

# More Pages from a Journal

Mark Rutherford

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Title: More Pages from a Journal

Author: Mark Rutherford

Release Date: September, 2004 [EBook #6404]  
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]  
[This file was first posted on December 6, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

**\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK, MORE PAGES FROM A JOURNAL \*\*\***

Transcribed from the 1910 Oxford University Press edition by David Price, email [ccx074@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:ccx074@coventry.ac.uk)

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### A BAD DREAM

Miss Toller, a lady about forty years old, kept a boarding-house, called Russell House, at Brighton, in a dull but genteel part of the town--so dull that even those fortunate inhabitants who were reputed to have resources in themselves were relieved by a walk to the shops or by a German band. Miss Toller could not afford to be nearer the front. Rents were too high for her, even in the next street, which claimed a sea-view sideways through the bow-windows. She was the daughter of a farmer in Northamptonshire, and till she came to Brighton had lived at home. When she was five-and-twenty her mother died, and in two years her father married again. The second wife was a widow, good-looking but hard, and had a temper. She made herself very disagreeable to Miss Toller, and the husband took the wife's part. Miss Toller therefore left the farm at Barton Sluice, and with a little money that belonged to her purchased the goodwill and furniture of Russell House. She brought with her a Northamptonshire girl as servant, and the two shared the work between them. At the time when this history begins she had five lodgers, all of whom had been with her six months, and one for more than a year.

Mrs. Poulter, the senior in residence of the five, was the widow of a retired paymaster in the Navy. She was between fifty and sixty, a big, portly woman. After her husband was pensioned she lived in Southsea. As he belonged to the civilian branch, Mrs. Poulter had to fight undauntedly in order to maintain a calling acquaintance with the wives of executive officers, and in fact the highest she had on her list was a commander's lady. When Paymaster Poulter died, and his pension ceased, she gave up the struggle. She had no children, and moved to Brighton with an annuity of 150 pounds a year derived from her husband's insurance of 2000 pounds, and a life interest in some property left by her mother.

Mr. Goacher was a bachelor clergyman of about forty. He read prayers, presided over the book-club, and by a judicious expenditure of oil prevented friction between the other boarders. It was understood that he had been compelled to give up clerical duty by what is called clergyman's sore-throat. It was not known whether he had been vicar, rector, or curate, but he wore the usual white neck-band and a soft, low felt hat, he was clean-shaven, his letters were addressed 'Reverend,' he was not bad-looking; and these vouchers were considered sufficient.

Mrs. Mudge was the widow of a tradesman in London. She was better off than any of the other lodgers, and drank claret at twenty shillings a dozen.

Miss Everard, the youngest of the party, was a French mistress, but English by birth, and gave lessons in two or three schools. She was never at home on weekdays excepting at breakfast and dinner. After dinner she generally corrected exercises in her bedroom, but when she was not busy she sat in the drawing-room to save fire and light.

Miss Taggart was the daughter of a country doctor. Both her parents were dead, and she was poor. She had a reputation for being enlightened, as she was not regular in her attendance at public worship on Sunday, and did not always go to the same church. She told Mrs. Poulter once that science should tincture theology, whereupon, appeal being made to Mr. Goacher by that alarmed lady, he ventured to remark, that with all respect to Miss Taggart, such observations were perhaps liable to misconstruction in ordinary society, where they could not be fully explained, and, although she was doubtless right in a way, the statement needed qualification. Miss Taggart was not very friendly with Mrs. Poulter and Mr. Goacher, and despised Mrs. Mudge because she was low-bred. Miss Everard Miss Taggart dreaded, and accused her of being vicious and spiteful.

It was still early in December, but the lodgers in Russell House who had nothing to do--that is to say all of them excepting Miss Everard--were making plans for Christmas. They always thought a long time beforehand of what was going to happen. On Tuesday morning they began to anticipate Sunday, and when the Sunday afternoon wore away slowly and drearily, they looked forward to the excitement of omnibuses and butchers' carts on Monday. A little more than a fortnight before Christmas, on Sunday at early dinner, a leg of mutton was provided. Mrs. Poulter always sat at the head of the table and carved. This was the position she occupied when Mr. Goacher came, and she did not offer to resign it. Mrs. Mudge was

helped first, but it was towards the knuckle and she had no fat.

'Thank you, Mrs. Poulter, but will you please give me a piece of fat?'

Mrs. Poulter, scowling, placed a minute portion of hard, half-burnt skin on Mrs. Mudge's plate.

'Much obliged, Mrs. Poulter, but I want a piece of FAT--white fat--just there,' pointing to it with her fork.

Mrs. Poulter, as we have said, was at enmity with Mrs. Mudge. Mrs. Mudge also was Low Church; and Mrs. Poulter was High. She had just returned from a High Church service at St. Paul's, and the demand for an undue share of fat was particularly irritating.

'Really, Mrs. Mudge, you forget that there is hardly enough to go round. For my part, though, I care nothing about it.'

'If I had thought you did, Mrs. Poulter, I am sure I should not have dared to ask for it.'

'I believe,' said Miss Taggart, 'that the office of fat in diet is to preserve heat.'

'If fat promotes heat,' said Miss Everard, 'and I have no doubt it is so, considering Miss Taggart's physiological knowledge, my advice is that we abstain from it.'

'It is a pity,' said Mr. Goacher, smiling, 'that animals will not suit our requirements. But to be practical, Miss Toller might be instructed to order legs of mutton with more fat. This reminds me of beef, and beef reminds me of Christmas. It is now the second Sunday in Advent, and there is a subject which you will remember we had agreed to discuss this week.'

This important subject was a proposal by Mrs. Mudge that Miss Toller should dine with them on Christmas Day.

'You, Mrs. Poulter,' said Mr. Goacher, 'are of opinion that we should not invite her?'

'Certainly. I do not see how she is to send up the dinner properly if she is to be our guest, and I imagine also she would not be comfortable with us.'

Mrs. M. 'Why shouldn't she be comfortable? Of course, if we don't try to make her so she won't be. There are ways to make people comfortable and ways to make them uncomfortable. Miss Toller is just as good as any of us.'

Miss T. 'She is not an educated woman, and I am sure she would rather remain downstairs; our conversation would not interest her.'

Miss E. 'Pray, Miss Taggart, what is an educated woman?'

Miss T. 'What a question, Miss Everard! By an educated woman is meant a woman who has been taught the usual curriculum of a lady in cultivated circles.'

Miss E. 'What is the curriculum of a cultivated lady?'

Miss T. 'Really you are provoking; you understand perfectly as well as I do.'

Miss E. 'I am still in the dark. What is the curriculum of a cultivated lady?'

Mrs. P. 'I much doubt if Miss Toller is acquainted with the ordinary facts of geography, even those which are familiar to common seamen in the Navy. She probably could not tell us the situation of the Straits of Panama.'

Mrs. Poulter had been reading something in the newspaper the day before about the Panama Canal.

Miss E. 'Straits of Panama!' but she checked herself when she saw that not a muscle moved on anybody's face. 'Now, my dear Mrs. Poulter, I assure you I have friends who dine in the best society, and I'll be bound they never heard of the Straits of Panama.'

Mrs. P. 'The society in which I was accustomed to mix, Miss Everard, would have excluded a person who was so grossly ignorant.'

Miss T. 'The possession of scientific truth, in addition to conferring social advantages, adds so much to our happiness.'

Miss E. 'This also I am inclined to dispute. Do you really feel happier, Mrs. Poulter, because you can tell us what continents are divided by the Straits of Panama?'

Mrs. M. 'I'll lay a wager Miss Toller knows as much as we do, but the things she knows aren't the things we know.'

Mr. G. 'We are digressing, I am afraid. I suggest we should have a ballot. I will write "Yes" on five little pieces of paper, and "No" on five, and after distribution we will fold them up, and each of us shall drop one in the vase on the mantel-shelf.'

This was done, and there were three for the invitation and two against it.

Mrs. Poulter and Mr. Goacher were left alone after the table was cleared.

'Permit me to say, dear madam, that I entirely agreed with you.'

'You must have voted with Mrs. Mudge.'

'I did, but not from any sympathy with her views. I strive to keep the peace. In an establishment like this concord is necessary.'

Mr. Goacher, when he dropped his paper in the vase, had not forgotten that Mrs. Mudge had offered to provide the wine for the dinner. If she had been defeated the offer might have been withdrawn.

'I have fancied before now that I have seen in you a decided

preference for Mrs. Mudge.'

This was true. He had 'tried it on with her,' to use her own words, but she was impregnable. 'It was no good with me,' she said to Miss Everard; 'I saw what he was after.'

'My dear Mrs. Poulter, your supposition is preposterous--forgive me--you do not suppose that I am unable to recognise superiority in birth, in manners, and in intellect. It was better, on this particular occasion, to conciliate Mrs. Mudge. She is not worthy of serious opposition. Miss Toller will not sit near you.'

Mrs. Poulter was pacified.

'I am glad to hear this explanation. I had hoped that one might be forthcoming.'

'I am truly thankful I am worthy of hope, TRULY thankful.'

Mrs. Poulter dropped Palmer's Ecclesiastical History, which she had begun to read every Sunday afternoon for three months. Mr. Goacher picked it up, and was about to take Mrs. Poulter's hand, but Miss Taggart entered and the conversation closed just when it was becoming interesting.

In a day or two Mrs. Poulter informed Miss Toller that the ladies and Mr. Goacher had been pleased to express a wish that she should dine with them on Christmas Day. She consented with becoming humility, as even Mrs. Poulter confessed, but with many secret misgivings. She desired to strengthen herself with her lodgers on whom her living depended, but Helen was more than a servant. She was her friend, and she could not bear the thought of leaving her in the kitchen. Helen, too, was passionate and jealous. Miss Toller therefore ventured to ask Mrs. Poulter whether, as it was Christmas, Helen also might be invited. Mrs. Poulter signified to Miss Toller her extreme surprise at the suggestion.

'The line, Miss Toller, must be drawn somewhere. Helen will have the gratuity usual at this season--she is a well-regulated person and will see the impropriety of intrusion into a sphere for which she is unfit.'

Miss Toller withdrew. She dared not venture to explain or apologise to Helen, although delay would make matters worse. She went into North Street and spent ten shillings which she could ill afford in buying a locket for her.

Christmas Eve was black and bitter. After the lodgers had gone to bed, Miss Toller and Helen sat by the kitchen fire.

'Oh, Miss, I wish we were at Barton Sluice.'

'What makes you wish it, now?'

'I hate this place and everybody in it, excepting you. I suppose it's Christmas makes me think of the old farm.'

'I remember you said once that you thought you would like a town.'

'Ah, I said so then. I should love to see them meadows again. The snow when it melts there doesn't go to dirty, filthy slush as it does in Brighton. But it's the people here I can't bear. I could fly at that Poulter and that Goacher at times, no matter if I was had up for it.'

'You forget what a hard life you had with Mrs. Wootton at the Hatch.'

'No, I don't forget. She had a rough tongue, but she was one of our set. She got as good as she gave. She spoke her mind, and I spoke mine, and there was an end to it. But this lot--they are so stuck-up and stuck-round. I never saw such folk in our parts--they make me feel as if I were the dirt under their feet.'

'Never mind them. I have more to put up with than you have. You know all; you may be sure, if I could help it, I shouldn't be here.'

'I do know all. I shouldn't grieve if that stepmother of yours drank herself to death. O Lord, when I see what you have to go through I am ashamed of myself. But you were made one way and I another. You dear, patient creature!'

'It's half-past eleven. It is time to go to bed.'

They went to their cold lean-to garrets under the slates.

Miss Toller lay awake for hours. This, then, was Christmas Eve, one more Christmas Eve. She recollected another Christmas Eve twenty years gone. She went out to a party, she and her father and mother and sister; mother and sister now dead. Somebody walked home with her that clear, frosty night. Strange! Miss Toller, Brighton lodging-house keeper, always in black gown--no speck of colour even on Sundays--whose life was spent before sinks and stoves, through whose barred kitchen windows the sun never shone, had wandered in the land of romance; in her heart also Juliet's flame had burned. A succession of vivid pictures of her girlhood passed before her: of the garden, of the farmyard and the cattle in it, of the river, of the pollard willows sloping over it, of Barton Sluice covered with snow--how still it was at that moment--the dog has been brought inside because of the cold, and is asleep in the living-room--her father, is he awake? the tall clock is ticking by the window, she could hear its slow beats, and as she listened she fell asleep, but was presently awakened by the bells proclaiming the birth in a manger. She remembered that Mrs. Poulter had to be called at seven that she might go to an early service. She hastily put on her clothes and knocked at the door, but Mrs. Poulter decided that, as it was freezing, it would not be safe to venture, and having ordered a cup of tea in her bedroom at half-past eight, turned round and fell asleep again.

It was a busy day. The lodgers, excepting Miss Everard, went to church in the morning, but Miss Toller and Helen had their hands full. In the afternoon Miss Toller was obliged to tell Helen the unpleasant news.

'I don't want to go, but I must not offend them.'

'But you ARE going?'



'I can't get out of it.'

Helen did not speak another word. About half-past six Miss Toller put on her best clothes and appeared in the dining-room. Helen punctually served the dinner. A seat was allotted to Miss Toller at the bottom of the table opposite Miss Everard and next to Mr. Goacher, who faced Mrs. Poulter. Mrs. Mudge's wine was produced, and Mr. Goacher graciously poured out a glass for Miss Toller.

'At this festive season, ma'am.'

A second glass was not offered, although Mrs. Mudge's supply was liberal. Mr. Goacher did not stint himself.

'There are beautiful churches in Northamptonshire, I believe, Miss Toller?' said the reverend gentleman after the third glass.

'Yes, very beautiful.'

'Ah! that is delightful. To whatever school in the Establishment we belong, we cannot be insensible to the harmony between it and our dear old ivy-clad towers and the ancient gravestones. I love old country churches. I often wish my lot had been cast in a simple rural parish.'

Miss E. 'Why do you not go?'

Mr. G. 'My unfortunate throat; and besides, I believe I am really better fitted for an urban population.'

Miss E. 'In what way?'

Mr. G. 'Well, you see, Miss Everard, questions present themselves to our hearers in towns which do not naturally occur to the rustic mind--questions with which, if I may say so, I am perhaps fitted to deal. The rustic mind needs nothing more than a simple presentation of the Gospel.'

Miss E. 'What kind of questions?'

Mr. G. 'You must be aware that our friend Mrs. Poulter, for instance, accustomed as she is to the mental stimulus of Southsea and Brighton, takes an interest in topics unfamiliar to an honest agriculturist who is immersed all the week in beeves and ploughs and swine.'

Mr. Goacher had intended that Mrs. Poulter should hear that her name was mentioned.

Mrs. P. 'What are you saying about me?'

Miss E. 'Nothing to your discredit. We were talking about town and country parishes, and Mr. Goacher maintains that in a town parish a clergyman of superior intellect is indispensable.'

Mrs. P. 'But what has that to do with me?'

Miss E. 'Oh, we merely brought you forward as an example. You have

moved in cultured society, and he is of opinion that he is better fitted to preach to people like you than to farmers.'

Mrs. M. 'Culture, fiddle-de-dee! Afore I was married, I lived in the country. Five-and-twenty years I lived in it. Don't tell me. A farmer with five hundred acres of land, or even a cowman who has to keep a dozen cows in order and look after his own garden, wants more brains than any of your fine town-folk. Ah, and our old parson had a good bit more than any one of these half-witted curates such as you see here in Brighton playing their popish antics in coloured clothes.'

Mrs. Poulter was very angry.

'Mrs. Mudge,' she said, speaking to nobody in particular, and looking straight before her, 'has chosen to-day of all days on which to insult, I will not call it MY faith, but the faith of the Catholic Church.'

Mr. Goacher at once intervened with his oil-can.

'My leanings, Mrs. Poulter, have latterly at any rate been in your direction--without excesses, of course; but both you and I admit that the Church is ample enough to embrace the other great parties so long as there is agreement in essentials. Unity, unity! Mrs. Mudge's ardour, we must confess, proves her sincerity.'

Mr. Goacher took another glass of Mrs. Mudge's wine. After the dessert of almonds and raisins, figs, apples, and oranges--also supplied by Mrs. Mudge--Miss Toller rose and said she hoped she might be excused, but Mr. Goacher pressed her to stay. He had offered to entertain the company with a trifling humorous composition of his own. She consented, and he recited a parody on 'To be or not to be,' descriptive of a young lady's perplexity at having received an offer of marriage. When it was over Miss Toller departed. It was now nine o'clock, and she found that the dinner things had been washed up, and that Helen had gone to bed. The next morning she went downstairs a little later than usual, but there was no Helen. She ran up to her bedroom. It was empty; she had slept there that night, but her box was packed and directed, and there was a paper on it to say that the carrier would call for it. Miss Toller was confounded. She would have rushed to the station, but the first train had gone. She was roused by the milkman at the area door, and hastened down to light the fire. At first she resolved to excuse Helen's absence on the ground that it was Boxing Day, but she would almost certainly not return, and after breakfast Miss Toller went upstairs and told her lodgers that Helen had left. Mrs. Poulter managed to acquaint Mr. Goacher and Miss Taggart that she desired to speak to them when Mrs. Mudge and Miss Everard were out of the way, and at midday there was a conference. Mrs. Poulter declared that the time had now arrived for decisive action, so far as she was concerned. Mrs. Mudge's behaviour could not be endured. Her insolence in the matter of the newspaper (this will be explained in a moment), and her contempt for what was sacred, made it impossible without loss of self-respect to live with her. The servant's sudden departure for reasons unknown, had, to use Mrs. Poulter's words, 'put the coping-stone to the edifice.' The newspaper grievance was this. The Morning Post was provided by Miss Toller for her boarders. Mrs. Poulter was always the first to take

it, and her claim as senior resident was not challenged. One morning, however, Mrs. Mudge, after fidgeting for a whole hour, while Mrs. Poulter leisurely scanned every paragraph from the top of the first page down to the bottom of the last, suggested that the paper should be divided, as other people might wish to see it. Mrs. Poulter dropped her eye-glass and handed Mrs. Mudge the outside sheet, with the remark that if she would but have intimated politely that she was in a hurry, she could have had it before.

'I'm in no hurry,' Mrs. Mudge replied, 'and you don't seem to be in any. Thank you; this is not the bit I want; you needn't trouble; I can order a paper myself.' The next day there was a Standard for Mrs. Mudge, who with some malice immediately offered it to Mr. Goacher. Mrs. Poulter glared at him, and after a little hesitation he expressed his obligation but preferred to wait, as he had a letter to write which must be dispatched immediately. Mrs. Poulter never forgot Mrs. Mudge's spite, as she called it; the Standard reminded her of it daily.

Mr. Goacher agreed with Mrs. Poulter that, for the reasons she gave, it would be desirable to remove from Russell House. He also felt that, as a clergyman, he would do wisely in leaving, for he could not ascribe the disappearance of 'the domestic' to anything but a consciousness of guilt.

Miss Taggart considered that Mrs. Mudge's conduct was due to defective training. As to Helen, Miss Taggart added that 'you never feel yourself secure against moral delinquency in the classes from which servants are drawn. They have no basis.'

'I understand,' said Mrs. Poulter, 'that Helen is a Dissenter.'

Miss Taggart, as the reader has been told, was not particularly fond of Mrs. Poulter and Mr. Goacher, but to stay with Mrs. Mudge and Miss Everard was impossible. She had also once or twice received a hint from Miss Toller that perhaps she had better suit herself elsewhere, as the minute attention she demanded to her little needs, of which there were many, was trying both to mistress and servant.

Miss Toller was promptly informed that three of her lodgers were going at the end of the month.

'I hope, Mrs. Poulter, that you are not dissatisfied. I have no doubt I shall soon be able to obtain assistance.'

Mrs. P. 'Our reasons, Miss Toller, had better not be communicated; they are sufficient. Against you personally we have nothing to object.'

Miss T. 'Have you searched the box which I understand has been left?'

Miss Toller. 'Have you missed anything, ma'am?'

Miss T. 'Not at present. I might discover my loss when it was too late.'

Mr. G. 'It would be better for the protection of all of us.'

Miss Toller. 'I couldn't do it for worlds; you'll pardon me for saying so. I'd sooner you left me without paying me a farthing. Helen may have her faults, but she is as honest as--.' Miss Toller's voice trembled and she could not finish the sentence.

Mrs. P. 'Have you any reason to suspect any--any improper relationship?'

Miss Toller. 'I do not quite understand you.'

Mr. G. 'Pardon me, Mrs. Poulter, it is my duty to relieve you of that inquiry. Mrs. Poulter cannot be explicit. Do you surmise that Helen is compelled to conceal?--you will comprehend me, I am sure. I need not add anything more.'

The poor landlady, habitually crushed by the anticipation of quarter-day into fear of contradiction or offence, flamed up with sudden passion. 'Sir,' she cried, 'Helen is my friend, my dearest friend. How dare you!--you a clergyman! I let you and Mrs. Poulter know that she is as pure and good as you are--yes, and a thousand times better than you are with your hateful insinuations. I shall be thankful to see the last of you!' and she flung herself out of the room.

'What do you think of that?' said Mrs. Poulter. 'It is beyond comment. We cannot remain another night.' Mr. Goacher and Miss Taggart agreed, and Miss Taggart was commissioned at once to engage rooms. When she had gone Mr. Goacher was compelled to explain that he was in a difficulty.

'Of course, my dear Mrs. Poulter, after this open insult I must go at once, but unhappily I am rather behind-hand in my payments to Miss Toller. Remittances I expected have been delayed.'

'How much do you owe her?'

'I believe it is now about fifteen pounds. Her disgraceful conduct discharges us from any liability beyond to-day. Might I beg the loan of twenty pounds from you?--say for a fortnight. It is a favour I could not dream of soliciting from anybody but Mrs. Poulter.'

It was most inconvenient to Mrs. Poulter to advance twenty pounds at that moment. But she had her own reasons for not wishing that Mr. Goacher should imagine she was straitened.

'I believe I can assist you.'

Mr. Goacher dropped on his knees and took the lady's hand, kissing it fervently.

'My dear madam, may I take this opportunity, in this position, of declaring what must be obvious to you, that my heart--yes, my heart--has been captured and is yours? Identity of views on almost every subject, social and religious, personal attachment beyond that felt to any other woman I ever beheld--have we not sufficient reasons, if you can but respond to my emotion, to warrant an Eden for us in the future?'

'Mr. Goacher, you take me by surprise. I cannot conceal my regard for you, but you will not expect an answer upon a matter of such moment until I have given it most mature consideration. Miss Taggart will be here directly: I think I hear the bell.'

Mr. Goacher slowly rose: Miss Taggart appeared and announced that the rooms were secured.

To end this part of the story, it may be added that in about a fortnight Mr. Goacher's throat was quite well, and he announced to Mrs. Poulter his intention of resuming active work in the Church. The marriage, therefore, was no longer delayed.

A little while afterwards Mrs. Goacher discovered that her husband had been a missionary in the service of the Church Missionary Society and had consequently been Low, that he had been returned a little damaged in character; and that resumption of active work was undesirable.

Mrs. Mudge had lunch and tea with a friend. When she came back Miss Toller told her what had happened.

'I dare say you'll blame me. It was wrong to let my temper get the better of me, but I could not help it.'

'Help it? The wonder to me is you've stood it so long. I couldn't stand them; I should have left if they hadn't. Have they paid you?'

'Yes.'

'What, that Goacher? Then he borrowed it!' and Mrs. Mudge laughed till she cried.

The day wore on and no carrier came for the box. After dinner Miss Toller told Mrs. Mudge she must go out for a few minutes to get a charwoman; that she would take the latch-key, and that nobody would call. She had gone about a quarter of an hour when there was a ring at the bell. Mrs. Mudge went to the door and, behold, there was Helen!

'The Lord have mercy on us! Why did you run away so suddenly?'

'Don't ask me. Never you say a word about it to me. I'm a sinner: where's Miss Toller?'

Helen listened in silence as Mrs. Mudge told her the eventful history of the last twelve hours. She went upstairs: Miss Toller's bedroom door was open, and on the drawers she saw a little packet tied up with blue silk.

It was addressed 'for dear Helen.' She tore it open, and there was a locket and in it was her beloved mistress's hair--the mistress to whom she had been so cruel, who had so nobly defended her. She threw herself on the bed and her heart almost broke. Suddenly she leaped up, flew down into the kitchen, and began washing up the plates and dishes. Miss Toller was away for nearly an hour; her search for a charwoman was unsuccessful, and she came back dejected. Helen rushed to meet her and they embraced one another.

'O Miss Toller, forgive me! When I saw you sitting with that Poulter and that Goacher, the Devil got the better of me, but--'

'Hush, my dear; I oughtn't to have gone, and never any more from this day call me Miss Toller. Call me Mary, always from this day-- you promise me?' and Miss Toller kissed Helen's quivering lips.

Miss Toller did all she could to get other boarders, but none came and she had a hard time. It was difficult for her sometimes to find a dinner for herself and Helen. Good Mrs. Mudge was delicately considerate and often said, 'that meat need not come up again,' and purposely ordered more than she and Miss Everard could eat, but the butcher's bill and the milk bill were not paid so regularly as heretofore. Worse than privation, worse than debt, was the vain watching for inquiries and answers to her advertisement. What would become of her? Where could she go? Three more boarders she must have or she could not live, and there was no prospect of one. If by great good luck she could obtain three, they might not stay and the dismal struggle would begin again. Lodging-house keepers are not the heroines of novels and poems, but if endurance, wrestling with adversity, hoping in despair, be virtues, the eternal scales will drop in favour of many underground basements against battlefields. At last, after one or two pressing notices from landlord and rate-collector, Mrs. Mudge and Miss Everard were informed that Russell House was to be given up. She and Helen must seek situations as servants.

Mrs. Mudge and Miss Everard went away at the end of the month. On the dining-room table after they had gone Miss Toller found two envelopes directed to her. Inside were some receipts. Mrs. Mudge had paid all the rent due to the end of Miss Toller's term, and Miss Everard the taxes. Next week Miss Toller had the following letter from her father

'MY DEAR MARY,--This is to tell you that your stepmother departed this life last Tuesday fortnight. She was taken with a fit on the Sunday. On Tuesday morning she came to herself and wished us to send for the parson. He was here in an hour and she made her peace with God. I did not ask you to the funeral as you had been so long away. My dear Mary, I cannot live alone at my age. I was sixty-five last Michaelmas, and I want you back in the old house. Let bygones be bygones. I shall always be, your affectionate father,

'THOMAS TOLLER.

'PS.--You can have the same bedroom you had when your own mother was alive.'

The furniture, modern stuff, was sold, every stick of it, and Miss Toller rejoiced when the spring sofa and chairs which had been devoted to Poulters and Goachers and Taggarts were piled up in the vans. The nightmares of fifteen years hid themselves in the mats and carpets.

Helen and she standing at the dresser ate their last meal in the dingy kitchen of Russell House. It was nothing but sandwiches, but it was the most delicious food they had tasted there. It is a

mistake if you are old to go back to the village in which you were born and bred. Ghosts meet you in every lane and look out from the windows. There are new names on the signboard of the inn and over the grocer's shop. A steam-engine has been put in the mill, and the pathway behind to the mill dam and to the river bank has been closed. The people you see think you are a visitor. The church is restored, and there is a brand new Wesleyan chapel. Better stay where you are and amuse yourself by trying to make flowers grow in your little, smoky, suburban back-garden. But Miss Toller and Helen were not too old. Mr. Toller met them at the station with a four-wheeled chaise. Before the train had quite stopped, Helen caught sight of somebody standing by the cart which was brought for the luggage. 'It's Tom! it's Tom!' she screamed; and it was Tom himself, white-headed now and a little bent. She insisted on walking with him by the side of his horse the whole four miles to their journey's end. He was between forty and fifty when she went away and had been with Mr. Toller ever since--'tried a bit at times,' he confessed, 'with the second missus.' 'She's with God, let us hope,' said Tom, 'and we'll leave her alone.'

They came to Barton Sluice. Flat and unadorned are the fields there, and the Nen is slow, but it was their own land, they loved it, and they were at rest. They fell into their former habits, and the talk of crops, of markets, of the weather, and of their neighbours was sweet. Mrs. Mudge and Miss Everard came now and then to see them in summer time, and when Mr. Toller slept with his fathers, his daughter and Helen remained at the farm and managed it between them.

ESTHER

BLACKDEEP FEN, 24th November 1838.

My Dear Esther,--This is your birthday and your wedding-day, and I have sent you a cake and a knitted cross-over, both of which I have made myself. I can still knit, although my eyes fail a bit. I hope the cross-over will be useful during the winter. Tell me, my dear, how you are. Twenty-eight years ago it is since you came into the world. It was a dark day with a cold drizzling rain, but at eleven o'clock at night you were born, and the next morning was bright with beautiful sunshine. Some people think that Blackdeep must always be dreary at this time of year, but they are wrong. I love the Fen country. It is my own country. This house, as you know, has belonged to your father's forefathers for two hundred years or more, and my father's old house has been in our family nearly as long. I could not live in London; but I ought not to talk in this way, for I hold it to be wrong to set anybody against what he has to do. Your brother Jim is the best of sons. He sits with me in the evening and reads the paper to me. He goes over to Ely market every week. He has his dinner at the ordinary, where many of the company drink more than is good for them, but never once has he come home the worse for liquor. I had a rare fright a little while ago. I thought there was something between him and one of those Stanton girls at Ely. I saw she was trying to catch him. It is all off now. She is a town girl, stuck-up, spends a lot of money on her clothes, and would have

been no wife for Jim. She would not have been able to put her hand to anything here. She might have broken my heart, for she would have tried to draw Jim away from me. I don't believe, my dearest child, in wedded love which lessens the love for father and mother. When you were going to be married what agony I went through! It was so wicked of me, for it was jealousy with no cause. I thank God you love me as much as ever. I wish I could see you again at Homerton, but the journey made me so ill last winter that I dare not venture just yet.--Your loving mother,

RACHEL SUTTON.

HOMERTON, 27th Nov. 1838.

My Dearest Mother,--The cake was delicious: it tasted of Blackdeep, and the cross-over will be most useful. It will keep me warm on cold days, and the love that came with it will thicken the wool. But, mother, it is not a month ago since you sent me the stockings. You are always at work for me. You are just like father. He gave us things not only on birthdays, but when we never looked out for them. Do you remember that week when wheat dropped three shillings a quarter? He had two hundred quarters which he might have sold ten days earlier. He was obliged to sell them at the next market and lost thirty pounds, but he had seen at Ely that day a little desk, and he knew I wanted a desk, and he bought it for me with a fishing-rod and landing-net for Jim.

My husband said he could not think of anything I needed and wrote me a cheque for two pounds.

O! that you could come here, and yet I am certain you must not. My heart aches to have you. In my day-dreams I go over the long miles to Blackdeep, through Ware, through Royston, through Cambridge, through every village, and then I feel how far away you are. I turned out of the room the other day the chair in which you always sat. I could not bear to see it empty. Charles noticed it had gone and ordered it to be brought back. He may have suspected the reason why I put it upstairs. My dearest, dearest mother, never fear that my affection for you can become less. Sometimes after marriage a woman loves her mother more than she ever loved her before.

It is a black fog here and not a breath of air is stirring. How different are our fogs at Blackdeep! They may be thick, but they are white and do not make us miserable. I never shall forget when I was last in Fortyacres and saw the mist lying near the river, and the church spire bright in the sunlight. The churchyard and the lower part of the church were quite hidden.

What a mercy Jim was not trapped by Dolly, for I suppose it was she. Jim is not the first she has tried to get. You are quite right. She might have broken your heart, and I am sure she would have broken Jim's, for she is as hard as a millstone.--Your loving child,

ESTHER.

BLACKDEEP FEN, 3rd December 1838.



Your letter made me feel unhappy. I am afraid something is on your mind. What is the matter? I was not well before I went to Homerton the last time, but maybe it was not London that upset me. If you cannot leave, I shall come. Let me hear by the next post.

HOMERTON, 5th December 1838.

I told Charles I was expecting you. He said that your sudden determination seemed odd. 'Your mother,' he added, 'is a woman who acts upon impulses. She ought always to take time for

consideration. This is hardly the proper season for travelling.' I asked him if he would let me go to Blackdeep. He replied that, unless there was some particular reason for it, my proposal was as unwise as yours. What am I to do? A particular reason! It is a particular reason that I pine for my mother. Can there be any reason more particular than a longing for the sight of a dear face, for kisses and embraces? You must counsel me.

BLACKDEEP, 15th December 1838.

As Charles imagines I am carried away by what he calls impulses, I did not answer your letter at once, and I have been thinking as much as I can. I am not a good hand at it. Your dear father had a joke against me. 'Rachel, you can't think; but never mind, you can do much better without thinking than other people can with it.' I wish I had gone straight to you at once, and yet it was better I did not. It would have put Charles out, and this would not have been pleasant for either you or me. I would not have you at Blackdeep now for worlds. The low fever has broken out, and to-day there were two funerals. Parson preached a sermon about it; it was a judgment from God. Perhaps it is, but why did it take your father three years ago? It is all a mystery, and it looks to me sometimes as if here on earth there were nothing but mystery. I have just heard that parson is down with the fever himself.

Do let me have a long letter at once.

HOMERTON, 20th December 1838.

A Mrs. Perkins has been here. She sat with me for an hour. She spends her afternoons in going her rounds among her friends, as she calls them, but she does not care for them, nor do they care for her. She looks and speaks like a woman who could not care for anybody, and yet perhaps there may be somewhere a person who could move her.

I am so weary of the talk of my neighbours. It is so different from what we used to have at Blackdeep. Oh me! those evenings when father came in at dark, and Mr. and Mrs. Thornley came afterwards and we had supper at eight, and father and Mr. Thornley smoked their pipes and drank our home-brewed ale and we had all the news--how much Mr. Thornley had got for his malt, how that pig-headed old Stubbs wouldn't sell his corn, and how when he began to thresh it and the ferrets were brought, a hundred rats were killed and bushels of wheat had been eaten.

You ask me what is the matter. I do not deny I am not quite happy, but it would be worse than useless to dwell upon my unhappiness and try to give you reasons for it. London, in the winter, most likely does not suit me. I shall certainly see you in the spring, and then I hope I shall be better.

BLACKDEEP FEN, Christmas Day, 1838.

As a rule it is right to hide our troubles, but it is not right that you should hide yours from me. You are my firstborn child and my only daughter. There are girls who are very good, but between their mothers and them there is a wall. They do what they are bid; they are kind, but that is all. They live apart from those that bore them. I would not give a straw for such duty and love. I gathered one of our Christmas roses this morning. We have taken great care to keep them from being splashed and spoilt. There was not a speck on it. I put it in water and could not take my eyes off it. Its white flower lay spread open and I could look right down into it. I thought of you. When you were a little one--ay, and after you were out of short frocks--you never feared to show me every thought in your mind, you always declared that if you had wished to hide anything from me, it would have been of no use to try. What a blessing that was to me! How dreadful it would be if, now that you are married, you were to change! I am sure you will not and cannot.

HOMERTON, 1st January 1839.

The New Year! What will happen before the end of it? I feel as if it must be something strange. I have just read your last letter again, and I cannot hold myself in. My dearest mother, I confess I am wretched. It might be supposed that misery like mine would express itself with no effort, but it is not so: it would be far easier to describe ordinary things. I am afraid also to talk about it, lest that which is dim and shapeless should become more real.

Since the day we were married Charles and I have never openly quarrelled. He is really good: he spends his evenings at home and does not seem to desire entertainment elsewhere. He likes to see me well-dressed and does not stint in house expenditure, although he examines it carefully and pays a good many of the bills himself by cheque. He has been promoted to be manager of the bank, and takes up his new duties to-day. Mrs. Perkins, whose husband is one of the partners, told me that he had said that there is nobody in the bank equal to Charles for sound sense and business ability; that everything with which he has to do goes right; he is always calm, never in a hurry, and never betrayed into imprudence. This I can well believe. As you know, Jim asked him a month ago in much excitement for advice about Fordham, who owed him 200 pounds. Jim had heard there was something wrong. Charles put the letter in the desk and did not mention it to me again till a week afterwards, when he asked me to tell Jim the next time I wrote to Blackdeep that he need not worry himself, as Fordham was quite safe. It is certainly a comfort to a woman that her husband is a strong man and that he is much respected by his employers. Of what have I to complain? O mother, life here is so dull! This is not the right word; it is common, but if you can fill it up with my meaning, there is no

better. It will then be terrible. There is hardly a flower in the garden, although not a weed is permitted. The sooty laurels unchanging through winter and summer I hate. Some flowers I am sure would grow, but Charles does not care for them. Neatness is what he likes, and if the beds are raked quite smooth, if the grass is closely shaven and trimmed and not a grain of gravel in the path is loose, he is content. He cannot endure the least untidiness in the house. If papers are left lying loosely about, he silently puts them evenly together. He brings all his office ways into the dining-room; the pens must never be put aside unwiped and the ink-bottles must be kept filled to a certain height. We do not get much sun at any time of day in Homerton, and we face the west. Charles wishes the blinds to be drawn when it shines, so that it may not fade the curtains. We have few books excepting Rees's cyclopaedia, and they are kept in a glazed case. If I look at one I have to put it back directly I have done with it. I saw this place before I was married, but it did not look then as it looks now, and I did not comprehend how much Blackdeep was a part of me. The front door always open in daytime, the hollyhocks down to the gate, the strawberry beds, the currant and gooseberry bushes, the lilacs, roses, the ragged orchard at the back, the going in and out without 'getting ready,' our living-room with Jim's pipes and tobacco on the mantel-shelf, his gun over it, his fishing-tackle in the corner--I little understood that such things and the ease which is felt when our surroundings grow to us make a good part of the joy of life. When I came to Blackdeep for my holiday and lifted the latch, it was just as if a stiff, tight band round my chest dropped from me. I have nothing to do here. We keep three servants indoors. I would much rather have but two and help a little myself. They are good servants, and the work seems to go by mechanism without my interference. I suggested to Charles that, as they were not fully employed, we should get rid of one, but he would not consent. He preferred, he said, paid service. To me the dusting of my room, paring apples, or the cooking of any little delicacy, is not service. The cook asks for orders in the morning; the various dishes are properly prepared; but if I were Charles, and my wife understood her business, I should like to taste her hand in them. I never venture into the kitchen. 'The advantage of paid service,' added Charles, 'is that if it is inefficient you can reprimand or dismiss.' Nothing in me finds exercise. I want to work, to laugh, to expect. There was always something going on at Blackdeep, no two days alike. I never got up in the morning knowing what was before me till bedtime. That outlook too from my window, how I miss it!-- the miles and miles of distance, the rainbow arch in summer complete to the ground, the sunlight, the stormy wind, the stars from the point overhead to the horizon far away--I hardly ever see them here.

You will exclaim 'Is this all?' If you were here you would think it enough, but it-- The clock is striking one. Charles is to be at home to lunch. He is going to buy the house and is to meet the owner this afternoon, an old man who lives about ten minutes' walk from us. Charles thinks the purchase will be a good investment and that another house might be built on part of the garden.

BLACKDEEP, 15th January 1839.

I am not surprised you find London dull, but I grieve that it has taken such an effect on you. I hoped that, as you are young, you

would get used to the bricks and mortar and the smoke.

Jim came in and I had to stop. The Lynn coach is set fast in the snow near the turnpike at the top of our lane, and he is going to help dig it out. I will take up my pen again. You are no worse off than thousands of country girls who are obliged to live in streets narrower than those in Homerton. I cannot help boding you are not quite free with me. I do beseech you to hide nothing. There must even now be something the matter beyond what I have heard. I cannot say any more at present. My head is in a whirl. May be you will have a child. That will make all the difference to you.

HOMERTON, 20th January 1839.

How shall I begin? I must tell the whole truth. Mother, mother, I have made a great mistake, the one great mistake of life. I have mistaken the man with whom I am to live. Charles and I were engaged for two years. I have discovered nothing new in him. I was familiar with all his ways and thought them all good. I compared him with other men who were extravagant and who had vices, and I considered myself fortunate. He was cool, but how much better it was to be so than to have a temper, for I should never hear angry words from him which cannot be forgotten? I remembered how measured my uncle Robert's speech was, how quiet he was, and yet no two human beings could have been more devoted to one another than uncle and aunt. Charles's quietude seemed so like uncle's. Charles was very methodical. He always came to see me on the same days, at the same hours, and stayed the same time. It provoked me at first, but I said to myself that he was not a creature of fits and starts and that I could always depend on him.

He always kissed me when we met and when we parted. I do not remember that he ever had me in his arms, and I never felt he was warm and eager when we were alone together; but I had heard of men and women who married for what they called love, and in a twelvemonth it had vanished and there was nothing left. Of many small particulars I took but little notice. When we chose the furniture I wanted bright-coloured curtains, but he did not like them and bought dark red, gloomy stuff. I tried to think they were the best because they would not show the London dirt. I had a bonnet with scarlet trimmings which suited my black hair, but he asked me to change them for something more sober, because they made me conspicuous. Again I thought he was right, and that what might do for the country might not be proper in town. Trifles! and yet to me now what a meaning they have! Two years--and everything is changed, although, as I have just said, I have found out nothing new! The quietude is absence of emotion, different in its root from uncle Robert's serenity. It is the deadly sameness of a soul to which nothing is strange and wonderful and a woman's heart is not so interesting as an advertisement column in the newspaper. He never cares to look into mine. I do not pretend that there is anything remarkable in it, but if he were to open it he would find something worth having. This absence of curiosity to explore what is in me kills me. What must the bliss of a wife be when her husband searches her to her inmost depths, when she sees tender questions in his eyes, when he asks her DO YOU REALLY FEEL SO? and she looks at him and replies AND YOU? I could endure the uneventfulness of outward life if anything not unpleasant HAPPENED between me and

Charles. Nothing happens. Something happens in my relationship to my dog. I pat him and he is pleased; he barks for joy when I go out. I cannot live with anybody with whom I am always on exactly the same even terms--no rising, no falling, mere stagnation. I am dead, but it is death without its sleep and peace. Fool, fool that I was! I cannot go on. What shall I do? If Charles drank I might cure or tolerate him; if he went after another woman I might win him back. I can lay hold of nothing.

A child? Ah no! I have longed unspeakably for a child sometimes, but not for one fathered by him.

BLACKDEEP, 24th January 1839.

I knew it all, but I dared not speak till you had spoken. Your letter came when we were at breakfast. I could not open it, for my heart told me what was in it. Jim wondered why I let it lie on the table, and I made some excuse. After breakfast I took it upstairs into my own room and sat down by the bed, your father's bed, and cried and prayed. If he were alive he would have helped me, or if no help could have been found he would have shared my sorrow. It is dreadful that, no matter what my distress may be, he cannot speak. What counsel can I send you? I have had much to do with affliction, but not such as yours. My love for you is of no use. I will be still. I have always found, when I am in great straits and my head is confused, I must hold my tongue and do nothing. If I do not move, a way may open out to me. Meantime, live in the thought of Blackdeep and of me. It will do you no harm and may keep you from sinking.

HOMERTON, 30th January 1839.

No complaint, no reproof. You might have told me it was perhaps my fault.

I always have to reflect on what I am about to say to him. I go through my sentences to the end before I open my lips. He dislikes exaggeration, and checks me if I use a strong word; but surely life sometimes needs strong words, and those which are tame may be further from the truth than those which burn. When he first began to think about buying the house, I was surprised and talked with less restraint than is usual with me. After a little while he said that I had not contributed anything definite to a settlement of the question. I dare say I had not, but it is natural to me to speak even when I do not pretend to settle questions. He seems to think that speech is useless unless for a distinct, practical purpose. At Blackdeep almost everything that comes into my head finds its way to my tongue. The repression here is unbearable.

Last night it rained, and Charles's overcoat was a little wet at the bottom. He asked that it might be put to the fire. Directly he came down in the morning he felt his coat and at breakfast said in his slow way, 'My coat has not been dried.' I replied that I was very sorry, that I had quite forgotten it, and that it should be dried before he was ready to start. I jumped up, brought it into the room and hung it on a chair on the hearth-rug. He did not thank me and appeared to take no notice. 'I am indeed very sorry,' I

repeated. He then spoke. 'I do not care about the damp: it is the principle involved. I have observed that you do not endeavour systematically to impress my requests on your mind. If you were to take due note of them at the time they are made, and say them aloud two or three times to yourself, they would not escape your memory. Forgetfulness is never an excuse in business, and I do not see why it should be at home.' 'O Charles!' I cried, 'do not talk about principles in such a trifle; I simply forgot. I should be more likely to forget my cloak than your coat.' He did not answer me, but opened a couple of letters, finished his breakfast, and then began to write at the desk. I went upstairs, and when I returned to the breakfast room he had gone. In the evening he behaved as if nothing had passed between us. He would have thought it ridiculous if such a reproof had unsettled a clerk at the bank, and why should it unsettle me? The clerk expects to be taught his lesson daily. So does every rational being.

Nothing! nothing! I can imagine Mrs. Perkins' contempt if I were to confide in her. 'As good a husband as ever lived. What do you want, you silly creature? I suppose it's what they call passion. You should have married a poet. You have made an uncommonly good match and ought to be thankful.' A poet! I know nothing of poets, but I do know that if marriage for passion be folly, there is no true marriage without it.

BLACKDEEP, 7th February 1839.

I am no clearer now than I was a fortnight ago. I wish I could talk to somebody, and then perhaps my thoughts would settle themselves. Last Sunday I made up my mind I would come to you at all costs; then I doubted, and this morning again I was going to start at once. Now my doubts have returned. Jim notices how worried I am, and I make excuses.

I cannot rest while I am not able to do more than put you off by praying you to bear your lot patiently. It is so hard to stand helpless and counsel patience. Could you give him up and live here? I am held back, though, from this at present. I am not sure what might happen if you were to leave him. Perhaps he would be able to force you to return. You have no charge to make against him which anybody but myself would understand.

I must still wait for the light which I trust will be given me. It is wonderful how sometimes it strikes down on me suddenly and sometimes grows by degrees like the day over Ingleby Fen. I lay in bed late this morning, for I hadn't slept much, and watched it as it spread, and I thought of my Esther in London who never sees the sunrise.

HOMERTON, 14th February 1839.

There is hardly anything to record--no event, that is to say--and yet I have been swept on at a pace which frightens me. The least word or act urges me more than a blow. Yesterday I made up my accounts and was ten shillings short. I went over them again and again and could not get them right. I was going to put into the cash-box ten shillings of my own money, but I thought there might be

some mistake and that Charles, who always examines my books, would find it out, and that it would be worse for me if he had discovered what I had done than if I had let them tell their own tale. After dinner he asked for them, counted my balance, and at once found out there was ten shillings too little. I said I knew it and supposed I had forgotten to put down something I had spent. 'Forgotten again?' he replied; 'it is unsatisfactory: there is evident want of method.' He locked the box and book in the desk and read the newspaper while I sat and worked. Next day I remembered the servant had half-a-sovereign to pay the greengrocer, and I had not seen her since I gave it to her. When Charles returned from the bank my first words were, 'O Charles, I know all about the half-sovereign: I am so glad.' Would not you have acknowledged you were glad too? He looked at me just as he did the night before. I believe he would rather I had lost the money. 'Your explanation,' was his response, 'makes no difference: in fact it confirms my charge of lack of system. I have brought you some tablets which I wish you to keep in your pocket, and you must note in them every outgoing at the time it is made. These items are then to be regularly adjusted, and transferred afterwards.' I could not restrain myself.

'Charles, Charles,' I cried, 'do not CHARGE me, as if I had committed a crime. For mercy's sake, soften! I have confessed I was careless; can you not forgive?' 'It is much easier,' was the answer, 'to confess and regret than to amend. I am not offended, and as to forgiveness I do not quite comprehend the term. It is one I do not often use. What is done cannot be undone. If you will alter your present habit, forgiveness, whatever you may mean by it, becomes superfluous.' His lips shut into their usual rigidity. Not a muscle in them would have stirred if I had kissed them with tears. No tears rose; I was struck into hardness equal to his own, and with something added. I HATED him. 'Henceforward,' I said to myself, 'I will not submit or apologise; there shall be war.'

16th February 1839.

I left my letter unfinished. War? How can I make war or continue at war? I could not keep up the struggle for a week. I am so framed that I must make peace with those with whom I have disagreed or I must fly. I would take nine steps out of the ten--nay, the whole ten which divide me from dear friends; I would say that this or that was not my meaning. I would abandon all arguing and wash away differences with sheer affection. Toward Charles I cannot stir. Sometimes, although but seldom, my brother Jim and I have quarrelled. Five minutes afterwards we have been in one another's arms and the angry words were as though they had never been spoken. Forgiveness is not a remission of consequences on repentance. It is simply love, a love so strong that in its heat the offence vanishes. Without love--and so far Charles is right--forgiveness even of the smallest mistake is impossible.

It is a thick, dark fog again this morning. At Blackdeep most likely it is bright sunlight.

Charles does not seem to suspect that his indifference has any effect on me. I suppose he is unable to conceive my world or any world but his own. If he were at Blackdeep now and the sun were shining, would it be to him a glowing, blessed ball of fire?

He may have just as much right to complain of me as I have to complain of him. He sets store on the qualities necessary for his business, and he knows what store the partners set on those qualities in him. No doubt they are of great importance to everybody. It must be hard for him to live with a woman who takes so little interest in city affairs and makes so much of what to him is of no importance. He looks down upon me as though I were not able to talk on any subject which, for its comprehension, requires intelligence. If he had married Miss Stagg, who has doubled the drapery business at Ely, they might have agreed together very well.

This is true, but I come back to myself. The virtues are not enough for me. Life with them alone is not worth the trouble of getting up in the morning. I thirst for you: I shall come, whatever may happen.

BLACKDEEP, 20th February 1839.

I cannot write an answer to your letter. You must come. I could not make up my mind last night, but this morning the light, the direction, as my mother used to say, was like a star. How you remind me of her! not in your lot but in your ways, and she had your black hair. She was a stranger to these parts. Where your grandfather first saw her I do not know, but she was from the hill country in the far south-west. She never would hear anything against our flats. When folk asked her if she did not miss the hills, she turned on them as if she had been born in the Fens and said she had found something in them better than hills. But how I do wander on! That has nothing to do with you now, although I could tell you, if it were worth while, how it came into my head. I shall look out for you this week.

LOMBARD STREET, 14th March 1839.

Dear Esther,--You have now been away three weeks and I shall be glad to hear when you intend to return. Your mother I hope is better, and if she is not, I trust you will see that your absence cannot be indefinitely prolonged. I am writing at the Bank, and your reply marked 'Private' should be addressed here. Some changes, now almost completed, are being made in the lower rooms at Homerton which will give me one for any business of my own.--Your affectionate husband,

CHARLES CRAGGS.

BLACKDEEP, 17th March 1839.

Dear Charles,--My mother is not well, and I shall be grateful to you if you will give me another week. I am sorry you have made alterations in the house without saying anything to me. It will be better now that I should not come back till they are finished.--Your affectionate wife,

ESTHER CRAGGS.

HOMERTON, 19th March 1839.



The paperhangers and painters have left; the carpets will be laid and the furniture arranged to-day. I trust to see you when I come home on the 22nd instant. This will nearly give you the week you desired. I shall be late at the Bank on the 22nd, but if you are fatigued with your journey there is no reason why you should not retire to rest, and we will meet in the morning.

BLACKDEEP, 21st March 1839.

I had hoped for a little delay, for I shrank from the necessity of announcing my resolve, although it has for some time been fixed. I shall not return. The reason for my refusal shall be given with perfect sincerity. I do not love you, and you do not love me. I ought not to have married you, and I can but plead the blindness of youth, which for you is a poor excuse. I shall be punished for the remainder of my days, and not the least part of the punishment will be that I have done you a grievous injury. Worse, however--ten thousand times worse--would it be for both of us if we were to continue chained together in apathy or hatred. I would die for you this moment to make good what you have lost through me, but to live with you as your wife would be a crime of which I dare not be guilty. This is all, and this is enough.

HOMERTON, 24th March 1839.

Madam,--I am not surprised at the contents of your letter of the 21st instant, nor am I surprised that your determination should have been made known to me from your mother's house. I have no doubt that she has done her best to inflame you against me. How she contrives to reconcile with her religion her advice to her daughter to break a divine law, I will not inquire. I am not going to remonstrate with you; I will not humiliate myself by asking you to reconsider your resolution. I will, however, remind you of one or two facts, and point out to you the consequences of your action, so that hereafter you may be unable to plead you were not forewarned.

You will please bear in mind that YOU have abandoned ME; I have not abandoned you. You disappointed me: my house was not managed in accordance with my wishes, but I was prepared to accept the consequences of what I did deliberately and I desired to avoid open rupture. I hoped that in time you would learn by experience that the maxims which control my conduct rest on a solid basis; that I was at least to be esteemed, and that we might live together in harmony. I repeat, you have cast me off, though I was willing you should stay.

You confess you have done me a wrong, but have you reflected how great that wrong is? I have no legal grounds for divorce, and you therefore prevent me from marrying again. You have damaged my position in the Bank. Many of my colleagues, envious of my success, will naturally seize their opportunity and propagate false reports, and I therefore inform you that I shall require of you a document which my solicitor will prepare, completely exonerating me. This will be necessary for my protection. A Bank manager's reputation is extremely sensitive, and a notorious infringement of any article of the moral code would in many quarters cause his commercial honesty

to be suspected.

You allege that you are sincere, but I can hardly acquit you of hypocrisy. Your sentimental excuse for deserting me is suspicious.

When the document just mentioned has been signed, I shall send a copy of it to the rector of your parish. Without it he will know nothing but what you and your mother tell him, and he will be in a false position.

I hereby caution you that I shall not lose sight of you, and if at any time proof of improper relationship should be obtained, I shall take advantage of it.

CHARLES CRAGGS.

BLACKDEEP, 26th March 1839.

Dearest Mother,--This letter came this morning, and I send it at once to you at Ely. Am I to answer it? When I read some parts I wished he had been near me that I might have caught him by the throat. I should have exulted that for once I could move him, although it should be by terror. It is strange that not until now did I know he was so brutal. Notice that, according to him, if a wife leaves her husband it must be for a rival. He does not understand how much she can hate him, body and soul, and with no thought of a lover; that her loathing needs no other passion to inflame it, and that the touch of his clean finger may be worse to her than a leper's embrace.

When I had written so far I was afraid. I knelt down and cried to our Father who is in Heaven.--Your loving daughter,

ESTHER.

ELY, 28th March 1839.

You must not reply. I have always tried not to answer back if it will do no good. In a way, I am not sorry he has written in this style to you. It proves that the leading I had was true. I feared cruel claws ever since I first set eyes on him notwithstanding he was so even-tempered, and I am glad he has not shown them till you are safe in Blackdeep. I know what you will have to go through in time to come, but for all that I am sure I am right and that you are right. I am more sure than ever. I am sorry for him, but he will soon settle down and rejoice that you have gone. That spiteful word about my religion does not disturb me. I have my own religion. I have brought up my children in it. I have taught them to fear God and to love the Lord Jesus Christ, who has stood by me in all my troubles and guided me in all my straits whenever I have been willing to wait His time. I bless God, my dear child, that you have not gone away from your mother's faith--ay, and your father's too--and that you can still pray to your Heavenly Father in your distress. Be thankful you have been spared the worst, that you have not grown hard.

I shall come back this week; your aunt wants you here, and a change

will do you good.

BLACKDEEP, 10th April 1839.

I am glad you went to Ely, for yesterday the parson called to see you. He had received a letter from Mr. Craggs, and considered it his duty as a Christian minister to endeavour to bring about a reconciliation. I told him at once he might spare himself the pains, for they would be useless. He replied that I ought to think of the example. Well, at that I broke out. I asked him whether that slut of a Quimby girl wasn't a worse example, who at five-and-twenty had married Horrocks, the hoary old wretch, for his money, and leads him a dog's life? Had he ever warned either of them? They go to church regular. I was very free, and I said I thought it was a bright example that a woman should have given up a fine house and money in London because there was no love with them, and should have come back to her mother at Blackdeep. Besides, I added, why should my Esther suffer a living death for years for the sake of the folk hereabouts? They weren't worth it. She was too precious for that. 'Oh!' but he went on again, 'they have souls to be saved. Husbands and wives may be led to imagine there is no harm in separating, and may yield to the temptations of unlawful love.' This made me very hot, and I gave it him back sharp that a sinner could find in the Bible itself an excuse for his sin.

He said no more except that it would be a nice scandal for the Dissenters, and that he trusted God would bring me into a better frame of mind. He then went away. His reasoning went in at one ear and out at the other. Parsons are bound to preach by rule. It is all general: it doesn't fit the ins and outs.

BLACKDEEP, 1st May 1839.

You had better stop at Ely as long as you can. Everybody is gossiping, for parson has told the story as he heard it from your husband. It is worse for Jim than for me, as he goes about among people here, and although they daren't say anything to him about you, there is no mistake as to what they think. Mrs. Horrocks inquired after me, and said she was sorry to hear of my trouble. Jim told her I was quite well, and that the two cows were now all right. He wouldn't let her see he knew what she meant.

Last night, Jim, who has been talking for a twelvemonth past about going to his cousin in America, asked me whether I would not be willing to leave. I have always set my face against it. To turn my back on the old house and the Fen, to begin again at my time of life in a new strange world would be the death of me. More than ever now am I determined to end my days here. They'd say at once we had fled. No, here we'll bide and face it out.

They did not fly. Years went on, and to the astonishment of their neighbours--perhaps they were a little sorry--there was no sign that Esther had a lover. Mrs. Horrocks's eyes were feline, but she was obliged to admit she was at fault. Jim married, and an agreeable opportunity was presented for the expression of amazement that his wife's father and mother felt safe in allowing their child to enter

such a family--but then she came from Norwich. The majority of the poor in Blackdeep Fen sided with the Suttons, and here and there a pagan farmer boldly declared that old Mrs. Sutton and her daughter were of a right good sort, and that there was not a straightfarrarder man than Jim in Ely market. But to respectable Blackdeep society the Suttons remained a vexatious knot which it could not unpick and lay straight. Nobody, as Mrs. Horrocks observed, knew how to take them. Mrs. Craggs wore her wedding-ring, and when she was in Mrs. Jarvis's shop looked her straight in the face and asked for what she wanted as if she were the parson's wife. But that, according to Mrs. Horrocks, just showed her impudence. 'What a time that poor Craggs in London must have had of it:' (Mr. Horrocks was not present). 'Lord! how I do pity the man.' 'And yet,' added Mrs. Jarvis, 'and YET, you might eat your dinner off Mrs. Craggs's floor. I call it hers, for she cleans it.' Clearly the living-room ought to have been a pigsty. It was particularly annoying that, although Mrs. Sutton and her family by absence from church had become infidels, they did not go to the devil openly as they ought to do, and thereby relieve Blackdeep of that pain and even hatred which are begotten by an obstinate exception to what would otherwise be a general law. Parson often preached that everybody was either a sheep or a goat. The Suttons were not sheep--that was certain; and yet it was difficult to classify them as ordinary Blackdeep goats, creatures with horns. Mrs. Jarvis had heard that there was a peculiar breed of goats with sheep's wool and without horns. 'Esther Craggs,' she maintained, 'will one day show us what she's after; mark my word, you'll see. If that brazen face means nothing, then I'm stone-blind.'

After Jim's marriage Esther continued to manage the house and the dairy, leaving the cooking to her sister-in-law and the needlework to her mother. Soon after five o'clock on a bright summer morning the labourer going to his work heard the unbarring of Mrs. Sutton's shutters and the withdrawal of bolts. The casement windows and the door were then flung open, and Esther generally came into the doorway and for a few minutes faced the sun. She did not shut herself up. She walked the village like a queen, and no Fen farmer or squireling ventured to jest with her. Mrs. Jarvis could not be brought to admit her stone-blindness and clung to the theory of somebody in London; but as Esther never went to London, and nobody from London came to her, and the postmistress swore no letters passed between London and the Sutton family, Mrs. Jarvis became a little distrusted, although some of her acquaintances believed her predictions with greater firmness as they remained unfulfilled. 'I don't care what you may say; don't tell me,' was her reply to sceptical objections, and it carried great weight.

Esther died of the Blackdeep fever in the fifth year after she came home. As soon as he received the news of her death Mr. Craggs married Mrs. Perkins, who had been twelve months a widow, was admitted into partnership, and is now one of the most respected men in the City.

KATE RADCLIFFE

In 1844 there were living between Carlisle and Keswick, Robert Radcliffe and his only child Kate. They belonged to an ancient Roman Catholic family, remotely connected with the Earl of Derwentwater who was executed in 1716; but Robert Radcliffe's father had departed from the faith of his ancestors, and his descendants, excepting one, had remained Protestant. Robert had inherited a small estate and had not been brought up to any profession. He had been at Cambridge, and at one time it was thought he might become a clergyman, but he had no call that way, and returned to Cumberland after his father's death to occupy himself with his garden and books. He was a good scholar and had a library of some three thousand volumes. He married when he was about eight-and-twenty, but his wife died two years after Kate was born, and he did not marry again. He took no particular pleasure in field sports except angling, nor in the gaities of county society, although he was not a recluse and was on friendly terms with most of his neighbours. He was fond of wandering in his own country, and knew every mountain and every pass for twenty miles round him. His daughter was generally his companion, sometimes on her pony and sometimes on foot. Neither of them had been abroad, save once to France when she was about sixteen. They cared little for travelling in foreign parts, and he always said he got nothing out of a place in which he was a lodger. He went once a Sunday to the village church: he was patron of the living. The sermons were short and simple. Theological questions did not much concern him, and he found in Horace, Montaigne, Swift, and the County History whatever mental exercise he needed. So far he was the son of his father, but his mother had her share in him. She was a strange creature, often shaken by presentiments. Years after she was married her husband had to go to Penrith on some business which she knew would keep him there for a night. She got it into her head when she was alone in the evening that something had happened to him. She could not go to bed nor sit still, and at three o'clock in the morning she called up her servant and bade him saddle his horse and hers. Off they started for Penrith, and she appeared before her astonished husband just as he was leaving his room at the inn for an early breakfast. She rushed speechless into his arms and sobbed.

'What is the matter?' he cried.

'Nothing.'

'Nothing wrong at home?'

'Nothing.'

She passed her hands slowly over his face as if to reassure herself, pushed back his hair, looked in his eyes, took both his hands and said softly, 'Not another word, please.'

He understood her, at least in part. She remained quietly at the inn till the afternoon and then went home with him. She was also peculiar in her continual reference to first principles. The meaningless traditions, which we mistake for things, to her were nothing. She constantly asked, 'why not?' and was therefore dangerous. 'If you go on asking "why not?"' said her aunt to her once, 'mark me you'll come to some harm.' She saw realities, and yet--it was singular--she saw ghosts. Mr. Radcliffe did not obviously resemble his mother, nor did Kate, and yet across both of

them there often shot clear, and at times even flashing gleams, indisputable evidence that in son and granddaughter she still lived. It was in his relationship to his daughter that Mr. Radcliffe betrayed his mother's blood. His reading, as we have said, was in Horace, Montaigne, and Swift, but if Kate went away for no longer than a couple of days to her cousins at Penrith, he used to watch her departure till she was hidden at the first bend of the road about half a mile distant, and then when he went back to his room and looked at her empty chair, a half-mad, unconquerable melancholy overcame him. It was not to be explained by anxiety. It was inexplicable, a revelation of something in him dark and terrible. In 1844 Kate Radcliffe was twenty-four years old. She had never been handsome, and when she was sixteen her pony had missed its footing on a treacherous mountain track and she narrowly escaped with her life. She was thrown on a rock, and her forehead was crossed henceforth beyond remedy with a long broad mark. She had never cared much for company, and her disfigurement made her care for it less. She could not help feeling that everybody noticed it, and most people in truth noticed nothing else. She was 'the girl with a scar.' As time went on, this self-consciousness, or rather consciousness of herself as the scar, diminished, but her indifference remained, other reasons for it being added. She never had a lover; and, indeed, what man could be expected to take to himself as wife even the wisest and most affectionate of women whose brow was indented? She was advised to wear some kind of head-gear which would hide her misfortune, but she refused. 'Everybody,' she said, 'would know what was behind, and I will not be harassed by concealment.' To her father her accident did but the more endear her. There is no love so wild, no, not even the love of a mistress, as that which is sometimes found in a father or mother for a child, and often for one who is physically or even mentally defective. It is not subject to satiety and lassitude, and grows with age. To Kate also her father was more than the whole world of men and women. The best of friends weary of one another and large spaces of separation are necessary, but these two were always happy together. Theirs was the blessed intimacy which is never unmeaning and yet can endure silence. They never felt that unpleasant stricture of the chest caused by a search for entertainment or for some subject of conversation.

Nevertheless, although Mr. Radcliffe was so much to Kate, she was herself, and consequently had wants which were not his. There had been born in her before 1844 a passion which could not be satisfied by any human being, a leaning forward and outward to something she knew not what. The sun rose over the fells; they were purple in sunset; the constellations slowly climbed the eastern sky on a clear night, and her heart lay bare: she wondered, she was bowed down with awe, and she also longed unspeakably. When she was about twenty-five years old she accepted an invitation to spend a few weeks with a friend in London. She was fond of music, and on her first Sunday she could not resist the temptation to hear a mass by Mozart in Saint Mary's, Moorfields. She was overpowered, and something moved in her soul which she had never felt in the church at home. She worshipped at Saint Mary's several times afterwards, and her friend rallied her on conversion to Roman Catholicism.

'It is the music, Kate.'

'Well, then, why not?'

'The music is so tender, so overwhelming, that thinking is impossible.'

'Is thinking the only way to the truth--putting two and two together? The noblest truth comes with music. More solid truth has been demonstrated by a song, a march, or a hymn, than by famous political and theological treatises. But I am not a Roman Catholic.'

'Oh yes! I know what you mean: it is a poetical way of saying that music stimulates aspiration.'

'No, that is not what I mean. If there be such a mental operation as passionless thinking it does not lead to much. Emotion makes intellectual discoveries.'

'I do not understand you. Revealed religion rests on intelligent conviction. It is the doctrine of a Creator, of law, of sin, of redemption, of future happiness and misery.'

'That is to say, your religion stands on authority or logic. But I cannot dispute with you. The beliefs by which some of us live--"belief" is not the right word--are not begotten or strengthened and cannot be overthrown by argument. We dare not expose them, but if they were to fail, we should welcome death and annihilation. I repeat, I am not a Roman Catholic.'

Kate went back to her father and her native hills. The drama of Saint Mary Moorfields was continually before her eyes, and Mozart's music was continually in her ears. An ideal human being had been revealed to her who understood her, pitied her, and loved her. She was no longer a mere atom of dust, unnoticed amongst millions of millions. But the intensity of her faith gave birth to fear and doubt. Her own words recurred to her, but she was forced to admit that she must depend upon evidence. If Christ were nothing but a legend, she might as well kneel to a mist.

In those days, within five miles of her father's house was a small Roman Catholic chapel. The priest had been well educated, but he had never questioned any of the dogmas imposed on him as a child. One Sunday morning, when her father did not go to church, Kate walked over to the chapel and heard mass. The contrast with Saint Mary Moorfields was great. The sermon disappointed her. It was little more than simple insistence on ritual duty. She reflected, however, that it was not addressed to her, but to those who had been brought up to believe. As she walked home a strange conflict arose in her. On the one hand were her imperious needs, which almost compelled assumption of fact; but the wind blew, and when she looked up the clouds sailed over the mountains. She sat on a grey rock to rest. It had lain there for thousands of years, and she was reminded of the Druid circle above the Greta. She could get no further with her thinking, and knelt down and prayed for light. It is of all prayers the most sincere, but she was not answered--at least not then. The next Sunday she went again to mass, and she had half a mind to signify her wish to confess, but what could she confess? She was burdened with no sins, and in confession she could not fully explain her case. She determined she would write to the priest and ask him to grant her an interview.

Her desertion of the parish church was observed, and of course nobody was surprised that Miss Radcliffe had turned Papist. The old Radcliffes were all Papists; there was Popery in the blood, and it came out like the gout, missing a couple of generations. Then again there was the scar, and Miss Radcliffe would never be married. One of the neighbours who suggested the scar and maidenhood as a sufficient reason for apostasy was a retired mill-owner, who was a Wesleyan Methodist when he was in business in Manchester, but had become ostentatiously Anglican when he retired into the country. The village blacksmith, whose ancestors had worked at the same forge since the days of Queen Elizabeth, was a fearless gentleman, and hated the mill-owner as an upstart. He therefore made reply that 'other people changed their religion because they wanted to be respectable and get folk like the Radcliffes to visit them--which they won't,' the last words being spoken with emphasis and scorn.

Mr. Radcliffe was much disturbed. To him Roman Catholicism was superstition, and he wondered how any rational person could submit to it. To be sure he assented every week to supernatural history and doctrines presented to him in his own parish church, but to these he was accustomed, and his reason, acute as it was, made no objection. There was another cause for his distress. His only sister, whom he tenderly loved, had become a foreign nun and was lost to him for ever. His life was bound up with his child, and he dreaded intervention. It is all very well to say that religious differences need not be a bar to friendship. This is one of the commonplaces of people who understand neither friendship nor religion. When Kate and he went for their long walks together, they would no longer see the same hills; and there would always be something behind her affection for him and above it. He was moodily jealous, and it was unendurable that he should be supplanted by an intruder who would hear secrets which were not entrusted to a parent. There was still some hope. He did not know how far she had gone; and he resolved to speak to her. One morning, as soon as breakfast was over, he proposed an excursion; he could talk more freely in the open air. After a few minutes' indifferent conversation he asked her abruptly if she was a Roman Catholic.

'I cannot say.'

'Cannot say! Do you still belong to our church?'

'Father, do not question me.'

'Ah! I see what has happened; it is lawful to hide from me, to prevaricate and perhaps'--he checked himself. 'You know that ever since you have grown up I have hidden nothing from you. I have told you everything about my own affairs: I have asked your counsel, for I am old, and the wisdom of an old man is often folly. You have also told me everything: you have opened your heart to me. Think of what you have said to me: I have been mother and father to you. The trouble to me is not merely that you believe in transubstantiation and I do not, but that there is something in you which you reserve for a stranger. What has come to you?--for God's sake keep close to me for the few remaining years or months of my life. Have you reflected on the absurdities of Romanism? Is it possible that my Kate should kneel at the feet of an ignorant priest!'



She was silent. She knew as little as her father of Roman Catholic history and creeds.

He went on:

'Your aunt, my dear sister--a more beautiful creature never walked this earth--I do not know if she is alive or dead. Can that be true which kills love?'

'Father, father,' she cried, sobbing, 'nothing can separate us!'

He said no more on that subject, and seemed to recover his peace of mind, although he was not really at rest. He was getting into years and he saw that words were useless and that he must wait the issue of forces which were beyond his control. 'If she is to go, she must go: resistance will make it worse for me: I must thank God if anything of her is left for me. Thus spoke the weary submission of age, but it was not final, and the half-savage desire for his child's undivided love awoke in him again, and he prayed that if he could not have it his end might soon come.

Kate's love for her father was deep, but she could not move a single step merely to pacify him. She could have yielded herself entirely to him in worldly matters; she would have doubted many of her strongest beliefs if he had contested them; she would have given up all her happiness for him; she would have died for him; but she could not let go the faintest of her religious dreams, although it was impossible to put them into words.

She wrote her letter to the priest. She found him living in a cottage and was somewhat taken aback when she entered.

There were hardly any books to be seen, but a crucifix hung on the wall.

'Miss Radcliffe--an old and honoured name! What can be the object of your visit?'

'Father, I am in distress. I want something which perhaps you can give.'

'Ah, my child, I understand. You would like to confess, but you are Protestant; I cannot absolve you. Return to the true fold and you can be released.'

'O Father, I have committed no crime; I come to you because I doubt and I MUST believe.'

The holy father was unused to such a penitent, and was perplexed and agitated.

'Doubt, my child--yes, even the faithful are sometimes troubled with doubt, a temptation from the Enemy of souls. Were you one of the flock I could prescribe for you. But perhaps you mean doubt of the heresies of your communion. In that case I can recommend a little manual. Take it away with you, study it, and see me again.'

'Father,' said Kate, pointing to the crucifix, 'did He, the Son of

God, Son of the Virgin, really live on this earth? did He break His heart for me? If He did, I am saved.'

'Surely your own minister has instructed you on this point; it is the foundation even of Protestantism.'

'I prefer to seek instruction and guidance from you; answer me this one question.'

'Satan has never thus assaulted me, and I have never heard of any such suggestion to one of my people. I am a poor parish priest. Take the manual. It has been compiled by learned men: read it carefully with prayer: I also will pray for you that you may be gathered into the eternal Church.'

Kate took the manual and went home. There was but little history in it, but there was much about the person of Christ. He was man and God 'without confusion and without change.' As man he had to learn as other men learn, and, as God, he knew everything. He was sinless, and the lusts of the flesh had no power over him, but he had a human body, and was necessarily subject to its infirmities. His human nature was derived from his mother. God was not born from her, and yet she was the mother of God. Kate was able to see that some part of what looked like sheer contradiction was the conjunction of opposites from which it is impossible to escape in the attempt to express the Infinite, but in the manual this contradiction was presented with repulsive hardness. The compiler desired to subjugate and depose the reason. This was not the Christ she wanted. She hungered for the God, the Man, at whose feet she could have fallen: she would have washed them with tears, she would have wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed them and anointed them with ointment. She could have followed Him to the court of the High Priest and have gloried in discipleship: she could have taken the thief's place beside Him on the cross, and she would not have exchanged those moments of torture in companionship with Him for a life of earthly bliss. But--that fatal BUT--did He ever live, did He still live, did He love her, did He know how much she loved Him? Thus it has always been. There is an impulse in man which drives him to faith; the commonplace world does not satisfy him; he is forced to assume a divine object for his homage and love, and when he goes out into the fields it has vanished.

Kate did not call again upon the priest. Her father came to the conclusion that there was nothing in his suspicions, and that she had been suffering from one of her not uncommon fits of nervous restlessness and depression. This was a mercy, for his bodily health had begun to fail. The winter was very severe, and in the dark days just before Christmas he took to his bed and presently died, having suffered no pain and with no obscuration of his mind until the last ten minutes. Kate had nursed him with pious care: she was alone with him and closed his eyes about four o'clock in the morning. At first she was overcome with hysterical passion, and this was succeeded by shapeless thoughts which streamed up in her incessantly as the mists stream up from a valley at sunrise. Not until day broke did she leave the room and waken the household.

An epoch is created rather by the person than by the event. The experience which changes one man is nothing to another. Some will pass through life without a mark from anything that happens to them;

others are transformed by a smile or a cloud. So also the same experience will turn different men into totally different paths. Kate had never seen death before. It smote her with such force that for months and months her father was before her eyes and she could not convince herself that he was not with her. But she went no further towards Roman Catholicism. She let the facts stand. Once when she was walking on the moors she stretched out her arms again and was urged to pray, but she felt that her prayer would be loss of strength and she stood erect. For nearly a twelvemonth she simply endured. She remembered a story in an old Amulet, one of a series of annuals, bound in crimson cloth and fashionable at that time, of a sailor stranded on a rock in the sea. The waves rose to his lips, but he threw back his head, and at that moment there was a pause and the tide turned. It might turn for her or it might not; she must not move. She read scarcely any books and lived much in the open air. The autumn was one of extraordinary splendour. September rains after a dry summer washed the air and filled the tarns and becks. Wherever she went she was accompanied by that most delicious sound of falling waters. The clouds, which through July and August had been nothing but undefined, barren vapour, gathered themselves together and the interspaces of sky were once more brilliantly blue. Day after day earth and heaven were almost too beautiful, for it was painful that her finite apprehension should be unequal to such infinite loveliness. She received no such answer as that for which she hoped when she knelt by the grey rock, but that is the way with the celestial powers; they reply to our passionate demands by putting them aside and giving us that for which we did not ask. WE KNOW NOT HOW TO PRAY AS WE OUGHT.

#### MR. WHITTAKER'S RETIREMENT

I had been a partner in the house of Whittaker, Johnson, and Marsh, in the wholesale drug trade, for twenty-five years, and, for the last ten years, senior partner. For the first nine years of my seniority I was not only nominally, but practically, the head of the firm. I had ceased to occupy myself with details, but nothing of importance was concluded without consulting me: I was the pivot on which the management turned. In the tenth year, after a long illness, my wife died: I was very ill myself, and for months not a paper was sent to me. When I returned to work I found that the junior partners, who were pushing men, had distributed between them what I was accustomed to do, and that some changes which they thought to be indispensable had been made. I resumed my duties as well as I could, but it was difficult to pick up the dropped threads, and I was dependent for explanation upon my subordinates.

Many transactions too, from a desire to avoid worrying me, were carried through without my knowledge, although formerly, as a matter of course, they would have been submitted to me. Strangers, when they called, asked to see Johnson or Marsh. I directed the messenger that they were to be shown into my room if I was disengaged. This was a failure, for, when they came, I was obliged to ask for help, which was not given very generously. Sometimes I sent for the papers, but it took a long time to read them, and my visitors became impatient. During one of these interviews, I

remember that I was sorely perplexed, but I had managed to say something loosely with no particular meaning. Johnson came in and at once took up the case, argued for ten minutes while I sat silent and helpless, and an arrangement was concluded in which I really had no voice whatever. Now and then I strove to assert myself by disapproval of suggestions offered to me, but in the end was generally forced to admit I was wrong. We had a very large order for which we were obliged to make special arrangements with manufacturers. Both Johnson and Marsh were of opinion that a particular firm which had often supplied us was not to be trusted, as our dealings with them during my absence had been unsatisfactory. I was inclined foolishly but naturally, to attach little importance to anything which had been done entirely without me, ridiculed their objections, and forced my decision upon them. The firm broke down; our contract with them was cancelled; another had to be made under pressure, and we lost about five hundred pounds. Although I was not reminded of my responsibility in so many words, I knew that I was solely to blame; I became more than ever convinced I was useless, and I was much dejected. At last I made up my mind to retire. I was urged to remain, but not, as I imagined, with any great earnestness, and on the 31st December 1856 I left the office in Eastcheap never to enter it again.

For the first two or three weeks I enjoyed my freedom, but when they had passed I had had enough of it. I HAD NOTHING TO DO! Every day at the hours when business was at its height, I thought of the hurry, of the inquiries, of the people waiting in the anteroom, of the ringing of bells, of the rapid instructions to clerks, of the consultations after the letters were opened, of our anxious deliberations, of the journeys to Scotland at an hour's notice, and of the interviews with customers. I pictured to myself that all this still went on, but went on without me, while I had no better occupation than to unpack a parcel, pick the knots out of the string, and put it in a string-box. I saw my happy neighbours drive off in the morning and return in the evening. I envied them the haste, which I had so often cursed, over breakfast. I envied them, while I took an hour over lunch, the chop devoured in ten minutes; I envied them the weariness with which they dragged themselves along their gravel-paths, half an hour late for dinner. I was thrown almost entirely amongst women. I had no children, but a niece thirty-five years old, devoted to evangelical church affairs, kept house for me, and she had a multitude of female acquaintances, two or three of whom called every afternoon. Sometimes, to relieve my loneliness, I took afternoon tea, and almost invariably saw the curate. I was the only man present. It was just as if, being strong, healthy, and blessed with a good set of teeth, I were being fed on water-gruel. The bird-wittedness, the absence of resistance and of difficulty, were intolerable. The curate, and occasionally the rector, tried to engage me, as I was a good subscriber, in discussion on church affairs, but there seemed to me to be nothing in these which required the force which was necessary for the commonest day in the City. Mrs. Coleman and the rector were once talking together most earnestly when I entered the room, and I instinctively sat down beside them, but I found that the subject of their eager debate was the allotment of stalls at a bazaar. They were really excited--stirred I fully admit to their depths. I believe they were more absorbed and anxious than I was on that never-to-be-forgotten morning when Mortons and Nicholsons both failed, and for two hours it was just a toss-up whether we should

not go too.

I went with my niece one day to St. Paul's Churchyard to choose a gown, but it was too much for me to be in a draper's shop when the brokers' drug sales were just beginning. I left my niece, walked round the Churchyard as fast as I could, trying to make people believe I was busy, and just as I came to Doctors Commons I stumbled against Larkins, who used to travel for Jackman and Larkins.

'Hullo, Whittaker!' said he, 'haven't seen you since you left. Lucky dog! Wish I could do the same. Ta-ta; can't stop.'

A year ago Mr. Larkins, with the most pressing engagement in front of him, would have spared me just as much time as I liked to give him.

Formerly I woke up (sometimes, it is true, after a restless night) with the feeling that before me lay a day of adventure. I did not know what was in my letters, nor what might happen. Now, when I rose I had nothing to anticipate but fifteen hours of monotony varied only by my meals. My niece proposed that I should belong to a club, but the members of clubs were not of my caste. I had taken a pride in my garden and determined I would attend to it more myself. I bought gardening books, but the gardener knew far more than I could ever hope to know, and I could not displace him. I had been in the habit of looking through a microscope in the evening, although I did not understand any science in which the microscope is useful, and my slides were bought ready-made. I brought it out now in the daytime, but I was soon weary of it and sold it. We went to Worthing for a month. We had what were called comfortable lodgings and the weather was fine, but if I had been left to myself I should have gone back to Stockwell directly my boxes were unpacked. We drove eastwards as far as we could and then westward, and after that there was nothing more to be done except to do the same thing over again. At the end of the first week I could stand it no longer, and we returned. I fancied my liver was out of order and consulted a physician. He gave me some medicine and urged me to 'cultivate cheerful society,' and to take more exercise. I therefore tried long walks, and often extended them beyond Croydon, and once as far as Reigate, but I had never been accustomed to walking by myself, and as I knew the names of scarcely half-a-dozen birds or trees, my excursions gave me no pleasure. I have stood on Banstead Downs in the blaze of sunlight on a still October morning, and when I saw the smoke-cloud black as night hang over the horizon northwards, I have longed with the yearning of an imprisoned convict to be the meanest of the blessed souls enveloped in it.

I determined at last to break up my household at Stockwell, to move far away into the country; to breed fowls--an occupation which I was assured was very profitable and very entertaining; dismiss my niece and marry again. I began to consider which lady of those whom I knew would suit me best, and I found one who was exactly the person I wanted. She was about thirty-five years old, was cheerful, fond of going out (I never was), a good housekeeper, played the piano fairly well, and, as the daughter of a retired major in the Army, had a certain air and manner which distinguished her from the wives and daughters of our set and would secure for me an acquaintance with the country gentlefolk, from which, without her, I should probably be debarred. She had also told me when I mentioned my

project to her, but saying nothing about marriage, that she doted on fowls--they had such pretty ways. As it was obviously prudent not to engage myself until I knew more of her, I instigated my niece in a careless way to invite her to stay a fortnight with us. She came, and once or twice I was on the verge of saying something decisive to her, but I could not. A strange terror of change in my way of life took hold upon me. I should now have to be more at home, and although I might occupy myself with the fowls during the morning and afternoon, the evening must be spent in company, and I could not endure for more than half an hour a drawing-room after dinner. There was another reason for hesitation. I could see the lady would accept me if I proposed to her, but I was not quite sure why. She would in all probability survive me, and I fancied that her hope of survival might be her main reason for consenting. I gave her up, but no sooner had she left us than I found myself impelled to make an offer to a handsome girl of eight-and-twenty who I was ass enough to dream might love me. I was happily saved by an accident not worth relating, and although I afterwards dwelt much upon the charms of two or three other ladies and settled with myself I would take one of them, nothing came of my resolution. I was greatly distressed by this growing indecision. It began to haunt me. If I made up my mind to-day that I would do this or that, I always had on the morrow twenty reasons for not doing it. I was never troubled with this malady in Eastcheap. I was told that decay in the power of willing was one of the symptoms of softening of the brain, and this then was what was really the matter with me! It might last for years! Wretched creature! my life was to be nothing better than that of the horse in Bewick's terrible picture. I was 'waiting for death.'

Part of my income was derived from interest on money lent to a cousin. Without any warning I had a letter to say that he was bankrupt, and that his estate would probably not pay eighteenpence in the pound. It was quite clear that I must economise, and what to do and whither to go was an insoluble problem to me. By chance I met an old City acquaintance who told me of a 'good thing' in Spanish bonds which, when information was disclosed which he possessed, were certain to rise twenty per cent. If what he said was true--and I had no reason to doubt him--I could easily get back without much risk about two-thirds of the money I had lost. Had I been in full work, I do not believe I should have wasted a shilling on the speculation, but the excitement attracted me, and I ventured a considerable sum. In about a fortnight there was a sudden jump of two per cent. in my securities, and I was so much elated that I determined to go farther. I doubled my stake; in three weeks another rise was announced; I again increased the investment, and now I watched the market with feverish eagerness. One day I was downstairs a quarter of an hour earlier than usual waiting for the boy who brought the paper.

I tore it open and to my horror saw that there was a panic on the Stock Exchange; my bonds were worthless, and I was ruined.

I had always secretly feared that this would happen, and that I should be so distracted as to lose my reason. To my surprise, I was never more self-possessed, and I was not so miserable as might have been expected. I at once gave notice of discharge to my servants, sold nearly all my furniture and let my house. I was offered help, but declined it. I moved into a little villa in one of the new

roads then being made at Brixton, and found that I possessed a capital which, placed in Consols--for I would not trust anything but the public funds--brought me one hundred and twenty-five pounds a year. This was not enough for my niece, myself and a maid, and I was forced to consider whether I could not obtain some employment. To return to Eastcheap was clearly out of the question, but there was a possibility, although I was fifty-six, that my experience might make me useful elsewhere. I therefore called on Jackman and Larkins at twelve o'clock, the hour at which I knew there was a chance of finding them able to see me. During my prosperity I always walked straight into their room marked 'private,' but now I went into the clerks' office, took off my hat and modestly inquired if either Mr. Jackman or Mr. Larkins could spare me a minute. I was not asked to sit down--I, to whom these very clerks a little over a twelvemonth ago would have risen when I entered; but my message was taken, and I was told in reply that both Mr. Jackman and Mr. Larkins were engaged. I was bold enough to send in another message and was informed I might call in two hours' time. I went out, crossed London Bridge, and seeing the doors of St. Saviour's, Southwark, open, rested there awhile. When I returned at the end of two hours, I had to wait another ten minutes until a luncheon tray came out. A bell then rang, which a clerk answered, and in about five minutes, with a 'come this way' I was ushered into the presence of Jackman, who was reading the newspaper with a decanter and a glass of sherry by his side.

'Well, Whittaker, what brings you here? Ought to be looking after your grapes at Stockwell--but I forgot; heard you'd given up grape-growing. Ah! odd thing, a man never retires, but he gets into some mess; marries or dabbles on the Stock Exchange. I've known lots of cases like yours. What can we do for you? Times are horribly bad.' Jackman evidently thought I was going to borrow some money of him, and his tone altered when he found I did not come on that errand.

'I was very sorry--really I was, my dear fellow--to hear of your loss, but it was a damned foolish thing to do, excuse me.'

'Mr. Jackman,' said I, 'I have not lost all my property, but I cannot quite live on what is left. Can you give me some work? My connection and knowledge of your business may be of some service.' I had put hundreds of pounds in this man's pocket, but forbore to urge this claim upon him.

'Delighted, I am sure, if it were possible, but we have no vacancy, and, to be quite plain with you, you are much too old. We could get more out of a boy at ten shillings a week than we could out of you.'

Mr. Jackman drank another glass of sherry.

'But, sir'--(sir! that I should ever call Tom Jackman 'sir,' but I did)--'as I just said, my experience and connection might be valuable.'

'Oh, as to experience, me and Larkins supply all that, and the clerks do as they are told. Never keep a clerk more than two years: he then begins to think he knows too much and wants more pay. As to connection, pardon me--mean nothing, of course--but your recommendation now wouldn't bring much.'

At this moment the door opened and Larkins entered in haste. 'I say, Jackman--' then turning and seeing me,--'Hullo, Whittaker, what the devil are you doing here? Jackman, I've just heard--'

'Good-bye, Whittaker,' said Jackman, 'sorry can't help you.'

Neither of them offered to shake hands, and I passed out into the street. The chop-houses were crammed; waiters were rushing hither and thither; I looked up at the first floor of that very superior house, used solely by principals, where I often had my lunch, and again crossed London Bridge on my way back. London Bridge at half-past one! I do not suppose I had ever been there at half-past one in my life. I saw a crowd still passing both southwards and northwards. At half-past nine it all went one way and at half-past six another. It was the morning and evening crowd which was the people to me. These half-past one o'clock creatures were strange to me, loafers, nondescripts. I was faint and sick when I reached home, for I walked all the way, and after vainly trying to eat something went straight to bed. But the next post brought me a note saying that Jackman and Larkins were willing to engage me at a salary of 100 pounds a year--much more, it was added, than they would have paid for more efficient service, but conceded as a recognition of the past. The truth was, as I afterwards found out, that Larkins persuaded Jackman that it would increase their reputation to take old Whittaker. Larkins too had become a little tired of soliciting orders, and I could act as his substitute. I was known to nearly all the houses with which they did business and very likely should gain admittance where a stranger would be denied. My hours would be long, from nine till seven, and must be observed rigidly. Instead of my three-and-sixpenny lunch I should now have to take in my pocket whatever I wanted in the middle of the day. For dinner I must substitute a supper--a meal which did not suit me. I should have to associate with clerks, to meet as a humble subordinate those with whom I was formerly intimate as an equal; but all this was overlooked, and I was happy, happy as I had not been for months.

It was on a Wednesday when I received my appointment, and on Monday I was to begin. I said my prayers more fervently that night than I had said them for years, and determined that, please God, I would always go to church every Sunday morning no matter how fine it might be. There were only three clear week-days, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, to be got through. I imagined them to be holidays, although I had never before taken three consecutive holidays, save in those wretched Augusts or Septembers, when pride annually forced me away to the seaside. At last Monday came: our breakfast hour was henceforth fixed at half-past seven, and at eight o'clock I started to walk to Kennington, and thence to ride by an omnibus to King William's statue. Oh! with what joy did I shut the little garden gate and march down the road, once more somebody! I looked round, saw other little front gates open, each by-street contributed, so that in the Kennington Road there was almost a procession moving steadily and uniformly City-wards, and I was in it. I was still a part of the great world; something depended on me. Fifty-six? yes, but what was that? Many men are at their best at fifty-six. So exhilarated was I, that just before I mounted the omnibus--it was a cold morning, but I would not ride inside--I treated myself to a twopenny cigar. My excitement soon wore off. I could not so far forget myself as not to make suggestions now and



then, and Jackman took a delight in snubbing me. It was a trial to me also to sit with the clerks. We had never set ourselves up as grand people at Stockwell, but I had all my life been accustomed to delicate food properly cooked, and now that my appetite was declining with my years, I would almost at any time have gone without a meal rather than eat anything that was coarse or dirtily served. My colleagues ridiculed my 'Stockwell manners,' as they called them, and were very witty, so they thought, in their inquiries when I produced my sandwich wrapped up in a clean napkin, how much it cost me for my washing. They were a very cheap set, had black finger-nails, and stuck their pens behind their ears. One of them always brought a black-varnished canvas bag with him, not respectably stiff like leather--a puckered, dejected-looking bag. It was deposited in the washing place to be out of the way of the sun. At one o'clock it was brought out and emptied of its contents, which were usually a cold chop and a piece of bread. A plate, knife and fork, and some pepper and salt were produced from the desk, and after the meat, which could be cut off from the chop, was devoured, the bone was gnawed, wrapped up in paper, and put back in the bag. The plate, knife, and fork were washed in the wash-hand basin and wiped with the office jack-towel. It was hard when old business friends called and I had to knock at the inner door and say, 'Mr. -- - wants to see you, sir,' the object of the visit not being entrusted to me. A few of them behaved politely to me, but to others it seemed to be a pleasure to humble me. On that very first Monday, Bullock, the junior in Wiggins, Moggs, and Bullock, burst into the room. He knew me very well, but took no notice of me, although I was alone, except to ask -

'Is Mr. Jackman in?'

'No, sir, can I do anything for you?'

He did not deign to say a word, but went out, slamming the door behind him.

Nevertheless I kept up my spirits, or rather they kept themselves up. At five o'clock, when the scramble to get the letters signed began, I thought of our street at home, so dull at that hour, of the milkman, and the muffin-boy, of the curate, and of my niece's companions, and reflected, thank God, that I was in the City, a man amongst men. When seven o'clock came and the gas was put out, there was the anticipation also of the fight for a place in the omnibus, especially if it was a wet night, and the certainty that I should meet with one or two neighbours who would recognise me. No more putting up window-blinds, pulling up weeds in the back garden, sticking in seeds which never grew, or errands to suburban shops at midday. How I used in my retirement to detest the sight of those little shopkeepers when the doors of Glyn's Bank were swinging to and fro! I came home dead-beaten now, it is true, but it was a luxury to be dead-beaten, and I slept more soundly than I had ever slept in my life. In about six months my position improved a little. Jackman's love for sherry grew upon him, and once or twice, to Larkins's disgust, his partner was not quite as fit to appear in public as he ought to have been. Very often he was absent, sick. Two of the cheap clerks also left in order to better themselves. I never shall forget the afternoon--I felt as if I could have danced for joy--when Larkins said to me, 'Whittaker, Mr. Jackman hasn't very good health, and if he's not here when I am out, you must

answer anybody who calls, but don't commit yourself--and--let me see--I was going to tell you you'll have ten pounds a year more, beginning next quarter--and there was something else--Oh! I recollect, if anybody should want to see Mr. Jackman when he happens to be unwell here, and I am not with him, send for me if you know where I am. If you don't know, you must do the best you can.' My office coat had hitherto been an old shiny, ragged thing, and I had always taken off my shirt-cuffs when I began work, because they so soon became dirty. I rammed the old coat that night into the fire; brought my second-best coat in a brown paper parcel the next morning, and wore my shirt-cuffs all day long. Continually I had to think--only fancy, to think--once more; in a very small way, it is true, but still to think and to act upon my thought, and when Larkins came in and inquired if anybody had called, he now and then said 'all right' when I told him what I had done. A clerk from my old office swaggered in and did not remove his hat. I descended from my stool and put on my own hat. The next time he came he was more polite. I have now had two years of it, and have not been absent for a day. I hope I may go on till I drop. My father died in a fit; his father died in a fit; and I myself often feel giddy, and things go round for a few seconds. I should not care to have a fit here, because there would be a fuss and a muddle, but I should like, just when everything was QUITE straight, to be able to get home safely and then go off. To lie in bed for weeks and worry about my work is what I could not endure.

## CONFESSIONS OF A SELF-TORMENTOR

My father was a doctor in a country town. Strictly speaking it was not a town, and yet it was something more than a village. His practice extended over a district with a radius of five or six miles from his house; he drove a gig and dispensed his own medicines. My mother was the youngest daughter of a poor squire who owned two or three hundred acres and lived at what was called the Park, which was really nothing more than two or three fields generally laid for hay, a small enclosure being reserved for a garden. We were not admitted into county society, and my mother would not associate with farmers and tradesfolk. She was a good woman, affectionate to her children and husband, but never forgot that--so she thought--she had married below her station. She had an uncle who had been in the Indian Army, and his portrait in full regimentals hung in the dining-room. How her heart warmed to the person who inquired who that officer was! When she went home, it was never to her 'home,' but to the 'Park.'

My father's income was not more than eight or nine hundred a year, and his expenses were heavy, but nevertheless my mother determined that I should go to the university, and I was accordingly sent to a grammar school. I had not been there more than three years, and was barely fourteen years old, when my father was pitched out of his gig and killed. He had insured his life for two thousand pounds, which was as much as he could afford, and my mother had another two thousand pounds of her own. Her income therefore was less than two hundred a year. She could not teach, she would not let lodgings, nor was she wanted at the Park. She therefore took a cottage, small

but genteel, at a rental of ten pounds a year, and managed as best she could. The furniture was partly sold, but the regimental portrait was saved. Unhappily, as the cottage ceilings were very low, it was not an easy task to hang it. The only place to be found for it, out of the way of the chairs, was opposite the window, in a parlour about twelve feet square, called the drawing-room; but it was too long even there, and my great-uncle's legs descended behind the sofa, and could not be seen unless it was moved. 'The cottage is a shocking come-down,' said my mother to the rector, 'but it is not vulgar; it is at least a place in which a lady can live.' Of course the university was now out of the question, and at fifteen I left school. I had read a little Virgil, a little Horace, and a book or two of Homer. I had also got through the first six books of Euclid after a fashion, and had advanced as far as quadratic equations in algebra, but had no mathematical talent whatever. My mother would not hear of trade as an occupation for me, and she could not afford to make me a soldier, sailor, doctor, lawyer, or parson. At last the county member, at the request of her father, obtained for me a clerkship in the Stamps and Taxes Department. These were the days before competitive examinations. She was now able to say that her son was in H. M. Civil Service. I had eighty pounds a year, and lodged at Clapton with an aunt, my father's sister.

Although I had been only half-educated, I was fond of reading, and I had plenty of time for it. I read good books, and read them with enthusiasm. I was much taken with the Greek dramatists, especially with Euripides, but my only means of access to them was through translations. My aunt had another nephew who came to see her now and then. He had obtained an open exhibition at Oxford, and one day I found that he had a Greek Euripides in his pocket, and that he needed little help from a dictionary. He sometimes brought with him a college friend, and well do I remember a sneer from this gentleman about the poor creatures whose acquaintance with AEschylus was derived from Potter. I did not look at a translation again for some time.

The men at my office were a curious set. The father of one was a leader of the lowest blackguards in a small borough, who had much to do with determining elections there; another bore the strongest resemblance to a well-known peer; and another was the legitimate and perfectly scoundrel offspring of a newspaper editor. I formed no friendships with any of my colleagues, but one of them I greatly envied. He was deaf and dumb, the son of a poor clergyman, and had an extraordinary passion for botany. Every holiday was devoted to rambling about the country near London. He cared little for anything but his favourite science, but that he understood, and he never grew tired of it. I took no account of his deafness and dumbness; the one thing I saw was his mastership over a single subject. Gradually my incompleteness came to weigh on me like a nightmare. I imagined that if I had learned any craft which required skill, I should have been content. I was depressed when I looked at the watchmaker examining my watch. I should have walked the streets erect if there had been one thing which I could do better than anybody I met. There was nothing: I stood for nothing: no purpose was intended by God through me. I was also constitutionally inaccurate--this was another of my troubles--and nothing short of the daily use of a fact made me sure of it. No matter how zealously I went over and over again a particular

historical period, I always broke down the moment my supposed acquisitions were tested by questions or conversation. I have read a book with the greatest attention I could muster, and have found, when I have seen a simple examination paper on it, that I could not have got a dozen marks. Of what value, then, were my notions on matters demanding far greater concentration of thought? Accuracy I fancied might be acquired, but I was mistaken. It is a gift as much as the art of writing sublime poetry. I struggled and struggled with pencil and precis, but I did not improve. My cousin's before-mentioned friend took delight in checking, like an accountant, what was said to him, especially by me, and although I saw that this for the most part was a mere trick, I could not deny that it proved continually that my so-called opinions were not worth a straw. The related virtues of accuracy, strength of memory, and clear definition, are of great importance, but I over-estimated them. I see now that human affairs are so complicated, that had I possessed the advantages bestowed on my cousin and his companion, they would not have prevented delusions, all the more perilous, perhaps, because I should have been more confident. However, at the time of which I am speaking, I was wretched, and believed that my wretchedness was entirely due to deficiencies and weaknesses, from which my friends were free. No sorrow of genius is greater than the daily misery of the man with no gifts, who is not properly equipped, and has desires out of all proportion to his capacity.

I had no real love of art and did not understand it. I went to concerts, but the only part of a sonata or symphony which took hold of me was that which was melodious. The long passages with no striking theme in them conveyed nothing to me, and as to Bach, excepting now and then, his music was like a skilful recitation of nonsense verses. The Marseillaise on a barrel-organ was intelligible, but gymnastics on strings--what did they represent? With pictures the case was somewhat different. I often left Clapton early in order that I might have half an hour at Christie's in quiet, and I have spent many pleasant moments in those rooms on sunny mornings in May and June before De Wint's and Turner's landscapes. But I knew nothing about them. Without previous instruction I should probably have placed something worthless on the same level with them, and I could not fix my attention on them long. A water-colour by Turner, on which all his power had been expended, an abstract of years and years of toil and observation, was unable to detain me for more than five minutes, and in those five minutes I very likely did not detect one of its really distinguishing qualities. As to the early religious pictures of the Italian school, I cared nothing either for subject or treatment, and would have given a cartload of them for a drawing by Hunt of a bird's nest. Wanting an ear for music and an eye for pictorial merit, I believed, or affected to believe, that the raptures of people who possessed the ear and eye were a sham. It irritated me to hear my aunt play, although she had been well taught in her youth and was a skilful performer. I know she would have liked to feel that she gave me some pleasure, and that her playing was admired, but I was so openly indifferent to it that at last she always shut the piano if I happened to come into the room while she was practising. I remember saying to her when she was talking to me about one of Mozart's quartets she had just heard, that music was immoral, inasmuch as it provoked such enormous insincerity. It is strange that, although spite was painful to me, especially towards her, I could not help indulging in it.

My failings gradually wrought in me confirmed bitterness. I persuaded myself that the interest which people appeared to take in me was mere polite pretence. There may be enough selfishness in the world to explain misanthropy, but there is never enough to justify it, and what we imagine to be indifference to us is often merely the reserve caused by our own refusal to surrender ourselves to legitimate and generous emotions. Oddly enough, I frequently made hasty and spasmodic offers of intimate friendship to people who were not prepared for them, and the natural absence of immediate response was a further reason for scepticism. A man to whom I was suddenly impelled was in want of money, and I pressed ten pounds upon him. He could not pay me at the appointed time, whereupon I set him down as an ungrateful brute, and moralised like Timon.

There was at that time living in London a lady whom I must call Mrs. A. She was the widow of a professor at Cambridge who had died young, and she might have been about five-and-thirty or forty years old. My cousin, who had known her husband, introduced me to her. She was not handsome; the cheek-bones were a little too prominent, and her face was weather-worn, but not by wind and sun. Nevertheless it was a quietly victorious face. Her ways were simple and refined. She had travelled much, as far even as Athens, and was complete mistress of Italian and French. Her voice struck me--it was so musical, and adapted itself so delicately to varying shades of thought and emotion. I have often reflected how little we get out of the voice in talking. How delightful is the natural modulation which follows the sense, and how much the sense gains if it is so expressed rather than in half-inarticulate grunts, say, between the inspirations and expirations of a short pipe!

Mrs. A. took much notice of me, and her attitude towards me was singular. She was not quite old enough to be motherly to me, but she was too old for restrictions on her intercourse with me, and her wide experience and wisdom well qualified her to be my directress. Often when I went to her house nobody was there, and she would talk to me with freedom on all sorts of subjects. I did not fall in love with her, but she was still attractive as a woman, and difference of sex, delightful manners, subtle intellect, expressive grey eyes, and lovely black hair streaked with white, might have taught me much which I could have learned from no ordinary friend. My cousin often went with me to Mrs. A.'s, but I was never at rest when he was there. I fancied then that if I could have rendered a dozen lines of Gray's Elegy into correct Greek, life would have nothing more to give me. Mrs. A. was too well-behaved to encourage conversation in my cousin's presence which disclosed my inferiority to him, but without premeditation it sometimes turned where I could not follow. As I have said, she had travelled in Greece. She understood something of modern Greek, and she and my cousin one evening fell to comparing it with ancient Greek. I sat sulky and dumb. At last she turned to me, and asked me smilingly why I was so quiet. I replied that I did not understand a word of what they were saying (which was untrue), and that if they would talk about Stamps and Taxes I could join. She divined in an instant what was the matter with me, and diverted the discussion so that it might be within my reach. 'I must confess,' she said, 'that my knowledge of philology is no better than yours. Philology demands the labour of a life. I often wonder what the teacher, student, and school history of England will be at the end of another thousand years. Perhaps, however, in

another thousand years books will no longer be written except on physics. Men will say, "What have we to do with the Wars of the Roses?" and as to general literature, they will become weary of tossing over and over again the same old ideas and endeavouring to imagine new variations of passion. The literary man will cease from the land. Something of this sort must come to pass, unless the human race is to be smothered.' My cousin said he prayed that her prophecy might come true, but I remained hard and stockish. Her sweet temper, however, could not be disturbed, and she announced that she was going to see Rachel, the great actress, and invited us both to accompany her. I refused, on the ground that I knew nothing of French (also untrue). She assured me that if I would read the play beforehand I should be in no difficulty. I was really touched by her kindness, but the devil in me would not let me yield. I missed the opportunity of seeing Rachel, just as I missed many other opportunities of more importance. Oh! when I look back now over my life and call to mind what I might have had simply for taking and did not take, my heart is like to break. The curse for me has not been plucking forbidden fruit, but the refusal of divine fruit offered me by heavenly angels.

Mrs. A.'s circle of acquaintances widened during the two or three years of my friendship with her. She often pressed me to meet them, but I nearly always held back. I told her that I did not care for mere acquaintances, and that certainly not more than one or two of her visitors would shed a tear if they heard she was dead. 'To possess one or two friends,' she said, 'who would weep at my departure would be quite enough. It is as much as anybody ought to demand, but you are mistaken in supposing that those who would not break their hearts for us may not be of value, and even precious. We are so made that the attraction which unites us to our fellow-creatures is, and ought to be, of varying intensity, and there is something to be obtained from a weaker bond which is not to be had from a stronger. I like the society of Mrs. Arnold and Madame Sorel. I enjoy the courtesy which is not slipper-and-dressing-gown familiarity, and their way of looking at things, especially Madame Sorel's, is different from mine and instructs me. Forgive me for reminding you that in our Father's house are many mansions, and if we wish to be admitted to some of them we must wear our best clothes, and when we are inside we must put on our company manners.' She was quite right; Mrs. Arnold and Madame Sorel could have given me just what I needed.

My visits to Mrs. A. became less and less frequent, and at last altogether ceased. It was actually painful to me to neglect her, but I forced myself to it, or to put it more correctly the Demon of pure Maliginity, for there is such a demon in Hell, drove me to it.

Some years afterwards I wrote to her asking her if she could get work for a starving man whom she had known in other days, and she helped him to obtain it. Two years after she had done this kind office, and had shown she had not forgotten me, she died, and I went to her funeral in Brompton Cemetery. It was a cold day, and black fog hung over London. When the coffin was lowered into the grave I wept many tears. I had been guilty of a neglect which was wicked injustice, and I could never hear her say she had forgiven me. I understood the meaning of atonement, and why it has been felt in all ages that, by itself, reformation is insufficient. I attempted an expiation, which I need not describe. It is painful, but the

sacrifice which I trust I shall offer to the end of my days brings me a measure of relief.

About a twelvemonth after Mrs. A.'s death I fell sick with inflammation of the lungs. Once before, when I was ill, I declined my aunt's attendance. I said that I did not believe it was possible for mere friendship or affection to hold out against long watching, and that there must come a time when the watcher would be relieved by the death of the patient. I declared that nothing was more intolerable to me than to know that anybody sacrificed the least trifle on my behalf, and that if my aunt really wished me to get better she would at once send for a paid nurse. I had a paid nurse, but Alice, our servant, told me afterwards that my poor aunt cried a good deal when she saw her place taken by a stranger. She was now nearly seventy, but she offered herself again, and I thankfully accepted her, stipulating of course that she should be helped. I wondered how she could retain her love for me, how she could kiss me so tenderly morning and night, and apparently not remember my unkindness to her. But therein lies the difference between a man and a woman. Woman is Christian. A woman's love will sweep like a river in flood over a wrong which has been done to it and bury it for ever.

I am not regenerate, but who is ever regenerate? My insignificance and defects do not worry me as they did: I do not kick at them, and I am no longer covetous of other people's talents and virtues. I am grateful for affection, for kindness, and even for politeness. What a tremendous price do we have to pay for what we so slowly learn, and learn so late!

#### A LETTER TO THE 'RAMBLER'

Sent to the Rambler March 1752, but, alas, in that month the Rambler came to an end. I am not sorry it was not printed. On re-reading it I find passages here and there which are unconscious and unavoidable imitations of Dr. Johnson. No use in re-writing them now.

J. R.  
June 1760.

Sir,--I venture to send you a part of the history of my life, trusting that my example may be a warning against confidence in our own strength to resist even the meanest temptation.

My father was a prosperous haberdasher in Cheapside, and I was his eldest son. My mother was the daughter of the clerk to the Fellmongers' Company. She had reached the mature age of nine-and-twenty when she received an offer of matrimony from my father, and after much anxious consideration and much consultation with her parents, prudently decided to accept it, although to the end of her days she did not scruple openly to declare that she had lowered herself by marrying a man who was compelled to bow behind a counter to the wife of a grocer, and stand bareheaded at the carriage door

of an alderman's lady. My mother, I am sorry to say, abetted my natural aversion from trade and sent me to Saint Paul's School to learn Latin, Greek, and the mathematicks that I might be qualified to separate myself from the class to which unhappily she was degraded and that she might recover in her child the pride she had lost in her husband. My abilities were not despicable, my ambition was restless, and my progress in my studies was therefore respectable. I conceived a genuine admiration for the classick authors; I was genuinely moved by the majesty of Homer and the felicity of expression in Horace. In due time I went to Oxford, and after the usual course there, in which I was not unsuccessful, I took Holy Orders and became a curate. When I was about eight-and-twenty I was presented with a College living in the village of A. about four miles from the county town of B. in the West of England. My parishioners were the squire, a half-pay captain in the army, a retired custom-house surveyor who was supposed to be the illegitimate son of a member of parliament, and the surrounding farmers and labourers. All were grossly illiterate, but I soon observed that a common ignorance does not prevent, but rather tends to establish artificial distinctions. Inferiority by a single degree in the social scale becomes not only a barrier to intercourse, but a sufficient reason for contempt. The squire and his lady spent their days in vain attempts to secure invitations to my Lord's at the Abbey and revenged themselves by patronising the captain, who in his turn nodded to the surveyor but would on no account permit intimacy. The surveyor could not for his life have condescended to enter a farmhouse, and yet was never weary of denouncing as intolerably stuck-up the behaviour of those above him. He consoled himself by the reflection that they were the losers, and that, poor creatures, their neglect of him was due to a lamentable misapprehension of the dignity of H. M. Custom-house Service. I can assure you I thought the comedy played at A. very ridiculous, and often laughed at it.

It was soon quite clear to me that if I was to live in peace I must take to myself a wife. The squire and the surveyor had daughters. The squire's would each have a hundred a-year apiece, a welcome addition to my small income. They were good-looking, and by repute were virtuous and easy of temper, but when I became acquainted with them I found that I must not expect from them any entertainment save the description of visits to the milliner, or schemes for parties, or the gossip of the country-side. I did not demand, Mr. Rambler, the critical acumen of Mrs. Montagu, or the erudition of Mrs. Carter, but I believe you will agree with me that a wife, and especially the wife of a clergyman and a scholar, should be able to read a page of Dr. Barrow's sermons without yawning, and should not drop Mr. Pope's Iliad or Odyssey in five minutes unless she happened to light upon some particularly exciting adventure. I therefore dismissed the thought of these young ladies, and the daughters of the surveyor were for the same reasons ineligible, with the added objection that if I chose one of them the squire and his family would never enter the church again.

One day I went over to B. to leave my watch for repairs. I noticed a fishing-rod in the shop, and as I was fond of the sport I asked the watchmaker if it was his. He said that he generally went fishing when he could spare himself a holiday, and that he had just spent two days on the Avon. I was thinking of the Stratford river and foolishly inquired which Avon, forgetting the one near us.



'Our Avon,' he replied; 'our Avon, of course, sir; THE Avon.

"Proud of his adamants with which he shines  
And glisters wide, as als of wondrous Bath."

I did not recollect the lines, but discovered on inquiry that they were Spenser's, an author, I regret to say, whom I had not read. I was astonished that a person with a mechanical occupation who sat in a window from morning to night dissecting time-pieces should be acquainted with poetry, and I begged him to tell me something of his life. He was the son of a bookseller in Bristol who had been apprenticed to the celebrated Mr. Bernard Lintot. The father failed in business, and soon afterwards died leaving a widow and six children. My friend was then about fourteen years old. He had been well educated, but his mother was compelled to accept the offer of a neighbour who took compassion on her, and he was brought up to the watchmaking trade in Bath. He had to work long hours and endure many hardships which it might be supposed would tend to repress the sallies of the most lively imagination, but some men are so constituted that adverse circumstances do but stimulate a search for compensation. So it was with him. In his leisure hours he studied not only horological science but the works of our great English authors.

I was so much attracted to the watchmaker that I often called on him, when I had no business with him. He had a wife and daughter, both of whom were his companions. Melissa, the daughter, was about nineteen. She was not beautiful according to the Grecian model, but her figure was elegant, there was depth in her eyes, and she was always dressed with simplicity and taste. She spoke correctly, and surprised me by the justness of her observations, not merely on local and personal matters, but upon subjects with which women of more exalted rank are not usually familiar. Admission had been refused to her by every school in Bath, but she had been taken in charge by two elderly gentlewomen, distant relations of her grandfather, who had instructed her in the usual branches of polite learning, including French. I will content myself, Mr. Rambler, with informing you that I fell in love with Melissa, and that she did not discourage my attentions. I had not altogether overlooked the possibility of embarrassment at A., but my passion prevented the clear foresight of consequences. I have often found that evils which are imaginary will press upon me with singular vivacity, while those which may with certainty be deduced from any action are but obscurely apprehended, so that in fact intensity of colour is an indication of unreality. I must add that if the future had presented itself to me with prophetic distinctness, my love for Melissa was so great that I should not have hesitated. My frequent visits to B. had not passed unnoticed at A., and the reason was suspected. Hints were not wanting, and the custom-house surveyor told me a harrowing tale of a fellow-surveyor who had alienated all his friends and had been obliged to leave his house near Tower Hill because he had chosen to marry the daughter of a poor author who lived in Whitefriars. One day early in the morning I was in B. and met the squire's young ladies with their mother. She was a very proud dame. Her maiden name was Bone, and her father had been a sugar-baker in Bristol, but this was not a retail trade, and she had

often told me that she was descended from Geoffrey de Bohun, who was in the retinue of William the Conqueror and killed five Saxons with his own hand at the battle of Hastings. Her children, she bade me observe, had inherited the true Bohun ears as shown in an engraving she possessed of a Bohun tomb in Normandy. I walked with the party up the High Street, and had not gone far when I saw Melissa coming towards us. O, Mr. Rambler, can I utter it! She approached us, she knew that I must have recognised her, but I turned my head towards a shop-window and called my companions' attention to the display of silks and satins. After Melissa had passed, my lady asked me if that was not the watchmaker's daughter and whether I knew anything about her. I replied that I believed it was, and that I had heard she was a respectable young woman. My lady remarked that she had understood that she was virtuous, but that she had been unbecomingly brought up, and considered herself superior to her position. Her ladyship confessed that she would not be surprised any day to hear that Miss ---- had been obliged to leave B., for she had noticed that when a female belonging to the lower orders strove to acquire knowledge unsuitable to her station, the consequence was often ruin. It is almost incredible--I was silent!--but when I reached home I was overcome with shame and despair. This then was all that my love was worth; this was my esteem for intelligence and learning; and I was the man who had thanked God I was not as my neighbours at A.! If in the beginning I had deliberately resolved that it would be a mistake to ally myself with Melissa's family because my usefulness might be diminished, something might have been pleaded on my behalf, but I was without excuse. I had sacrificed Melissa to no principle, but to detestable vulgar cowardice. It was about two hours after noon when I returned, and in my confusion a note from Melissa which lay upon my table was not at once noticed. It had been written the day before, and it tenderly upbraided me because I had been absent for a whole week. Enclosed was a copy of verses by Sir Philip Sidney beginning, 'My true love hath my heart.' I mounted my horse again, and in less than half an hour was in B. I flew to Melissa. She received me in silence, but without rebuke. Indeed, before she had time for a word, I had knelt at her feet and had covered my face with her hands. On my way through the town I had seen my lady with her children, and one or two fashionably-dressed women, friends who lived in B. My lady was completing her purchases. I implored Melissa immediately to come out with me. She was astonished and hesitated, but my impetuosity was so urgent that she feared to refuse, and without any explanation I almost dragged her into the street. On the opposite side I descried my lady and her party. I crossed over, took Melissa's arm in mine, came close to them face to face, bowed, and then passed on. We then recrossed the road and turned into Melissa's house. I looked back and saw that they were standing still, stricken with astonishment. We went into the little parlour: nobody was there. Melissa threw her arms round my neck, and happier tears were never shed. In all the long years which have now gone by since that memorable day I have never had to endure from that divine creature a word or a hint which even the suspicion of wounded self-respect could interpret as a reproach.

We were married at B. The custom-house surveyor never entered his parish church again, but went over to B. once every Sunday. He wrote me a letter to say that it was with much regret that he left the church of his own village, but that it was no longer possible to derive any edification from the services there. The captain remained, but discontinued his civilities. The squire informed me

that as I was still a priest and possessed authority to administer the holy sacraments he should continue his attendance, but that of course all personal intercourse must cease. I expected that the common people would have been confirmed in their attachment to me, but the opinion of the little village butcher was that I had disgraced myself, and the farmers and labourers would not even touch their hats to my wife when they met her. However, we did not care, and in time it was impossible even to the squire not to recognise her tact, manners, and sense. Her father had constructed an ingenious sun-dial which he had placed on the front of his shop. The great Mr. Halley was staying with Mr. M., who lives about five miles from B., and seeing the dial when he was in the town, called on my father-in-law, and was so much struck with him that he obtained permission to invite him to dinner. There the squire met him and was obliged to sit opposite him, amazed to hear him converse on equal terms with Mr. Halley and his host, and to discover that he knew how to behave with decency. Hostility continued to wear away. Few people are endowed with sufficient perseverance to continue a quarrel unless the cause is constantly renewed.

My betrayal of Melissa has not been altogether without profit. I had imagined myself morally superior to my parishioners, and if I had put the question to myself I should have said with confidence that it was impossible that there should exist in me a weakness I had never suspected, one which every day moved me to laughter or to scorn. But, sir, I now feel how true it is that in our immortal poet's words, 'Man, proud man, is most ignorant of what he's most assured, his glassy essence.' I hope you will pardon a reference to sacred history: I understand how the Apostle Peter came to deny his Lord. A few minutes before the dreadful crime was committed he would have considered himself as incapable of it as he was of the sale of his Master for money or of that damning kiss, and a few minutes afterwards he would have suffered death for His sake. This, Mr. Rambler, is the lesson which induced me to write to you. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall; and indeed he may take all heed and yet will fall, unless Divine Providence mercifully catches him and holds him up.

#### A LETTER FROM THE AUTHORESS OF 'JUDITH CROWHURST'

You have asked me to tell you all about Judith Crowhurst. I will tell you something more and begin at the beginning. You will remember that Miss Hardman said to Mrs. Pryor, Mrs. Hardman's governess: 'WE need the imprudences, extravagances, mistakes and crimes of a certain number of fathers to sow the seed from which WE reap the harvest of governesses. The daughters of tradespeople, however well educated, must necessarily be under-bred, and as such unfit to be inmates of OUR dwellings, or guardians of OUR children's minds and persons. WE shall ever prefer to place those about OUR offspring, who have been born and bred with somewhat of the same refinement as OURSELVES.' I was one of those unhappy women who, mercifully for the upper classes, inherit manners and misery in order that the children of these superior creatures may not put an 'r' at the end of 'idea' and may learn how to sit down in a chair with propriety. My father was a clergyman holding a small country

living. He died when I was five-and-twenty, and I had to teach in order to earn my bread. I obtained a tolerably good situation, but at the end of two years I was informed that, although a clergyman's daughter would 'do very well' so long as her pupils were quite young, it was now time that they should be handed over to a lady who had been accustomed to Society. I had become thoroughly weary of my work. I was not enthusiastic to instruct girls for whom I did not care. I suppose that if I had been a born teacher, I should have been as happy with the little Hardmans as I was in the nursery with my youngest sister now dead. I should not have said to myself, as I did every morning, 'What does it matter?' In my leisure moments and holidays during those two years I had written a novel. I could supply conversation and description, but it was very difficult to invent a plot, and still more difficult to invent one which of itself would speak. I had collected a quantity of matter of all kinds before I began, and then I cast about for a frame in which to fit it. At last I settled that my hero, if hero he could be called, should fall in love with a poor but intelligent and educated girl. He had a fortune of about two thousand pounds a year, nearly the whole of which he lost through the defalcations of a brother, whose creditors received about five shillings in the pound. He felt that the fair name of his family was stained, and he was consumed with a passion to repay his brother's debts and to recover possession of the old house and land which had been sold. He went abroad, worked hard, and met with a lady who was rich whom he really admired. His love for his betrothed had been weakened by absence, the engagement, for some trifling reason, was broken off, and he married the heiress. At the end of five years he returned to England, discharged every liability, and in two years more was the owner of his birthplace. The marriage, alas! was unhappy. There was no obtrusive fault in his wife, but he did not love her. She could not understand his resolution to take upon himself his brother's debts, and she th

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