, and I've seen a many knowing cards; but if that isn't the neatest dodge, and if you ain't the knowingest card I ever did see, blow me."

"I tell you that letter was in my uncle's hand; written to his friend, the merchant at Gardenford; and in it he mentions having given me the very money you say has been stolen from his cabinet."

"Oh, the letter was all that, was it? And you've lighted your pipe with it. You'd better tell that little story before the coroner. It will be so very convincing to the jury."
The scrub, with his mouth very much to the left, spells out again the two words, "Not guilty!"

"Oh," says Mr. Jinks, "you mean to stick to your opinion, do you, now you've formed it? Upon my word, you're too clever for a country-town practice; I wonder they don't send for you up at Scotland Yard; with your talents, you'd be at the top of the tree in no time, I've no doubt."

During the journey, the thick November fog had been gradually clearing away, and at this very moment the sun broke out with a bright and sudden light that shone full upon the threadbare coat-sleeve of Daredevil Dick.

"Not guilty!" cried Mr. Jinks, with sudden energy. "Not guilty! Why, look here! I'm blest if his coat-sleeve isn't covered with blood!"

Yes, on the shabby worn-out coat the sunlight revealed dark and ghastly stains; and, stamped and branded by those hideous marks as a villain and a murderer, Richard Marwood re-entered his native town.
“I tell you I cannot bear it! I shall do something desperate if this life is not changed soon. It gets worse and worse, and I often feel as if I'd gladly sell my soul to Satan for a year of freedom.”

An impetuous young voice spoke, and the most intense desire gave force to her passionate words as the girl glanced despairingly about the dreary room like a caged creature on the point of breaking loose. Books lined the walls, loaded the tables and lay piled about the weird, withered old man who was her sole companion. He sat in a low, wheeled chair from which his paralyzed limbs would not allow him to stir without help. His face was worn by passion and wasted by disease but his eyes were all alive and possessed an uncanny brilliancy which contrasted strangely with the immobility of his other features. Fixing these cold, keen eyes on the agitated face of the girl, he answered with harsh brevity, “Go when and where you like. I have no desire to keep you.”

“Ah, that is the bitterest thing of all!” cried the girl with a
sudden tremor in her voice, a pathetic glance at that hard face. “If you loved me, this dull house would be pleasant to me, this lonely life not only endurable but happy. The knowledge that you care nothing for me makes me wretched. I’ve tried, God knows I have, to do my duty for Papa’s sake, but you are relentless and will neither forgive nor forget. You say ‘Go,’ but where am I go, a girl, young, penniless and alone? You do not really mean it, Grandfather?”

“I never say what I do not mean. Do as you choose, go or stay, but let me have no more scenes, I’m tired of them,” and he took up his book as if the subject was ended.

“I’ll go as soon as I can find a refuge, and never be a burden to you anymore. But when I am gone remember that I wanted to be a child to you and you shut your heart against me. Someday you’ll feel the need of love and regret that you threw mine away; then send for me, Grandfather, and wherever I am I’ll come back and prove that I can forgive.” A sob choked the indignant voice, but the girl shed no tears and turned to leave the room with a proud step.

The sight of a stranger pausing on the threshold arrested her, and she stood regarding him without a word. He looked at her an instant, for the effect of the graceful girlish figure with pale, passionate face and dark eyes full of sorrow, pride and resolution was wonderfully enhanced by the gloom of the great room, the presence of the sinister old man and glimpses of a gathering storm in the red autumn sky. During that brief pause the girl had time to see that the newcomer was a man past thirty, tall and powerful, with peculiar eyes and a scar across the forehead. More than this she did not discover, but a sudden change came over her excited spirit and she smiled involuntarily before she spoke.

“Here is a gentleman for you, Grandfather.”

The old man looked up sharply, threw down his book
with an air of satisfaction, and stretched his hand to the stranger, saying bluntly, "Speak of Satan and he appears. Welcome, Tempest."

"Many thanks; few give the Evil One so frank and cordial a greeting," returned the other, with a short laugh which showed a glitter of white teeth under a drooping black mustache. "Who is the Tragic Muse?" he added under his breath as he shook the proffered hand.

"Good! She is exactly that. Rosamond, this is the most promising of all my pupils, Phillip Tempest. The 'Tragic Muse' is Guy's daughter, as you might know, Phillip, by the state of rebellion in which you find her!"

The girl bowed rather haughtily, the man lifted his brows with an air of surprise as he returned the bow and sat down beside his host.

"Ring for lights and take yourself away," commanded the old man, and Rosamond vanished from the room, leaving it the darker for her absence.

For half an hour she sat in the great hall window looking out at the waves which dashed against the rocky shore, thinking sad and bitter thoughts till twilight fell and the outer world grew as somber as the inner one of which she was so weary. With a sigh she was about to rise and seek her own room when a sudden consciousness of a human presence nearby made her turn to see the newcomer pausing just outside the old man's door to regard her with a curious smile. An involuntary start betrayed that she had entirely forgotten him, a slight which she tried to excuse by saying hastily, "I was so absorbed in watching the sea I did not hear you come out. I love tempests and—"

He interrupted her with a short laugh and said in a deep voice which would have been melodious but for a satiric undertone which seldom left it, "I am glad of that, for your
grandfather invites me to pass the night, and I shall do so willingly since my young hostess has a taste for tempests, though I cannot promise to be as absorbing as the one outside.”

In the fitful light of the dusky hall the newcomer’s face suddenly appeared fiery-eyed and menacing, and, glancing at a portrait of Mephistopheles, Rosamond exclaimed, “Why, you are the very image of Meph—”

Tempest strolled to the picture which hung opposite the long mirror. Looking up at it, a change passed over his face, an expression of weariness and melancholy which touched her and made her repent of her frankness. With an impulsive gesture she put out her hand, saying in a tone of sweet contrition, “I beg your pardon; I’ve been very rude, but I live entirely alone with Grandfather, who is peculiar, that I really don’t know how to behave like a well-bred girl. I had no wish to be unkind; will you forgive me?”

“I think I will on condition that you play hostess for a little while, for your grandfather begs me to pass the night and gives me into your care. May I stay?”

He held her hand and spoke, looking down into the beautiful face which was so unconscious of its beauty. A hospitable smile broke over her wistful face and with a word of welcome she led him away to a little room which overhung the sea. Placing him in an easy chair, she stirred the embers till a cheery blaze sprung up, lighted a brilliant lamp, drew the curtains and then paused as if in doubt about the next step.

“I always have tea here alone and send Grandpapa’s up. Will you take yours with him or with me?”

“With you if you are not afraid of my dangerous society,” he answered with a significant smile.

“I like danger,” she said with a blush, a petulant shake of the head and a daring glance at her guest.

Ringing the bell, she ordered tea and when it came busied
herself about it with the pretty earnestness of a child playing housewife. Lounging in his easy chair, Tempest regarded her with an expression of indolent amusement, which slowly changed to one of surprise and interest as the girl talked with a spirit and freedom peculiarly charming to a man who had tried many pleasures and, wearying of them all, was glad to discover a new one even of this simple kind. Though her isolated life had deprived Rosamond of the polish of society, it had preserved the artless freshness of her youth and given her ardent nature an intensity which found vent in demonstrations infinitely more attractive than the artificial graces of other women. Her beauty satisfied Tempest’s artistic eye, her peculiarities piqued his curiosity, her vivacity lightened his ennui, and her character interested him by the unconscious hints it gave of power, pride and passion. So entirely natural and unconventional was she that he soon found himself on a familiar footing, asking all manner of unusual questions, and receiving rather piquant replies.

“So, like ‘Mariana in the moated grange,’ you are often ‘aweary, aweary,’ and wish that you were dead I fancy?” he said, after a series of skillful questions had elicited a history of the solitary life she had led. To his surprise she replied with a brave bright glance that betrayed no trace of sentimental weakness in her nature, but an indomitable will and a cheerful spirit.

“No, I never wish that. I don’t intend to die till I’ve enjoyed my life. Everyone has a right to happiness and sooner or later I will have it. Youth, health and freedom were meant to be enjoyed and I want to try every pleasure before I am too old to enjoy them.”

“I’ve tried that plan and it was a failure.”

“What? Tell me about it, please.” Rosamond drew a low seat nearer with a face full of interest.

Tempest smiled involuntarily at the idea of recounting his
experiences to such a listener, and said, in answer to an imperious little nod, as he paused, "That history would not interest you; but of this I can assure you, one may begin with youth, health and liberty, may taste every pleasure, obey no law but one's own will, roam all over the world and yet at five and thirty be unutterably tired of everything under the sun."

"Are you so old as that? I didn't think it," was Rosamond's reply.

"Does five and thirty seem venerable to fifteen?" asked Tempest curious to learn her age.

"I am eighteen," she answered with an air of dignity which was very becoming; then returning to what interested her, she said thoughtfully, "I don't understand how one can ever tire of pleasure. I've had so little I know I should enjoy it very much, and I can imagine nothing so delightful as to have entire liberty as you have."

"There is very little real liberty in the world; even those who seem freest are often the most tightly bound. Law, custom, public opinion, fear or shame make slaves of us all, as you will find when you try your experiment," said Tempest with a bitter smile.

"Law and custom I know nothing of, public opinion I despise, and shame and fear I defy, for everyone has a right to be happy in their own way."

"Even at the cost of what is called honor and honesty? That is a comfortable philosophy, and having preached and practiced it all my days I've no right to condemn it. But the saints would call it sinful and dangerous and tell you that life should be one long penance full of sorrow, sacrifice and psalm-singing."

"I'm so tired of hearing that! In the books I read the sinners are always more interesting than the saints, and in real life good people are dismally dull. I've no desire to be wicked,
but I do want to be happy. A short life and a gay one for me and I'm willing to pay for my pleasure if it is necessary."

"You may have to pay a high price for it, but sooner or later I am sure you will have it, for a strong will always wins its way."

"Thank you for saying that. It's the first word of encouragement I've had for years. I comfort myself with hopes and dreams but cheery prophecies uttered by friendly lips are far better," she said gratefully.

"Tell me your hopes and dreams."

"You would laugh at some of them, but I'm not afraid to own that I hope to be free as air, to see the world, to know what ease and pleasure are, to have many friends and to be dearly loved."

The last words fell slowly, softly from her lips and the brilliant eyes dimmed suddenly. As the ruddy blaze shone on the slender figure in the simple gown and the drooping face framed in clusters of dark hair, Tempest thought that the little room held the sweetest piece of womanhood he had ever seen. Most men would have been touched by the innocent confessions of the girl, but this man's heart had grown hard with years of selfishness and he merely enjoyed her as he would have done a lovely flower, an exciting book, a passionate song. Rosamond sat listening to the wind that now raved without and the rain that beat upon the windowpane. Tempest listened also and smiled a curious smile; the girl saw it and asked with an answering smile, "You like storms as well as I?"

"Yes, but I was thinking of something peculiar. Whenever I enter a house where some adventure or experience is to befall me, I invariably bring a tempest with me."

"Of course you do, if you bring your name. But do you really mean it always storms when you pay visits?"
"The omen never fails, and I'm growing superstitious about it. For that reason I seldom make visits or come ashore," he answered, as she looked up laughingly into his face.

"Why, where do you live then?"
"Cruising about in my yacht."
"Then it was you I watched coming gallantly into port today and wished a bon voyage?"
"Thanks, I seldom have any other. For months I have led the life of a sea king, floating to and fro with no society but books and my Greek boy, Ippolito."

"How charming! What a delicious life it must be! Tell me about it, please. I love the sea so dearly that everything concerning it delights me," and Rosamond plied him with questions till he was irresistibly roused from his ennui and incited to recount the pleasures and perils of a summer voyage. The girl listened with an eager face, a breathless interest more flattering than words, and when he paused exclaimed with a sigh of satisfaction, "You tell it so well it seems as if I saw all you describe. Where are you going when you sail away again?"

"I shall cruise about among the islands of the Mediterranean if no other whim seizes me. You know there is no winter in that lovely climate but one long summer all the year round; this suits me as a change after our fogs and winds, so when you sit here next January with sleet beating on the window and snowdrifts whitening the rocks below, you can imagine me lying among violets and primroses under the orange trees of Valrosa."

"What is that?" asked the girl, drinking in every word.

"My little villa near Nice. I've not seen it for two or three years and have a fancy to revisit it. A pretty place in a nest of roses; just the spot to spend one's honeymoon in."

"Did you spend yours there?"
“Do I look as if I ever had one?”
Undaunted by the sudden sharpness of the question, Rosamond bent forward and gravely scanned the face opposite. It was inscrutable, and all she discovered was that Tempest had magnificent eyes and a mouth which betrayed a ruthless nature.

“No, I think you never did,” she said decidedly. “You haven’t the look of a man who has a wife to love, or little children to take upon his knee. You don’t care for such things, do you?”

“Not I; no bonds for me of any kind. You read faces well.” He indulged in a noiseless laugh that had more of mockery than merriment in it.

“Do I amuse you?” asked Rosamond, looking piqued.

“Delightfully. I’ve not laughed so much for an age. I wish I could persuade your grandfather to try a voyage with me and let me enjoy your gay society.”

“Ah, I wish he would! But it is impossible. He never sits out and I am almost as much a fixture as he.”

“Do you never go away?”

“Never. Till you came I had not seen a strange face for weeks, and when you go the dreadful loneliness will return. Must you sail in the morning?”

“The word ‘must’ is not in my vocabulary. I go and come as I like, and lead the life of the Wandering Jew; with the comfortable difference of knowing I have the privilege of dying when I like.”

“You don’t look as if you ever could die, you are so strong and—” she did not finish her sentence but looked at the vigorous figure before her with genuine womanly admiration for a manly man.

“I have been very near proving I could die more than once; but my hour has not come yet so I must bide my time.”
“Was that wound received on one of the occasions of which you speak?” inquired Rosamond, touching her own smooth forehead to indicate the scar on his.

A transient glitter shone in Tempest’s eye, and his powerful hand closed like a vice, but his voice betrayed no emotion.

“Yes, I have to thank a friend for that and a year of suffering. The debt is paid however, and I’m none the worse for the wound. I’m told such scars are an improvement as they give an heroic air. Do you like it?”

“No now. If you had received it in a real battle I might admire it, but duels are not heroic.”

Tempest smiled at her decided mode of speaking, yet passed his hand across his forehead as if he did not consider the scar an ornament, and asked with some curiosity, “Where did you get that idea? Not from your grandfather, I’m confident; he has fought too many himself to condemn the practice.”

“I got it where I get most of my ideas, out of books. The house is full of them and I’ve nothing to do but read. Was Grandfather very wild and wicked when he was young? He never speaks of himself, and during the ten years I’ve been with him I’ve discovered nothing about his past life except that he never would forgive Papa for marrying as he did.”

“He is kind to you?”

“Yes, in his own way. He gives me a home but nothing more. I never understood why he did it, because he was angry with Mama and yet at her death he took me in.”

“I can tell you why he did it.”

“What do you know about it?” Rosamond’s dreamy eyes flashed wide open as she turned to him.

“I never saw your lovely mother but once, yet I do not forget her. I was your grandfather’s pupil even then, though only a lad, but he was a gay old man and we saw life together. Your
mother would have inherited a fortune had she not displeased her father by marrying a poor man. Her sister has the fortune, but when she dies it will come to you. Therefore the old man keeps a hold upon you."

"Is that it? I knew he did not love me, but I thought there might be a little pity in his cold heart. I hope that fortune will come quickly so that I may be free sooner than I planned."

"You mean to go away then?"

"Yes, I can bear this life no longer, it is so purposeless and lonely. I care for nobody and nobody cares for me; the years drag on and nothing changes."

"Except that the bud becomes a rose."

"A very thorny one, for there is no kind gardener to tend and train it," she said sadly.

"Wild roses are fairest, and nature a better gardener than art."

She looked a rose indeed as she blushed brightly under the glance he gave her, and frankly showed that his admiration pleased even while it half abashed her.

"I never had a compliment before, but I think I like it, though I don’t deserve it," she said, so naively that his satirical mouth softened with a smile of genuine amusement.

"I seldom pay them, but tonight I feel as if I had got into a fairy tale, sitting here in an enchanted tower while the storm raves without and Fair Rosamond entertains me hospitably by her fire. You know the old ballad?"

"Oh yes, and like it very much. I often make romances when I’m tired of reading them. Shall I sing you a little song I made about my namesake?"

"If you will. It is just the time and place for such music."

Turning to the old instrument that stood near, Rosamond poured into the simple lay all the passion and the pathos of her fresh young voice. Tempest listened with the indolent
A Long Fatal Love Chase

satisfaction of a man whose senses, those ministers of pleasure, had been cultivated to the utmost by years of indulgence. Yet when she ceased he did not thank her, but sat looking moodily into the fire as if the music had conjured up memories of other short-lived roses who had lent sweetness to his life.

Before either spoke there came a sharp peal of thunder and a vivid flash of lightning followed by a heavy crash. The man never stirred but the girl sprang to her feet, exclaiming, "It was the cedar on the cliff! I thought it would be struck some day," and she went to the window.

"Come away or you will share the fate of the tree," said Tempest commandingly. But Rosamond remained in her dangerous position till a second flash showed that her surmise was correct; then she resumed her seat, saying sorrowfully, "That was my favorite tree. Papa planted it when I was born and I always called it mine. It is a bad omen, for the superstitious say when the tree dies I shall follow soon. Do you believe in such things?"

"No," was the brief reply, but Tempest muttered to himself, "My coming was a worse omen than either storm or thunderbolt, if the child did but know it."

At this moment a bell rang sharply and an instant after a servant appeared to summon the guest to his host's room. Tempest obeyed reluctantly, bade Rosamond good night, and with a backward glance at the bright little nook and its charming occupant he went away, leaving her to dream dreams of the new hero who had come to play a part in the romance of her life.
All night the gale blew, the rain poured and the sea thundered on the coast. But at daybreak the wind huddled a little, the rain ceased and the sun shone fitfully. Tempest left his room early, paused an instant before the picture in the hall, eyeing it with a curious expression, and strolled about the great, silent house, wondering if his young hostess had yet left her room. A gust of air blowing downward from an open door led him to look up. A flight of winding steps led to the flat roof, and noiselessly climbing them he found Rosamond. A stone balustrade ran round the roof and in the angle which overhung the sea stood the girl, her dress fluttering in the wind, her hair blown back from cheeks rosy with its keen breath, her eyes intently fixed upon the horizon where the ocean seemed to meet the sky.

"Is Hero looking for her Leander?" asked Tempest's resonant voice.

"My Leander has not yet been found," she answered, glancing over her shoulder with a sudden smile.
A Long Fatal Love Chase

"What were you looking for so intently then?" she said, going to lean beside her.

"Your yacht. I dreamed I sailed away in it but before we reached a lovely land lying in the distance I woke. Can we see her from here?"

"No, the Circe lies in a little bay behind the cliffs, and there she must lie till the gale abates."

"I'm glad of it!"

"Why?"

"Because I want you to stay. I'm so dull here I should welcome even—" she paused for a word and he supplied it—"Mephistopheles."

"Don't remind me of that rudeness or I shall think you have not forgiven it. I don't see the resemblance now." Holding back her hair, she looked up at him with a frank, confiding glance which would have softened the most relentless heart.

"Who would not linger when welcomed by such a sweet Miranda?" he said, with a look which made her flush and change the subject suddenly, as if some womanly instinct warned her that his compliments were dangerous.

"Isn't it splendid up here? I always come when there is a storm, and long to be a seagull to float away on the wings of the wind as they do." She spread her arms with such an impetuous motion that Tempest involuntarily put out his hand to arrest her for she looked as if she would in truth "float away on the wings of the wind." She laughed and drew back from the detaining hand.

"No fear of that; if I'd wanted to make a romantic end I should have done it long ago."

"Then you don't approve of suicide?"

"Not I; it's a cowardly way of ending one's troubles. Better conquer or bear them bravely."
"I like that." Tempest gave an approving nod which pleased her more than the most graceful compliment, and made her talk on freely.

"I used to amuse myself by testing my own courage in many ways. Up here I began by walking round on the top of the balustrade, and when I could run along it without fear I tried the ledge outside."

"Faith! That was a dangerous test," and Tempest leaned forward to look at the narrow ledge which projected over the rocky shore, for the house was built on the very verge of the cliff.

"It was very foolish and I was terribly afraid at first, but I never give up, so I kept on and now can go all round without touching the balustrade."

"Can you?" He looked politely incredulous.

"Is that a wreck?" said Rosamond, suddenly pointing to a speck far out at sea. Tempest turned to look; an instant after a laugh recalled him and he saw the girl outside the low railing.

"Don't touch me or I'll let myself fall," she said, and folding her arms, with a fearless smile and a steady step she went rapidly along the perilous path. The stones were wet, the wind blew strongly, the sun shone in her face, and Tempest, as he walked inside with his eye on her, his hand ready to clutch her if she slipped, felt his pulse quicken as she turned corner after corner till she reached her starting point; then he drew a long breath and exclaimed, "Bravo! That was a feat to be proud of. Didn't it make your heart beat?"

"No, I think not. I'm never conscious that I have one."

Tempest smiled at a simplicity which had no touch of coquetry in it, and said, with a tone of pity in his voice, "You will find it soon enough, and perhaps regret the discovery. Now come out of danger, a gust may blow you away."
"I like danger, there's excitement in it and that is what I want."

"Very well, then you shall have it. Will you come back?"

"Yes, when I'm ready—" she began, with a defiant little gesture, for his air of command displeased her. But the words were hardly spoken when Tempest bent suddenly, took her by the waist and set her down inside the parapet.

"How dare you!" she demanded, scarlet with surprise and anger.

"I dare anything," was the cool reply.

"Don't boast, you dare not do what I did," said the girl petulantly, though rather afraid of him.

"I dare try it," and he put his hand on the railing with such an evident determination to make the attempt that Rosamond held him back, forgetting her resentment in alarm.

"No, no, you must not! I know you are brave, there is no need to prove it. Don't frighten me and endanger yourself for such a foolish thing."

"Yet you did both and added disobedience to the folly. I will be more docile. Sit here and recover from your fright."

He spoke in a masterful way which subdued the girl's willful spirit and she sat down on the stone seat to which he pointed, heartily ashamed of her freak and its consequences.

"It was my fault," she said with an air of mingled dignity and humility. "If I behave like a child I must expect to be treated like one. I'll try to be a woman and then perhaps I shall receive the respect which is due a woman, according to the books."

Tempest made her a deferential bow and said penitently, though a mocking smile lurked in his eye, "I beg pardon, I won't forget myself again. Now to assure me that my offense is forgiven will you come and see the Circe before she weighs anchor?"
Rosamond forgot her dignity and clapped her hands with delight as she answered, with no trace of anger in face or voice, "With all my heart! I wanted to see it very much, but did not like to ask. When can we go?"

"There will be another shower before it clears, so we must wait till afternoon, which will give me time to put my floating home into holiday trim in honor of your visit."

"How charming it will be! I was longing for something to happen and was quite desperate, but now you have come and everything is changed." She stopped with a shy glance, and added abruptly, "I am forgetting that you have had no breakfast; come and let me give you some."

Tempest smiled his inscrutable smile and followed, idly asking himself if it was worth his while to linger and amuse himself for a time with the beautiful, impetuous creature who seemed to have reached a point when a word would make or mar her future.

He breakfasted and remained shut up with the old man for several hours, then departed, promising to return in the afternoon. Meantime Rosamond watched the sky, counted the hours, and when the sun broke out brilliantly she beguiled her impatience by making herself as pretty as her scanty wardrobe allowed. Youth and beauty supplied all deficiencies, for the lithe grace of her girlish figure set off the simple gown, and the little old hat with no ornament but a garland of red autumn leaves shaded such a blooming face that one forgot to look farther. When ready a sudden whim took her into the drawing room. It had long been disused and was half dismantled, but a great mirror still hung there, and standing before it in a streak of sunshine she examined herself with unusual interest. Something seemed amiss, for she shook her head and was turning away with a listless air when she caught sight of another face in the tall dark mirror. Not a whit abashed at
A Long Fatal Love Chase

being found there she nodded to it, saying with brightening eyes, "Shall we go now, Mr. Tempest?"

"If you please." Then, as they walked away together, he asked in a tone that would have daunted many young girls, "Were you admireing yourself or looking for your fate as in old times, Miss Rose?"

She did not answer but said softly, as if to herself, "I like that name; no one ever calls me so now."

"Rosamond means 'Rose of the World,' you know. The name suits you and I unconsciously gave it to you. But you do not tell me what you saw in the glass."

"I saw myself—and you."

"Well, were you satisfied with your fate?"

"I was not thinking of my fate but of my old straw hat."

Then, like an inquisitive child she asked, "Did you ever see a magic mirror?"

"Yes."

"And read your fate in it?"

"That remains to be proved?"

"I wish I knew what you saw."

"A lovely dead woman, an old man mourning over her and myself standing near with an expression of remorse and despair such as I am quite incapable of feeling. Is that sufficiently mysterious and romantic for you?"

"But did nothing like that ever happen to you?" she asked, stopping to look up at him with her great eyes full of interest and wonder.

"Nothing resembling it in the slightest degree. The mirror lied and the dead lady has never appeared to me except as a part of that melodramatic farce."

"Where was it?"

"In Venice."

"How long ago?"
"Four or five years. A friend had a fancy to visit the magician who was amusing the idlers there so we went."
"What did your friend see?"
"Her husband."
"Oh, it was a woman, was it? That must have pleased her."
"On the contrary, it alarmed her extremely as she particularly desired not to see him."
"Didn’t she love him?"
"Not a whit."
"Then I hope her fate proved as false as yours."
"It proved exactly true. She saw her husband three days afterward and went raving mad by way of a pleasant welcome."
"How terrible! Was he angry or wicked, that she feared him so?"
"He was an amicable fool enough, and not at all angry when she saw him, but quite calm and comfortable with a bullet through his heart." Tempest spoke carelessly but there was a sinister glitter in his black eyes, and an involuntary motion of the hand across the forehead betrayed that the scar and the story had some connection. Rosamond looked troubled, for even her innocent heart felt by instinct the darker tragedy that remained untold.
"Why do you tell me such things?" she said, watching him askance as he walked beside her with an indolent gait curiously out of keeping with his athletic figure and bronzed face.
"You said you pined for excitement so I’m trying to give you some. Don’t you like it?"
"Yes, but I think that perhaps its not good for me, at least this kind. One more question and then we’ll talk of something else. Aren’t you afraid that your vision may yet be fulfilled as your friend’s was?"
Tempest shrugged his shoulders with his peculiar laugh,
noiseless, brief and mirthless, a sound that made the listener sad because it seemed to mock not only at others but at the laughor himself.

“I have some curiosity on that point,” he said. “So much has been written about remorse and despair that I sometimes think I should like a taste of them. I’ve tried almost all the other passions and sentiments and this would have the charm of novelty at least. There is the Cius curtsaying to her master.”

Rosamond’s face cleared as she eyed the little vessel in its holiday trim. Pennons streamed from the mast, a gay awning was spread on deck, and several foreign sailors in picturesque costume stood ready to receive her. Like a delighted child she looked about her, breaking into merry exclamations and enthusiastic praise of all she saw as Tempest did the honours of his floating home, which was as perfect as skill, taste and money could make it.

“I do not wonder you seldom go ashore. I’d never land if I were you, except to make this more charming by contrast. Ah, I wish I had such liberty as yours.” Rosamond was standing at the bow, looking across the boundless waste with an expression of intense longing which made her young face tragic.

“Shall I weigh anchor and sail away with you in the free fashion of the sea kings?” asked Tempest.

“I wish you would,” and her eyes shone with merriment at the playful proposition.

“Should you regret nothing that you would leave behind?” he asked, alert to catch the changes of her expressive face.

“Nothing,” she said, decidedly, then with a gesture as if she put aside some unwelcome subject she added, “Let us forget all that; I want to enjoy my holiday undisturbed by a sad thought. Can I go below?”

He led the way to the luxurious little saloon and showed
her all the appliances for ease and pleasure which it possessed, finding much amusement in her demonstrations of delight.

"Why didn't you have more of these charming nests so you could fill your yacht with friends sometimes?" asked Rosamond, putting her lovely head out of the daintiest of the two dainty state rooms which opened on the saloon.

"I never want but one at a time. I am as fickle as a woman and often change."

"All women are not fickle. I never had but one friend, yet I loved him faithfully and have not filled his place though I lost him six years ago."

"Ah, then you did find a Leander once? You are young to be such a constant lover."

"It was not a person but a dog." The tone of tender regret made the fact that her only friend had been a brute touching instead of ludicrous. Tempest turned abruptly to the door and called, "Ippolito!"

A light step came bounding down the cabin stairs and a slender, handsome boy of twelve in Greek costume appeared on the threshold.

"Here is a friend for you, Miss Rose, a safe and faithful little friend. Will you have him?" said Tempest, as the boy pulled off his embroidered fez and stood regarding her with a glance of admiration in his bold bright eyes. Before she could reply he smiled and nodded approvingly as he said to Tempest in prettily accented English, "She is to stay then? Of that I am glad for she has more of beauty than Señora Zoe. Do you—"

"Do you remember what I told you, young marplot?" demanded Tempest laying a heavy hand on the boy's shoulder as a quick glance arrested further words on his lips. Ippolito held his peace, but he looked quite undismayed and leaned against his master with the air of a favorite who was more accustomed to caresses than reproofs.
"Yes, I'll have him and thank you heartily," said Rosamond, charmed with the grace and beauty of the boy.

"Do you think your grandfather would allow me to leave him in your care for a time? I want a safe home and someone to be kind to the young rascal." For the first time Tempest's face betrayed a trace of emotion as he stroked the short gold curls that shone above the boy's dark eyes and classically molded features. The girl saw the momentary softening of that hard face and was touched, but shook her head, saying regretfully, "I am sure Grandfather will not let me keep him, he hates children. But why not let him stay with you if you are fond of him?"

"It is too wild a life for him, and I am too rough a master. Hey, Lito!"

The boy's only answer was an eloquent look and a closer grasp of the hand that still lay on his shoulder. Tempest smiled a genuine, warm, soft smile which changed and beautified him wonderfully as he said, "He's a pretty plaything, isn't he? I found him in Greece and took a fancy into my idle head that I could make a fine man of him. Well, what is it, Mademoiselle?" he asked suddenly, for Rosamond was looking intently at the boy.

"I was trying to think who he resembles. I never remember seeing anyone like him, yet his face looks so familiar it quite puzzles me."

"Sharper eyes than I gave her credit for," muttered Tempest, adding aloud, as he put the boy away, "Some picture probably; Lito has a classical head and is a direct descendent from some of the Greek gods I daresay. Now come and amuse yourself with these trifles while my Ganymede prepares supper."

Opening the drawers of a cabinet, Tempest entertained his guest with rare and curious spoils gathered from many lands,
"Yes, I'll have him and thank you heartily," said Rosamond, charmed with the grace and beauty of the boy.

"Do you think your grandfather would allow me to leave him in your care for a time? I want a safe home and someone to be kind to the young rascal." For the first time Tempest's face betrayed a trace of emotion as he stroked the short gold curls that shone above the boy's dark eyes and classically molded features. The girl saw the momentary softening of that hard face and was touched, but shook her head, saying regretfully, "I am sure Grandfather will not let me keep him, he hates children. But why not let him stay with you if you are fond of him?"

"It is too wild a life for him, and I am too rough a master. Hey, Lito?"

The boy's only answer was an eloquent look and a closer grasp of the hand that still lay on his shoulder. Tempest smiled a genuine, warm, soft smile which changed and beautified him wonderfully as he said, "He's a pretty plaything, isn't he? I found him in Greece and took a fancy into my idle head that I could make a fine man of him. Well, what is it, Mademoiselle?" he asked suddenly, for Rosamond was looking intently at the boy.

"I was trying to think who he resembles. I never remember seeing anyone like him, yet his face looks so familiar it quite puzzles me."

"Sharper eyes than I gave her credit for," muttered Tempest, adding aloud, as he put the boy away, "Some picture probably; Lito has a classical head and is a direct descendant from some of the Greek gods I dazeay. Now come and amuse yourself with these trifles while my Ganymede prepares supper."

Opening the drawers of a cabinet, Tempest entertained his guest with rare and curious spoils gathered from many lands,
The Circe

keeping her intent on corals, cameos and antique coins till Ippolito thrust his blond head between them with the announcement, "Master, it is ready."

"It is I who feel as if I'd got into a fairy tale now," said Rosamond, as she sat at a table covered with foreign dainties, drinking her host's health in choice wine from a slender-stemmed Venetian glass, while the pretty boy served her like a page, and everything about her heightened the romantic charm of time and place. As the words passed her lips she paused suddenly, conscious for the first time of the unusual motion of the yacht. "How it rolls! The wind must be rising. Why does he laugh and why do you look so wicked? Have I said or done anything very absurd?" she asked, glancing from one to the other.

"Come on deck and you will see why we laugh at you." Tempest rose, Rosamond followed, and one look explained everything. The yacht was flying down the harbor before the wind, and land was already far behind. She stood a moment half bewildered, while Lito danced with delight and Tempest watched her face.

"What are you doing? Where are we going?" she demanded.

"I am taking you at your word, and we are going out to sea," Tempest replied so gravely that her smile faded and she looked a little startled.

"Not far I fancy. It's a pleasant joke, but you would tire of it first."

"We shall see," and turning he gave some order to his men.

"Do you mean what you say? Are you in earnest, Mr. Tempest?"

"Quite in earnest. Do you like this sort of excitement better than housetops and magic mirrors?"

Rosamond eyed him keenly, but his face betrayed no sign
Women Writers – Novels - 389

of relenting and she grew pale with anger, not fear. "You said you dared do anything and I can believe it, but I wish I could be sure whether you really mean what you say now."

"Why not? I am simply gratifying your wish; you want to be free. I want a companion, Lito a playmate. I'm fond of wild exploits and have a fancy to try this." He certainly did have the air of a man who was capable of any freak regardless of consequences.

"Will he take me back, Ippolito?" she asked anxiously.

"If he wants you he will keep you as he did—" A hand on his mouth silenced the boy and Tempest swung him over the boat side, holding him there with one strong arm while he emphasized his words with the other. "You imp! Will nothing silence your unruly tongue? Shall I drop you and try that cure again?"

"Yes, if the Master wishes another grand fright," answered the boy, laughing in the irreverent face bent over him.

The child's apparent peril made the girl forget her own. She clung to Tempest's arm, imploring him to take the culprit out of danger, till, with a relenting smile, he complied, saying, as he swung Lito back to the deck and fixed his eyes upon her, "You see of what I am capable; are you resigned to your fate, Miranda?"

The act, the look, the name reassured Rosamond; her face brightened and she gave him a confiding glance which would have surprised Tempest had his threat been made in earnest.

"Yes, I do not fear you now, for I remember that brave men are not cruel. I trust you because I know you are too honest to steal a poor little girl, and I am sure that your love for Lito will make you kind to me."

"Well for you that you submit; if you had opposed me I think I should have kept you, for I never yield to another. You took it so seriously I wanted to try your mettle. What
would you have done had I persisted in stealing the 'poor little girl'?

"Gone overboard; I never yield to injustice if I can help it," and Rosamond's resolute mouth and flashing eyes proved the truth of her words. Tempest's face betrayed redoubled admiration as he said with his emphatic nod, "I think you would. Now we will enjoy ourselves and go back by moonlight. No one will be anxious about you at home and you have no neighbors to gossip over our improprieties."

For an hour Rosamond paced up and down the deck reveling in the breezy motion of the boat, the delicious sense of freedom which possessed her, the atmosphere of romance which surrounded her. Tempest lounged beside her, watching her beautiful face, listening to her happy voice, and enjoying her innocent companionship with the relish of a man eager for novelty and skillful in the art of playing on that delicate instrument, a woman's heart. When she wearied of walking, he placed her in a nest of cushions under the awning, wrapped her in a soft silken cloak (at the appearance of which she wondered much but said nothing) and sitting by her beguiled the twilight by telling the tales girls love, while Lito up aloft sang song after song in his clear, boyish voice. Slowly the moon rose, bathing sea and sky in her magical splendor, and slowly the Circe floated homeward along that shining path.

The air was balmy, the heavens clear, the ocean beautiful after its wild unrest, and Rosamond felt like one in an enchanted dream as she lay there conscious of an intense desire never to awake but to go floating on forever. All too soon the moonlight voyage ended and the girl reluctantly rose to go back to the dreary life which now seemed doubly dreary.

"Good-bye, Lito; I wish you could stay and be my little friend, for I need one very much," she said as the boy followed her with wistful eyes.
“Good night, not good-bye, we shall see you soon again I well know,” he answered, kissing her hand in his pretty for- eign fashion with a last “Addio, bella Rosa.”

As her foot touched the shore, Rosamond sighed and cast a lingering look behind.

“Are you tired?” asked Tempest very gently.

“Not tired but sad because I’ve been so happy and now it is all over.”

He made no reply and they walked a moment in silence, then Rosamond broke out with sudden energy, “Mr. Tem- pest, you know a good deal of the world and you take a little interest in me perhaps for Grandfather’s sake, so I will ven- ture to ask you what I can do to earn my bread in peace and freedom when I can bear this dreadful life no longer?”

“Turn governess and drudge your youth away as most indigent gentlewomen do,” was the brief reply.

“I don’t know enough and am too young, I think.”

“Be an actress, that’s a free life enough.”

“I’ve no talent and no money to start with if I had.”

“You can stitch your health and spirits into ‘bands and gussets and seams’ as a needlewoman. How does that suit?”

“Not at all, I hate sewing and know very little about it.”

“Then marry some rich old man who will let you have your own way in everything and die by the time you are tired of it.”

“A rich man wouldn’t care for a poor girl like me and I should not like money without love.”

“Bewitch a young man and let him make an idol of you—for a time,” he added under his breath.

“I don’t know any,” she said in a tone of artless regret that made the listener smile.

“You might be a companion; I think you’d make a charm- ing one for some people.”
"I like that, and will gladly try it if I can find anyone who wants me. Don't you know of anybody who would have me?"
"I know a dozen people who would take you in a moment, but you wouldn't like them."
"Why not?"
"Too gay and too free even for you," and Tempest laughed.
"Don't do that, but tell me what you mean," said the girl, peering up at his face as she spoke, half impatiently, half pleadingly. "You look as if you had some plan in your head yet would not tell it. You need not be afraid if it is humble work, I'll do anything to get out of my prison."
"Anything?" He looked at her keenly.
"Yes, I mean what I say. Now will you tell me your plan?"
"Not yet; I have one, but must prove its practicability before I propose it. Wait a little longer, you impatient bird, and do not try to fly too soon."

Something in his tone made the girl draw nearer and say confidingly, "I knew you'd help me, you are so kind and know so much. When I saw you standing in the doorway last night I was glad and welcomed you as the captive ladies used to welcome the brave knights who came to free them. You will try to free me, won't you?"

"I'll think of it. Good night, little Rose."

They stood in the old porch now; he took her hand as he spoke and bent on her a look that made her heart beat, for the powerful hand pressed hers, the fine eyes were full of pity for her loneliness and the deep voice made her name doubly sweet. The moon shone full upon him, but his hat brim hid the sinister scar and as she glanced shyly at him Rosamond thought this bronzed face the comeliest and kindliest she had ever seen. In her impetuous way she said, warmly, gratefully, "Thank you very much for this day's pleasure and your
promise to help me. I wish I could do something to show how grateful I am, but there will be no time."

"Why not?" he asked suddenly.

"Because you go so soon; at least you said you must."

He watched the innocent face an instant, then said almost sternly as if to himself, "Yes I must. Addio, bella Rosa," and bending his head he imitated the boy's act as well as his words.

"Good night, good night!" cried the girl, and lingered till he disappeared, leaving her with a kiss on her hand, a soft name in her ear, a happy memory at her heart and on her lips the eager, longing question, "Will he go or will he stay?"
He stayed; not for a day but for a month; and for Rosamond that month was a long holiday. Autumn seemed to change to summer, her dreary life grew full of interest and delight and her future shone before her, for the hero of her girl's fancy had become a living man and she had found her heart at last. As Tempest had said, there were no neighbours to gossip, for there was no other house upon the Island, and no friend ever came to watch over or warn the girl of what she was too ignorant and innocent to know herself.

Many another voyage did the Circe take her, and each time she returned with increased reluctance, for soon the yacht seemed more like home than the prison on the cliff. Often the three roamed away into the wood, or spent hours among the caves along the shore. When storms forbade these pleasant wanderings, they sat in the little room beguiling the time with music, books and conversation. Or they strolled about the great, solitary house, filling it with laughter and gay voices, for Lito followed Tempest like a shadow and soon loved
Women Writers – Novels - 395

32  A Long Fatal Love Chase

Rosamond with boyish devotion. All day they were happy, but when evening came the old man claimed his guest and Tempest seldom denied him, though the girl's eyes silently besought him to remain and Lito openly lamented, for neither of the young ones were admitted and they found the hours very long without "the Master."

"What is it that they do? They do not talk I know, for one evening as I passed I could not resist stopping an instant because the room was so still, though they were there. I waited several minutes, but heard not a sound except Mr. Tempest's laugh once and an odd chink as of silver or glasses. I must find out." Rosamond said this one evening as she and Lito were waiting for Tempest, who had gone to the mainland for a day as he often did. They were in the drawing room, which the girl had tried to make habitable with a cheery fire in the great chimney place, the few pictures she owned, and some ancient furniture covered with faded damask. The two were walking up and down in the twilight talking confidentially, for the boy had much endeared himself to the girl by his affection and the happiness he found in her society.

"You never will unless you peep and that you are too honorable to do," said Lito, feeling proud to have her on his arm.

"I shall ask Mr. Tempest."

"He will not answer and he will be angry."

"I'll make him answer and I should like to see him angry."

"Ah, you'd not say that if you had ever seen one of his rages. He is terrible then."

"How does he look?"

"Like that." The boy pointed to the face of Mephistopheles, which looked singularly menacing as the fitful firelight played over it.

"Yes, I can fancy that, but it won't frighten me and I shall ask him."
Before the boy could answer the clang of the great door startled them.

"Hark, he is come! I hear his step in the hall. Quick, let us be dancing or he will know that we have been talking of him."

Catching her round the waist he whirled her away in the waltz he had taught, for he made an excellent little cavalier, being nearly as tall as she and an adept in the graceful pastime. As they circled round the room they saw Tempest enter noiselessly and seat himself on the couch by the fire where he leaned watching them till they paused. Lito, being rather conscience-stricken, affected to be absorbed in settling the loose velvet jacket which was the most picturesque part of his costume, but Rosamond, who knew no fear, went straight to Tempest with her question ready on her tongue.

"You told me to ask for anything I wished, may I now?"

"Well, what is it, little Eve?" He motioned her to take her usual place beside him. She did so looking very gay and lovely with the glow of exercise in her cheeks and a gleam of mischief in her eyes as she said persuasively, "Lito says you will be angry if I ask, I should rather like that so I'm going to venture. What do you and Grandpapa do every evening when you shut yourselves up and leave us dismayed alone?"

Still hovering in the background, Lito watched anxiously to see how this was received, and was much amazed when "the Master" merely laughed, and answered blandly, "We have discovered the philosophers' stone and we make gold."

"I'm not satisfied with that; tell me the truth, Mr. Tempest," she said imperiously, for now she sometimes ruled.

"It is so, I assure you."

"Then let me come and see you do it."

"The old gentleman will object to it."

"Not if you present our petition."

"Do you think I have such power over him?"
A Long Fatal Love Chase

"I know it. Please grant my wish and I'll grant anything you ask of me, if I can."

"Will you?"

"Yes, try me."

"Not now, wait till tomorrow."

"There is the bell, can we go up with you?"

"You can, persistent angel." He offered her his arm.

"Not without Lito, he wants to see also," she said.

"Do you, boy?"

"If the Master permits that I go, I am glad to see."

"Come then, I am in a good humor tonight and disposed to be gracious. I shall not forget your promise, Rose, but hold you to it. Will you gratify your curiosity on these terms?" he asked, pausing.

"Yes. Won't it be pleasant, Lito, to go in and stay with them all the evening instead of moping here alone?"

The boy did not answer, but followed with a troubled, curious face as Tempest led her away to the old man's room.

He was waiting in his easy chair; a shaded lamp burned on a small green-covered table on which lay cards and some pieces of gold. He looked up impatiently, but his face darkened as he saw that Tempest was not alone.

"Why do you bring those children here?" he demanded angrily.

"Because they wanted to come and I had a fancy to gratify them," was the cool reply.

"I shall not play if they remain."

"And I shall not play if they go."

For an instant the two men looked at each other and the children drew back alarmed at the fierce glance of the old man, the scornful sneer of the young one.

"Your play will be the worse for it, but I yield," said the old man, with a visible effort at meekness.

"You are wise to do so, for it's your last chance to make
any play, good or bad. Sit here, Rose, and enjoy yourself if you can.” Tempest drew a chair beside his own and sat down with a defiant air which made his host clench his thin hand and vent on the boy the wrath he dared not vent upon the master. “Don’t skulk behind my chair that you may telegraph the contents of my hand to my opponent, you young villain. Go opposite and play pranks if you dare. Rosamond, come here, I’ll have no flouting in my presence. Now, Phillip.”

Rosamond obeyed and the game began. What it was she did not know and dared not ask, but soon was absorbed in it as her quick eye followed the cards and gave her some clue to its mysteries. She felt that the players were both excitement, though neither spoke often or betrayed any emotion beyond an impatient gesture now and then. But their eyes were terrible, for there the passion showed itself. In the old man’s a rapacious expression glittered when he glanced at the gold which lay between them. In the young man’s was a cool, relentless purpose which nothing could thaw out or soften, and in both that concentrated look which only gamblers wear.

Game after game was played and Tempest always won, yet the old man always said sternly, “Go on, I’ll try again, fortune may favor me at last.” They did go on till late into the night and the young pair still sat there fascinated by the baleful spell which held the players, till Tempest threw down his cards with a triumphant smile and the one, emphatic word, “Mine!”

The old man sat silent with his eyes on the girl who was watching Tempest with evident satisfaction in his success. With an air of relief he said slowly, “Be it so. I’ve done my best, but the pupil outwits his master by the very tricks he taught him.”

“You will keep your word?” asked Tempest suddenly.

“Ay, we shall neither of us profit by the bargain and the devil will get his own in time. I have done my part. I leave the
rest to you, see that you keep your word regarding the one condition and trouble me no more about it. Take these children away. I'm tired."

"Very good, here is the paper; I shall settle the rest tomorrow. Come infants, the revel is over." Tempest went to the door, followed by Rosamond and the boy. But as the handle turned in his grasp the old man's voice arrested them. "Child, come here." Rosamond turned to see her grandfather stretching his hand toward her with an expression which amazed her as much as his altered voice. She went to him, he looked up into the blooming face with a troubled glance, drew it down to his and kissed it, saying in a broken tone which changed suddenly to its usual sharpness, "Good-bye, God bless you, my girl. Go, go!"

Dumb with astonishment she followed Tempest, who broke into a peal of laughter which completed her bewilderment.

"What does it mean? He never did so before. It quite frightens me. Don't laugh but speak," she said as they reached the drawing room and Tempest's eyes still danced with that uncanny merriment.

"He has lost heavily and that has affected his mind perhaps. Or he is touched with late remorse at his neglect now that he is about to lose you."

"Lose me! Am I going to die?" cried the girl.

"No, I hope not, but you are going away. I forgot to tell you I'd found a place for you as companion."

"Have you? Many thanks, but—" there Rosamond's voice failed her for the granted wish was no blessing now, since it took her from him.

"It's a middle-aged person who wants you to sing, read, talk and make yourself agreeable. Salary and the rest of it can be arranged when you meet tomorrow, for I want it to be settled before I go."
“Are you going?” All the light and color faded out of the girl’s face and she clasped her hands together with a gesture of despair.

Still looking indolently at the fire as if quite unconscious of her emotion Tempest went on, “Yes, we are off at noon. I’ve stayed too long, but now that you are happily provided for I must get the Circe into her winter berth as soon as possible. Shall you miss me, Rose?”

“Yes!” Only a word but there was a heartbreak in it.

“I think you will a little. You’ll come down for a last look at the yacht in the morning, won’t you?”

“I’ll come.”

He rose and strolled away to the picture which hung opposite the long mirror. Looking up at it, a dark smile passed over his face and he said low to himself, with a glance over his shoulder at the girl’s drooping figure and pallid face, “Poor little Margaret, no hope for you when Faust and Mephistopheles are one.” He came back, touched her bent head with a caress, and said kindly, “I’m going now, you are tired and so is the boy. Come down early and we will talk over everything before I go.”

He pressed her passive hand. Lito, half dead with sleep, whispered a kind “Good night,” and she was left alone to lie on the desolate little couch all night long, weeping the bitter tears that aged her more than years.

She did go early, looking so wan and weary that her little friend cried out when she appeared, and Tempest needed no confessions to assure him of her love. The anchor was up and only a hawser held the Circe, which seemed eager to be gone. All was ready, and as the girl looked her last, traitorous tears dimmed her eyes; Tempest saw them and looked well pleased but offered no consolation.

“Come into the saloon and let me tell you about the place. Time is going and that must be settled.”
Listlessly she followed, too wretched to be curious, and sitting where he placed her listened to his words with eyes that saw nothing but the tall figure pacing to and fro before her, ears that heard only those sad words, "I am going," and a heart that ached as only young hearts can.

"This person is going abroad and you are to accompany the party. You will like that," he said as he walked.

"I'll try to." She stifled a sob before she could speak.

"Your duties will be very light and you can demand any salary you choose. Odd, isn't it?"

"Rather." She had hardly heard the question.

"The person is hard to please, but you will suit exactly and I think you will be happy."

"I hope I may," and she pressed her hands together in mute despair.

"When can you go?"

"Any moment, after you are gone." The meek voice broke there and hiding her face in her hands, Rosamond tried in vain to control the passion of grief which overwhelmed her.

"Nay, don't be tragical, my child. You asked me to find a home for you and now you look at me as reproachfully as if I had proposed some hateful scheme."

"No, no, forgive me, I'll be good and grateful, indeed I will!" And, choking back her sobs, the poor girl tried to smile upon him as he stood beside her with a curiously excited look on his usually impassive face.

"You do not ask where your new home is to be; have you no wish to know?" he asked abruptly, being satisfied.

"Yes, tell me," but there was no curiosity in her tone.

"It is here."

All the coldness was gone from his voice, the calmness from his manner as with a sudden gesture he gathered her into his arms and held her fast, saying so tenderly she could not doubt an instant, "My little Rose, did you think I would
leave you? I only waited to be sure you loved me and to win the old man's consent. I know this tender heart is mine and I have bought this little hand by its weight in gold. Look up, my darling, and begin your pleasant work at once, for you are my companion now. Will you have Phillip Tempest for your master, sweetheart?"

"I will! I will! Oh what have I ever done to be so happy, so beloved?" and Rosamond forgot her tears, her heartache, her despair and clung there radiant with the bliss which comes but once in a lifetime.

Seating himself, Tempest drew her down beside him and when her first glad excitement was a little calmed, amused himself by answering the questions she poured out, often pausing to caress the lovely head that leaned upon his breast with the confiding abandon of a child.

"What did you mean by saying you had bought my hand?" She looked at it with a charming air of bewilderment.

He took it in his own, and drawing from his pocket a circlet of diamonds smilingly fettered one slender finger as if to claim the hand, perhaps also to soften the hard truth, for he said slowly as she watched the glittering ring with girlish pleasure, "Your grandfather, little Rose, was once a skillful gambler, for having spent two fortunes he made another by dice and cards. Riotous living brought ruin and sickness and now in his old age he is helpless and poor. You may never inherit the fortune of your Aunt, a young and healthful woman, and he is tired of waiting. He told me he was just beginning to think of disposing of his one valuable possession, yourself, when I came. I loved you, I wanted you and this saved him time, expense and trouble, for I am rich and thought no price too high for such a companion."

"Did you play for me?" suddenly asked the girl, with a frown of shame and pain.

"Yes, he would have it so. It began in jest, you see, but the
old appetite awoke in him and while I wooed you I amused him with his favorite pastime. I excel him now and he lost heavily; this angered him and when he said he could never pay me for he had staked and lost all he possessed, I answered half in jest, "Stake Rose and if I win I'll forgive the debt." He took me in earnest, yet as the game went on he seemed to dread losing you and a strange touch of remorse or cupidity came over him. I played with all my heart and won, forgave the debt and added a gift which will keep him above want if he plays no more. That is the truth, forget it and be happy, dear."

"Then you bought me?" A shadow fell on the girl's happy face.

"I ransomed you as knights did captive damsels in the romances you love, and now shall you leave the lonely island, the stern wizard and the sad life behind you forever." So stated the ungracious fact grew bearable, for the master was a lover and the slave an inexperienced, tenderhearted girl.

Rosamond sat silently recalling many things, among them the words she had heard spoken between the two men the night before, and when she spoke it was to ask curiously, "What was the condition which Grandfather bade you remember?"

"You recollect that, do you? Wait a little, I've some questions to ask you first. The night I came you said to me as we sat talking by the fire, 'Everyone has a right to happiness and sooner or later I will have it.' Are you happy now?"

"Supremely happy." Her face shone with the intense joy which filled her innocent heart.

"Good; do you remember saying also, that you were willing to pay a high price for it?"

"Yes, and I am willing!"

"One more question and then I'll answer you. Another
old appetite awoke in him and while I wooed you I amused
him with his favorite pastime. I excel him now and he lost
heavily; this angered him and when he said he could never pay
me for he had staked and lost all he possessed, I answered half
in jest, "Stake Rose and if I win I'll forgive the debt." He
took me in earnest, yet as the game went on he seemed to
dread losing you and a strange touch of remorse or cupididy
came over him. I played with all my heart and won, forgave
the debt and added a gift which will keep him above want if
he plays no more. That is the truth, forget it and be happy,
dear."

"Then you bought me?" A shadow fell on the girl's happy
face.

"I ransomed you as knights did captive damsels in the rom-
ances you love, and now shall you leave the lonely island,
the stern wizard and the sad life behind you forever." So
stated the ungracious fact grew bearable, for the master was a
lover and the slave an inexperienced, tenderhearted girl.

Rosamond sat silently recalling many things, among them
the words she had heard spoken between the two men the
night before, and when she spoke it was to ask curiously,
"What was the condition which Grandfather bade you re-
member?"

"You recollect that, do you? Wait a little, I've some ques-
tions to ask you first. The night I came you said to me as we
sat talking by the fire, 'Everyone has a right to happiness and
sooner or later I will have it.' Are you happy now?"

"Supremely happy." Her face shone with the intense joy
which filled her innocent heart.

"Good; do you remember saying also, that you were will-
ing to pay a high price for it?"

"Yes, and I am willing!"

"One more question and then I'll answer you. Another
"The thing you said was this, 'Law and custom I know little of, public opinion I despise, shame and fear I defy.' Now prove it.

"I will, what must I do?"

"You will soon see. The condition upon which I was to save you was that I should marry you."

"Is that so terrible?" Rosamond turned her blushing face to him with eyes full of soft surprise.

"Yes, to me; I hate bonds of any kind; I want you to go with me as my little friend whom I love and who loves me. Pay this price for your happiness and defy public opinion as I do. Will you not, my darling?"

Voice and eyes and tender lips pleaded for him and he thought that she would yield. But the instinct of a maidenly heart rose up to oppose him in spite of love and sorrow. Innocent and ignorant as she was, the books she had read gave her some hints of the existence of sin and her woman's nature warned her when no other voice was near to save. Amazement, terror, shame and grief swept over her face and left it pale but steady as she shrunk away and stood up before him, saying brokenly, "No, I will not! Let me go home, you do not love me, and I must not stay."

"You promised to grant me anything—" he began, but she would not listen and, as if fearing her own resolution, she retreated to the door.

"Go then," he cried, "go and forget me if you can."

"I will go, but I never can forget you," and with one loving, despairing look she fled up the cabin stairs.

"Too late, too late!" called a mocking voice after her, and in a moment she saw that it spoke truly, for with all sail set the Circe was flying out to sea, and this time there was no return for Rosamond.
Rose in Bloom

"More than a year since you stole me like a pirate, Phillip. How short the time seems, and how happy!"

"The shortest and the happiest year I've spent since I was a boy. You are a wonderfully accomplished companion, Rose, to keep me contented so long."

"And you a kind master not to tire of me sooner. You are not tired of me yet are you, Phillip?"

"No, nor ever shall be I think. What the charm is I cannot tell, unless it be that for the first time in my life I really love."

Few persons looking at his beautiful companion would have failed to see where the charm lay, or have wondered that after many counterfeits real love had come at last. They were together on the terrace of Valrosa. Tempest, cigar in hand, lounged on the wide steps which swept down to the garden, looking up at Rosamond, who leaned on the carved balustrade gazing with delight upon a scene of beauty in which she was unconsciously the fairest and most striking object. A mile away the blue Mediterranean rolled up to meet the curving
shore, along which lay the white-walled city with its gilded domes, its feathery palms and lovely villas. Valrosa was the loveliest of all; in truth “a nest of roses,” blooming as luxuriantly through January in that climate of perpetual summer. Roses overhung the archway and thrust their sweet faces through the bars of the great gates, luring all passers-by to stop and long to enter there. Roses fringed the avenue that wound up through orange and lemon groves to the broad terrace that ran round the villa. Roses covered its walls with bloom, draped every cornice, climbed every pillar and ran riot over the balustrade. Every green nook where seats invited one to sit and dream was a mass of flowers; every cool grotto had its white nymph smiling out from a veil of blossoms; every fountain was fringed about with beauty, and nowhere could the eye fall without resting on some fair and fragrant sisterhood.

A fit queen for that nest of roses was the human flower that adorned it, for a year of love and luxury had ripened her youthful beauty into perfect bloom. Graceful by nature, art had little to do for her, and, with a woman’s aptitude, she had acquired the polish which society alone can give. Frank and artless as ever, yet less free in speech, less demonstrative in act; full of power and passion, yet still half unconscious of her gifts; beautiful with the beauty that wins the heart as well as satisfies the eye, yet unmarred by vanity or affectation. She now showed fair promise of becoming all that a deep and tender heart, an ardent soul and a gracious nature could make her, once life had tamed and taught her more.

In the stately figure standing on the terrace one would have scarcely recognized the little girl who first met Tempest’s eyes. The simple frock was replaced by costly silks that swept rustling about her, the loose curls were gathered up with a golden comb, the slender brown hands were snow white now
and shone with rarer jewels than the diamond ring; the scarf that trailed behind her was of the richest cashmere, and the lace which ornamented her whole dress was worth a small fortune in itself. An exquisite taste was shown in her costume, and the careless grace with which she wore it proved how slight a hold the feminine passion for finery had taken upon her. As she leaned there with one hand lying on a cushion of thornless verdure, the other idly gathering cluster after cluster of tiny cream-colored roses, her eyes wandered with unwearied delight over the green wilderness below, and when she spoke a smile of genuine happiness touched her lips.

As he answered her, Tempest had looked up with a glance that took in every charm of expression, tint and outline, and in his face was a warmer, tenderer admiration than any woman had ever seen there before.

"I am so proud to have you say that; to think that I had power to make you risk your liberty, and after a year of wedded life to hear you own that you are happy."

She stooped and laid a caressing hand on the dark head below her, but Tempest turned away and with a half-laugh replied in the tone of one not quite at ease, "I risked my liberty because you left me no other choice. You remember I did my best to keep it and win love also, but that failed as I feared it would, and you had your way. I never shall forget how superbly defiant and determined you looked as you stood ready to dash into the sea when you found I had sailed away with you that second time. I know you would have done it had I not promised to atone by a speedy marriage and produced the Reverend at once, marrying you in less than an hour."

"I should, Phillip, and I think I never could forgive you that insult if you had not proved your better knowledge of me by calling up the minister whom you had prepared in case I was rebellious. Let us forget it; I am your wife now and I want to respect as well as love my husband."
With a sudden impulse Tempest kissed the soft hand that touched his lips when he would have spoken, and thought bitterly within himself, "I wish to heaven I had found this girl ten years ago and saved myself from treachery for which I never can atone."

"Why do you sigh, Phillip? What are you thinking of?" asked Rosamond as he sat with his head on his hand looking down at the golden-green lizards playing on the warm stones below.

"I was thinking what a curious thing love is; only a sentiment, and yet it has power to make fools of men and slaves of women."

"It never will have power to make a slave of me." Rosamond lifted her handsome head with the defiant air of some wild, free thing, indignant at the thought of bonds.

"I think it would, Rose. If you love me as you say you do, would you not prove it by doing anything for me, making any sacrifice at my bidding, and defending me against the world if there was need of it?"

"I would do anything that was right, make any sacrifice except of principle, and defend you against anyone who wrongfully accused you."

"Where did you get your ideas of right and principle and all the rest of it? I never taught you that, nor did the old man. Perhaps it's instinct; women are often kept safe and made wise by that 'wonderful thing,' as Shakespeare calls it. Suppose I had committed some terrible crime? Would you stand by me? I merely ask to see how far your principle will carry you."

"Yes, if you repented of it I'd cling to you and bear the disgrace for your sake."

"Suppose it was a crime of a peculiarly black and damnable nature, the consequences of which would fall upon you,
making it wrong for you to cling to me. Would you hate and desert me?"

"No, I would love you and leave you."

"I doubt it. Take another case. Suppose you discovered that I did not love you and wished to be free. How then?"

"I'd try to win your heart back and be faithful to the end, as I promised when I married you."

"Suppose I broke away and left you, or made it impossible for you to stay. That I was base and false; in every way unworthy of your love, and it was clearly right for you to go, what would you do then?"

"Go away and—"

He interrupted with a triumphant laugh, "Die as heroines always do, tender slaves as they are."

"No, live and forget you," was the unexpected reply.

"Do you think that possible if you still loved me?"

"Everything is possible to a strong will. If it was right to cease loving you, I'd do it if I spent my whole life in the task." She clenched her hand with a resolute gesture.

"By my soul I think you would! That is why I don't tire of you, Rose, you are submissive to a certain point but beyond that firm as rock. Could I break your will if I tried? I've broken many." He got up and stood beside her, looking as if he longed to make the attempt. She eyed him intently, but smiled as she shook her head with an air of conscious power.

"You might kill me but not bend me if I had once decided to oppose you. Don't try any more tests, Phillip, for you would fail in spite of past success. They are dangerous for both of us."

"I'll wait a little and keep that amusement for the time when others lose their charm."

"You are in a singular mood today. What is amiss?" she asked, leaning on his arm.
“Nothing, I’m only prying into your heart as you pry into the heart of that poor rose. I’m curious but I don’t tire of my investigations as soon as you,” and he pointed to the flower, whose petals whitened the stones at her feet. She looked at it a moment, then fixed her eyes on him with a strange expression as a foreboding chill passed over her.

“Promise me one thing, Phillip.” She laid a hand on either shoulder as if to enforce her words.

“Anything, sweetheart, promises are easily made,” he answered, smiling into the lovely, serious face before him, adding within himself—“and broken.”

“You married me upon an impulse, suddenly and without much thought; perhaps I should say from pity if I did not have daily proofs that you love me. I am young and ignorant; you might easily weary of me and regret your hasty act. But do not deceive me; when you are tired of me tell me frankly and let me go away till you want me again. I never wish to be a burden, never will claim anything, or reproach you for what was a kind though perhaps an unwise act. Promise me this and I shall be happy.”

“I promise.”

“Thanks; now come for a drive, the sea breeze is rising and sunset along the shore is my favorite hour.”

“Mine also, not because of breeze or sunset, but because the Promenade is crowded then and I am proud to show my handsome wife. You know you are acknowledged to be the most beautiful woman at Nice this year?”

“I know one foolish man thinks so. There’s a carriage coming up the avenue, we must wait a little. It is Grammont, I think.”

Rosamond paused with one hand over her eyes and looked across the orange orchard toward the lodge gates, which had just admitted a carriage containing two gentlemen. Tempest
looked also and after a careless glance strolled down the steps to meet his guests, saying morosely as he went, "Who the deuce has Grammont got with him? An Englishman, I know by the veil on his hat and the white coat. I told him not to bring any of the stupid, conceited, gossiping fellows here, I hate the whole tribe."

"Behold me, my Phillipe! I come with news of Ristori,* and I present a friend who yearns to offer his homage to Madame," cried the young Frenchman, skipping from the carriage the instant it stopped.

The other gentleman leisurely followed, throwing back the gauze veil which the dazzling sun and dust make a necessary part of everyone’s walking costume at Nice. Before Grammont could introduce him, Tempest fell back a step with a startled face and the inhospitable greeting, "Willoughby! What the devil brings you here?"

"Upon my word, that’s a cordial welcome. Why man, I came to see you for old acquaintance sake and to get a peep at your charming wife, as Grammont says," returned the other good-naturedly.

"I beg pardon, you took me by surprise. Glad to see you," and with a face which belied his words Tempest offered his hand, glancing up as he did so in hopes that Rosamond had gone in. She had not, but was leaning over the flowery parapet with the evening glow upon her beautiful, expectant face. Tempest set his teeth and the instant Willoughby released his hand after a true English grasp and shake, he said quickly, "Step on, Grammont, and give Madame your news, we’ll follow."

*Adelaide Ristori (1822–1906) was a leading tragedienne of the European stage. One of her greatest roles was Medea, which Louisa May Alcott saw her perform in Nice in April 1866.—Ed.
Up pranced the agile Frenchman, hat in hand, and for ten minutes poured forth news, gossip, compliments and questions with the charming ease and spirit of his gallant nation. People always loitered up the wide steps that led from the drive to the terrace, for the enchanting spot drew praises from the least enthusiastic and raptures from the appreciative, therefore the delay of the gentlemen caused no surprise to those who waited for them. The change in Tempest's face caught Rosamond's eye the instant he appeared, but there was no time for questions as he spoke at once.

"Rosamond, this is an old friend from England; Willoughby, my wife."

The stranger bowed with a curiously confused air, but Englishmen are proverbially bashful and awkward among ladies, so Rosamond thought nothing of it, and recovering himself in a moment he plunged into a lively conversation, glancing often at his hostess with admiration and curiosity very visibly expressed in his face. Grammont dragged Tempest away much against his will to look at the horses and Willoughby profited by their absence.

"I had not heard of Tempest for an age till, by the merest chance, I learned that he was here, and came up at once to see him, though I had no idea he was so charmingly situated." The stout Englishman tried to execute a complimentary French bow with indifferent success.

"You are very kind. Our marriage was so sudden and we sailed so soon that no one knew of it, I believe. Since then we have been moving about the Continent till we came here in the autumn."

"You will not be able to tear yourself from this little Paradise for a long while, I fancy, if the climate permits you to remain," said Willoughby after a long pause and an odd look.

"It will not, the heat is intolerable by June. We shall take
to the Circe in May and sail away again to some new Paradise. Phillip seems to have a gift for finding them."

"And angels to inhabit them," added Willoughby with a glance that annoyed Rosamond though she was accustomed to compliments even more direct than this. She did not like the man and chid herself for the causeless dislike, trying to be gracious, yet ill at ease.

"You are from the north of England, I think Tempest mentioned?"

"No, from the east; Hythe was my home."

"Ah, now I understand; I've heard of the beautiful Miss St. John of Hythe but never dreamed that Tempest had won her. He was always a fortunate fellow."

"Not in this case, for he did not win the beautiful Miss St. John; he contented himself with poor Rosamond Vivian. Do you see my pretty little page?" Anxious to turn the conversation, she pointed to Lito, who was watering a tame antelope at the fountain below.

"By Jove! He's the very image of—I beg pardon, yes, a pretty boy indeed. Some protégé of Tempest's, I take it?"

Again Willoughby looked confused and half bewildered, yet quite unable to restrain his curiosity, for after a moment's pause he added, "How old is the lad, Mrs. Tempest?"

"Nearly fourteen, I think."

"Ah, yes, exactly," and having indulged in a long meditative stare at the boy he asked another question again with the odd smile.

"Where did Tempest find him, if I may ask?"

"In Greece, when he was there some years ago. He is a faithful little friend of mine and I am very fond of him. You began to say he resembled someone, may I ask whom? I've often tried to think but cannot, and fancy it must be some picture I've seen."

As she put her question, Willoughby looked up quickly,
colored to the roots of his blond hair and seemed much disturbed; but as she spoke of the picture an expression of relief came into his face, and he replied eagerly, "You are right, it is the Piping Fawn you have in your mind. The boy is very like it."

"But I never saw it," said Rosamond, with her eyes still on Lito.

"Then it's Ganymede or one of the antique statues. I had a dozen floating in my fancy when I spoke of the likeness."

"Yes, I daresay it is. I shall find out some day."

A look of pain and pity made Willoughby's pale eyes almost tender for a moment as he looked at the sweet, placid face beside him. His blunt manner softened, his tone grew respectful, and no more compliments left his lips. Something in the quiet assiduity with which he gathered up her parasol and scarf, took the little basket of embroidery which stood near, and offered her his arm to lead her in when Tempest beckoned, pleased Rosamond, and she began to think the odd Englishman more endurable.

"I am on my way to England. Can I serve you as bearer of dispatches to anyone at home, Mrs. Tempest?" said Willoughby, as they sat in the breezy salon while Lito served them with fruit and wine.

"Thanks. Do you ever go to Hythe?" she asked wistfully.

"Often"—which was a friendly falsehood, by the way.

"Perhaps then you would kindly take a letter to my grandfather and post it safely in London. I have written several times but receive no reply and fear he has never got my letters, foreign mails are so irregular."

"I will do so with pleasure and as soon as possible. It is singular that all the letters should be lost." As he spoke, Willoughby glanced at Tempest, who stood apart apparently intent on something Grammont was saying.

"The cholera still continues in Paris in spite of the season;
many deaths a day Dr. Montenari tells me, though it is kept as quiet as possible lest the panic spread. I tell Willoughby not to stop there on his way home, he is just the subject for it. I have an ardent friendship for him, but I confide to you that he is a gourmand as well as an invalid and the cholera loves such victims."

"He does not look ill, what is his malady?" asked Tempest, in the same low tone which the Frenchman used.

"Disease of the heart; it is hereditary he tells me. He is much better for his tour, but sooner or later he must drop away as his father and brothers have done. A sudden shock, a violent illness, or any intense excitement would kill him he tells me, so he resigns himself to indolence, grows stout, and supports his affliction with heroism."

"Sensible fellow. How long does he stay, Grammont?"

"Only a day or two, which gives me no time to do the honors, for my wife is as yet too feeble to permit long absences on my part. Can you give him a day? He is anxious to see the lions but, pardon that I say it, like most Englishmen very slow to make friends when among strangers and so finds it dull."

"I'll give him a day tomorrow; where is he staying?" said Tempest, with unexpected cordiality.

"At the Hotel des Anglais. Too noisy and fashionable for him, he says. He may decide to remain long, can you recommend a good, quiet hotel? You are an habitué and should know the best?"

"The Hotel de Ponchette is a plain, comfortable house and near the old town, which to me is far more interesting than the new."

"Ah, but not so airy and healthful. The drains are abominable, and in the autumn, when cholera was here, seven persons died in that hotel, they say."
"All gossip, my dear Grammont, and if it was not I could match your story with one of the Hotel de Lanure where you are; a dozen died there and the house was shut up for a time. These things are kept quiet because it is for the interest of the people to draw crowds here during the winter, which is their harvest time. Dr. Montenari could tell you of cases now, almost daily down in the city and the hospital. Say nothing about it, but take care of yourself and keep out of the sun, it is unusually hot this year. Heat, ice, fruit and fatigue I warn you against."

"I will remember; my poor Adèle would fly at once if she knew it, and the air is doing wonders for her so I shall be on my guard. Come, Willoughby, we must tear ourselves away if we would get back in time for dinner. I have good news for you; this amiable Tempest desires to devote a day to you and will show you in that time more than I could in a week, for he knows every nook and charming sight like a professional guide."

The Englishman looked surprised but grateful, and with thanks and compliments the guests departed. Their host accompanied them to the carriage and as they drove away Willoughby said maliciously, with a glance at Lito, "He is very like Ganymede, as I told your wife when she asked me who he reminded her of. By the way, who was the father of Ganymede, Tempest? My mythology is defective."

"I'll look up the story and tell you tomorrow," answered Tempest, with a look which caused Grammont to hasten their departure by a touch of the whip.

"I like that Englishman after all, he is so friendly," said Rosamond as Tempest joined her.

"Very friendly," he answered, adding under his breath an emphatic, "Damn him!"
The next morning when Rosamond was in the garden with her pets, Tempest went up to his dressing room and, closing the door with unusual care, opened a large, silver-mounted box which always stood in his room on shore, his stateroom when at sea. It was a medicine chest, and, selecting one of the little bottles, he poured a few drops of its contents into a glass of water and mixed it carefully, saying, as he swallowed the draught, "Here's to your health, Willoughby."

Pulling out a drawer in the box, he examined several small packets, reading the labels and directions on each with care. One he opened, and taking a pinch or two of the fine, aromatic powder which it contained he sprinkled it in his hair and among his clothes, smiling a wicked smile as he did so. Replacing bottle and packet he relocked the box, prepared himself for the day's expedition and went to bid Rosamond good-bye.

"I may not be back till late, do not wait up for me, Rose."
You look forlorn; silly child, don’t you know that it is well to part occasionally that we may have the pleasure of meeting and so not weary of one another? No, Lito, you are not to go with me today, I want Baptiste. Madame will need you when she drives; adieu.”

Baptiste was Tempest’s own man; he passed for a Frenchman but was an Algerian by birth, a slender, swarthy, fiery-eyed young man who looked as much out of place in the sober livery of a servant as an Arab of the desert would have done. For some reason he served his master with the blind fidelity and unquestioning obedience of a dog, though cold, reticent and haughty to everyone else. None of the servants liked him, Rosamond had an unconquerable prejudice against him and Lito hated him intensely. With this man sitting in the little seat behind him motionless as a statue, Tempest drove away to give Willoughby his day of pleasure.

“You are late, I was ready at the appointed time and have been waiting half an hour,” was the punctual Englishman’s first remark as Tempest drew up at the door of the Hotel des Anglais, which was all alive with the swarm of titled English who always haunt its splendid rooms.

“A thousand pardons. I stopped to book myself up a little so that we might economize time. We will take Villa Franca first, before it gets hot, because the glare from the sea, the sand and the rocks is blinding by noon. One of our vessels is wintering there and Captain Upshur, whom I met just now, begs we will go aboard and lunch; which is not an invitation to be refused if you care for capital wine and good company,” said Tempest.

Much mollified by the prospect Willoughby settled his overcoat, linen sun umbrella, blue veil and green glasses to his satisfaction and away they went. Tempest was in charming spirits, the day fine, the carriage luxuriously easy and the drive
indescribably beautiful, so that by the time they reached the picturesque little town on the hillside with its dusky olive orchards, its red-trousered troops about the fortress, and the ships riding at anchor in the bay, Willoughby was in an enthusiastic state of delight and ready for anything.

The company was good, the wine excellent, the lunch all that an epicure could desire, and the young officers were never tired of pressing upon Willoughby the iced claret and orange salad of which he partook so copiously that there was a general shout of merriment when he at last refused more on the plea that he was an invalid. It was well past noon when they got ashore, and the sun blazed down on sandy road, glittering sea and granite boulders with dazzling brilliancy.

“Let us go home and rest till it is cooler,” panted Willoughby behind his veil and goggles.

“Not yet, I'll take you to a charmingly cool place where you can rest and amuse yourself the while with some really wonderful Roman relics. It is close by and in a moment we shall turn into a shady road away from all this glare,” said Tempest, unconscious of heat or fatigue.

“Where are they?” asked Willoughby, interested at once, for relics were his delight.

“At Cimiez; there's a fine old Franciscan monastery there with some good pictures in the chapel, antique curiosities in the crypts and the ruins of a Roman amphitheater nearby. It's the pet lion of Nice and you will enjoy it. I've been so often the monks know me and welcome me, for a franc or two wins their hearts. Isn't this delicious?" and Tempest took off his hat as they whistled round a corner into a shadowy green road overhung by ilex and olive trees.

“It's a very imprudent thing to do, but I must follow your tempting example," and off came the other hat as Willoughby resigned himself to the grateful coolness of the spot.
Driving slowly, they began to wind up a steep path between flax fields and orange orchards, with villas on either side and glimpses of the gray monastery far above. A sudden exclamation from Baptiste interrupted an interesting conversation and caused his master to pull up. The man sprang down, examined a wheel and with much gesticulation explained that an overturn would inevitably follow unless the damage was repaired, which might easily be done by applying to the smith nearby among the beeches yonder.

"Confound the wheel! Come, Willoughby, let us stroll leisurely on while it is set to rights instead of stopping here to be stared at," said Tempest impatiently, as a flock of black-eyed peasants began to collect with flowers and fruit to sell and petitions for money and offers of assistance. Willoughby assented and walked on, glad to escape the staring and the beggars. Tempest joined him after giving Baptiste directions to follow, adding in English which none of the bystanders understood, for Willoughby was out of hearing, "Leave the coat and don’t hurry."

Resuming the conversation, Tempest made it so absorbing that his friend forgot warmth and weariness and walked on faster and farther than he had dared to do for a long while. Failing breath and a warning pain in his side recalled the fact, and he insisted upon stopping for the carriage. It came before he had time to rest or cool and in a few moments they reached the monastery.

"Do the vaults first before other visitors arrive to interfere," advised Tempest, and wiping the drops from his forehead, Willoughby descended into the deathly damp and chilly crypts where no sun had shone for centuries. Unconscious of his danger and absorbed in the rare and curious relics, he pored over them for an hour to the great wonderment of the monk, his guide. Tempest soon tired of them and went
up to get the chapel and cemetery opened ready for his guest. Blue and shivering, Willoughby appeared at length and with a hasty examination of the pictures went out to bask in the sunshine, which shone warm and bright over the cemetery.

"Will Monsieur permit that I advise him to put on his overcoat if he has one here, and not sit still in the sun, it is dangerous after a chill," said the meek monk, observing that Monsieur still shivered and looked pale.

With thanks for the warning Willoughby sent for his coat, rejoicing that he had brought it. But Baptiste returned with a despairing countenance to report that it had been left at the smithy, and calling himself a beast and a villain offered to fly and bring it to Monsieur.

"The mischief is done, I think, so we'll waste no time in complaining or 'flying' anywhere. We will go, Tempest, and find the coat on the way. We'll leave the amphitheater for another day," said Willoughby good-naturedly, and with a generous fee to the monk they rolled rapidly down the winding road up which the cool sea breeze was blowing as the tide came in. The coat was found and put on and as warmth returned hunger began to hint that it was dinner time.

"I'm going to take you to an excellent hotel and give you a dinner in honor of the day. Grammont says you may decide to stay and don't like Hotel des Anglais, so this will serve as a trial of Hotel de Ponchette," said Tempest, and after driving through the dirtiest, narrowest and most squalid part of the city he came out upon a gay little square where stood the hotel, overlooking the sea.

"Wait an instant and I will see if we can dine here in private." Tempest went in, procured a room, inspected it, dropped the curtains over the back windows (that opened on a courtyard where kitchens, stables, fish houses and all manner of accumulated filth produced an atmosphere such as can
only be found in an Italian city), set several pastilles a light to banish the noisome odors that haunted it and ordered a charming dinner to be served near the front windows, before which a glorious prospect of sea and sky was spread. Then Willoughby was invited up to make a hearty meal on every delicacy which could be procured, no matter how unfit for an invalid. When he hesitated, Tempest ridiculed his prudence unmercifully and by raillery or example overcame his self-restraint. Wine flowed freely and when they rose from table the chill was replaced by fever and the poor gentleman was fitter for his bed than for the moonlight excursion Tempest proposed.

"Now a quiet drive to Castle Hill for the view and to cool our heads, and then we will go home to supper."

"I am desperately tired, Tempest; your energetic style of sightseeing is rather too much for me. However, as my time is short I'll make the most of it and leave as little as possible to less agreeable guides," and, quite unconscious that the evening air was particularly dangerous to invalids, Willoughby allowed Tempest to drive him away along the shore.

The view was glorious and they lingered long, but even when they descended they did not reach home without one more adventure which completed poor Willoughby's destruction. Coming to the Cathedral, they found it all alight and astir as if some festival was afoot.

"What is it, Magnico?" asked Tempest of a peasant whom he recognized in the crowd as they paused to let a train of nuns pass in.

"A funeral, Monsieur. Prince Passati died suddenly on his

*Although we tend to think of Nice (Nizza in Italian) as a French city, it was at this time owned by Sardinia, which claimed it after the fall of Napoleon in 1814. It was not restored to France until after 1860.—Ed.
way from Rome and desired to be buried in Nizza, his native city. It is superb; Monsieur should enter."

Tempest turned to ask Willoughby if he cared for it and saw before he spoke that the news had shocked him.

"I knew the Prince in Rome, he was my best friend. I will go in, not for the spectacle but as a mark of respect to his memory," he said briefly, with such honest grief in his face that Magnico pulled off his hat and Baptiste helped him out with unusual respect.

The church was packed and with the greatest difficulty they forced and bribed their way to a spot whence they could see the high altar and the glittering group before it. The dead man lay on a bier of flowers, his weeping family knelt around him, nuns and monks with lighted candles formed a barrier between them and the throng; priests went to and fro with holy water, fragrant censers and pious prayers; the great organ pealed solemnly and behind the golden screen a choir of voices chanted the Miserere for the dead. The heat was suffocating, the pressure of the crowd oppressive, the laments heartbreaking and the atmosphere indescribably horrible. Women fainted as they knelt and were passed out over the heads of the throng, men grew pale, and the most inquisitive stranger was soon satisfied. Even Tempest, hardy as he was, felt his temples begin to throb and his breath come heavily after half an hour of it. Willoughby forgot discomfort in grief for a time, but sudden dizziness roused him to the fact that he was half suffocated.

"Tempest, I must get out of this as quick as possible. I ought not to have come. For heaven's sake get me out!" he whispered anxiously as a fresh arrival of peasants caused a general movement toward the altar.

"I'm afraid it is impossible. Here's a poor girl quite gone and she'd be crushed underfoot but for my arm. Hold fast
to me. I'll do my best," answered Tempest. He did do his best, for leaving the girl to her fate he struggled toward the door, drawing his companion after him. But before he reached it, with a stifled cry of pain and a feeble clutch at his shoulder Willoughby fell against him quite unconscious. A look of grim satisfaction passed over Tempest's face as he caught him with one arm and fought his way out with the other. Fresh air and water from the fountain dashing in the Square soon restored Willoughby enough to whisper faintly, "Take me home," and home they took him with all speed.

"My dear fellow, I never shall forgive myself for letting you get into that pestilential place. How are you now? Can I do anything for you?" and Tempest bent over the exhausted man as he lay on his bed with an expression of solicitude that touched the other. Offering him his clammy hand, Willoughby said gratefully, "Nothing, thank you, I shall send my man for a doctor if I'm not better after an hour of quiet. You must be very tired, go and rest. You've done enough for me today."

"Don't say that, I'll gladly stay if I can be of use," said Tempest quickly as he laid the pale hand down.

"I need nothing but quiet. Go to your Rose, and Phillip, be kind to her; she is so young, so trusting; for your mother's sake be gentle with the poor girl."

The momentary softness vanished from Tempest's face and the sinister expression returned. Taking up his hat, he said in a friendly tone but with averted eyes, "No fear of that. I love her as I never loved a woman before. Now good night, Robert, sleep well and let me find you quite yourself in the morning. Don't call in any of the Italian doctors if you can get on without; they all bleed their patients half to death and you can't bear that, so I warn you."
to me, I’ll do my best,” answered Tempest. He did do his best, for leaving the girl to her fate he struggled toward the door, drawing his companion after him. But before he reached it, with a stifled cry of pain and a feeble clutch at his shoulder Willoughby fell against him quite unconscious. A look of grim satisfaction passed over Tempest’s face as he caught him with one arm and fought his way out with the other. Fresh air and water from the fountain dashing in the Square soon restored Willoughby enough to whisper faintly, “Take me home,” and home they took him with all speed.

“My dear fellow, I never shall forgive myself for letting you get into that pestilential place. How are you now? Can I do anything for you?” and Tempest bent over the exhausted man as he lay on his bed with an expression of solicitude that touched the other. Offering him his clammy hand, Willoughby said gratefully, “Nothing, thank you, I shall send my man for a doctor if I’m not better after an hour of quiet. You must be very tired, go and rest. You’ve done enough for me today.”

“Don’t say that, I’ll gladly stay if I can be of use,” said Tempest quickly as he laid the pale hand down.

“I need nothing but quiet. Go to your Rose, and Phillipp, be kind to her; she is so young, so trusting; for your mother’s sake be gentle with the poor girl.”

The momentary softness vanished from Tempest’s face and the sinister expression returned. Taking up his hat, he said in a friendly tone but with averted eyes, “No fear of that. I love her as I never loved a woman before. Now good night, Robert, sleep well and let me find you quite yourself in the morning. Don’t call in any of the Italian doctors if you can get on without; they all bleed their patients half to death and you can’t bear that, so I warn you.”
"I hope not; but why do you say such things, Phillip? You know I don't believe nor understand them."

"Bless your innocent heart. I never thought you did. Now and then I like to say boldly what others dare hardly think. You do know that I'm not a saint, don't you?"

"Yes, I cannot help that, for you are constantly telling me you are not," and Rosamond sighed as if some burden of regret oppressed her.

"Yet you love the sinner and—"

"But not the sin," she added quickly.

"Of course not, that will follow in time. I'm a bad fellow, my dear, and I give up the hope of ever being any better. Since I have had the nearest approach to an angel that humanity can produce for a companion I have cherished a foolish fancy that I might develop a conscience as well as a heart; but today I discover that I am worse than ever, and the crowning sin is that I'm not sorry for it."

"What have you done?" asked Rosamond, with the serious yet puzzled expression she always wore when he was in this mood.

"Nothing but devote myself to my friend, yet all the way home I've been telling myself that I'm a villain and it makes no impression upon me as you see." It certainly did not seem to, for he lay there smiling tranquilly as he watched the fragrant smoke curl upward, apparently with no regret of any kind to mar his luxurious repose.

"Perhaps remorse will come all at once when least expected, for atonement surely must be made here or hereafter," said Rosamond with softly warning voice.

"I doubt that. When children inherit the sins of their fathers it is not just that they should make the atonement. My father was a wild, wicked, handsome man, Dare-Devil Tempest they called him. Fortune, happy and lawless all his life. A lovely woman adored him till he broke her heart and when
her pride could bear no more she killed herself. I remember her and I hated my father most heartily. He disowned me and I roamed about the world a homeless lad till your grandfather met and took a fancy to me. My mother's fortune was mine so I never lacked the power to purchase pleasure and I got on capitally. My father died peacefully yet unrepentantly in his bed, cordially detested by everyone who knew him, and left me nothing but his evil nature. I simply live out my real self and I don't think I shall be called upon to atone for my sins, as they are his. I never told you that story before; now you will understand your husband better, Mrs. Tempest, and see how hopeless his redemption is."

"No, everything is possible with God. I do not give you up. I pity you, and love can work miracles, so I shall still hope and work." Her face was like the face of an angel as she laid a soft hand on that scarred forehead, as if in spite of everything she claimed him for her own in the firm faith that love would save him.

"If it is a human possibility you will do it, my Rose. But you do not know what I am, and there may come a time when you will cease to hope," he answered, looking at her with strange wistfulness, for no man is utterly without a desire for virtue.

At noon next day Tempest went to inquire for Willoughby, and met Dr. Montenari standing at the door of the chamber with an anxious face and a vinaigrette at his nostrils.

"How is he?" asked Tempest abruptly.

"Gone, sir, gone. Don't go in, it's cholera!" returned the doctor in a shrill whisper, drawing the newcomer away and sniffing nervously at his salts as he spoke.

"When? How? Did he leave no message? Good God, how sudden!" and drawing the doctor into an empty anteroom, Tempest dropped into a seat like one overcome with the shock.
"Calm yourself, my dear sir. I did my best for him, but I was not called till midnight and then it was too late. I don’t say I could have saved him; the state of his heart complicated the case, but I might have kept him. He spoke of you, and of your wife and some commission which he had failed to execute. He briefly directed his man regarding his affairs, and after hours of mortal suffering became mercifully unconscious and so died an hour ago. This sad occurrence is to be kept as quiet as possible out of regard for the fears of the many invalids now in the house. Heart disease may truly be said to have caused his death, for he spoke of the shock he received at hearing of the Prince’s demise. He will be removed at once and his man leaves for home tomorrow. I may depend on your silence, Mr. Tempest?"

“You may, Doctor; I shall never speak of it.” Nor did he.